

**BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY AND THE POLITICS  
OF BUILDING ALLIANCES IN THE 1990S**

**Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of  
the degree of the Master of Philosophy**

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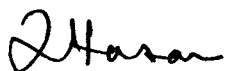
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This is to certify that the dissertation entitled, '**Bharatiya Janata Party and the Politics of Building Alliances in the 1990s**' submitted by me to the Center for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of the **Master of Philosophy**, is the result of my honest work. No one has done any work on this dissertation before in this University.

  
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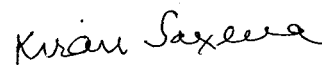


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*For*

*My dearest mother*

*Ngaranmi Zimik*

*For making me*

*The man I am today.*

## *Acknowledgement*

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*I take this as a moment of great privilege to thank Prof. Kiran Saxena, under whose guidance and supervision this work has been accomplished. In spite of all my mistakes and ignorance about the work she patiently tolerated me and gave a concrete shape to the work. At the same time she gave me an independent space to pursue my research work.*

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*For whatever mistake in the dissertation, the responsibility should be mine alone.*

*Date: 21/7/03*

*Shangreiso Zimik*

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## INTRODUCTION

The emergence of Hindutva as a concrete political ideology is one of the most remarkable features of the post-independence India. It is an ideology, which was rejected when India was under a foreign rule and the people of India were struggling to gain independence. However, this religio-politico ideology had gained widespread acceptability among the people of India when nation building and economic reconstruction should take precedence. Certain social, political and economic situations facilitated the growth of such an ideology, for any ideology requires certain situation for its growth and maturation. Today Hindutva has become an effective instrument in the hands of BJP to gain political power at the center.

The BJP being a party of the Hindutva, its rise to prominence in India politics has posed a serious threat to the secular and the democratic fabric of India. The decline of the Congress party has led to the break down of national consensus on secularism, nationalism, state role in the economy, nature of Indian society, etc. This ideological vacuum has been gradually occupied by the Sangh Parivar project of Hindutva. In short, it has emerged as an alternative to the official national consensus on the key issues that were built up by Nehru and Congress party. It is worthwhile to mention here that, the official national consensus was built up assiduously by the leaders of our freedom struggle, reflecting the ethos and the values of the freedom struggle. The rise of Hindutva had rung an alarm bell to secular and plural culture of India. As a monolith ideology, the adherents of Hindutva seek to change India into a unified Hindu Rashtra. Its attitude towards the minorities and the followers of religions other than, that of Hinduism has

raised an eyebrow that it represents a 'neo-fascist' movement in India politics. In this context, it is important to look into the concept of Indian Nationalism as propagated by the party. Chapter I focus on the party's view about Indian Nationhood. Particularly on the issues of nationalism and secularism, the construction of 'others' has become an important issue for the BJP.

The 1984 election was an eye opener for the party. It realized that the party had lost some of the political ground, which it had managed to capture with the help of the RSS leaders. The party leadership realized that it could only have a future only if it returned to its old identity. At the Pune Party executive meeting in October 1985, the party abandoned the 'Gandhian Socialism' and whole-heartedly accepted the old Sangh concept of 'Integral Humanism'. Since then, the party openly began to show of its Hindu color. It vociferously criticized the alleged 'minorityism' followed by the Congress. It also began to attack the official definition of Secularism and India being a land of composite culture. The party lost no time to shed its moderate face. It began to project itself as the most patriotic national party. There was a complete revival of the old Hindu identity. The party stressed that India would become more powerful only if the Hindus who were the majority asserted themselves more. That India is essentially a Hindu country, and its culture, a Hindu culture clearly emerged from the speeches of its leader and party resolutions. Its link with the RSS was publicly appreciated by the top leadership of the party. The party clearly showed that it is a party for the Hindus, when it began to demand for the ban of Cow slaughter and the building of 'Ram Temple' in Ayodhya, that too after the demolition of the Babri Masjid. Not only that, the party began

to look at all the government policies aiming at the minorities for their upliftment as 'pampering' them and thus depriving the majority of the Hindus their shares in their own land. It becomes imperative to explore the ideological and organizational backbone of the BJP, which give them such belief system. Chapter II deals with the relationship between the RSS and the BJP. This relationship makes the BJP a party with a difference.

The politics of 1990s also greatly helped the BJP to gain prominence in India national politics. It is a matter of great surprise that a party with just two seats in the 1984 general elections became the single largest party in the 1996 elections. The 1990s political phenomenon is completely different from the past. Politicians with tall ideal were no more seen in public life, rather what emerged were the political parties based on distinct castes and regional identities. The absence of dominant party necessitated the participation of such small parties for government formation at the center. The dismal performance of National Front government in 1989-90 and the Congress in 1991-96 made people to look for alternative. The emergence of BJP, as such, is a rude answer to all the engulfing distortions. The BJP leadership fully takes advantage of the blunder the rulers had been committing. The meteoric rise of the party has also arisen great attention. The growing acceptance of the Hindutva ideology as represented by the BJP necessitates a thorough understanding of the changes that have taken place in the last decades. Chapter III is devoted to the rise of BJP in the Indian political scenario.

To attain a parliamentary majority, it needs to move out from its traditional stronghold. Even in its stronghold it needs to expand its social base. For this the party has



to find base in the South and the East. Party that thrives on the ideology of Hindutva, in order, to be acceptable at the places that have nothing to do with it, needs to tone down its Hindutva rhetoric. This will help the party to be more acceptable to the regional parties. However on the other hand, it will antagonize its relation with the Sangh Parivar. Since 1996, the electoral gains of the BJP have been mostly from the allies. The allies provided the BJP with a new base. It introduced and strengthened the party where its presence were marginal and provided a foothold. Not only that they helped the party to form government at the center by providing the important support it needs. But most of the allies were regional parties. They mainly aim to maximize their gains. Most of all, they are the parties which have nothing to do with its ideology of Hindutva. In fact many parties have difficulty accepting its ideology.

BJP is an ideological party. It has an umbilical cord relation with the RSS. It exists as the political arms of the RSS. The fact that most of the leaders of the party are members of the RSS points to the fact that the RSS exercised considerable influence over the party. The RSS can survive without BJP but it is unlikely that the BJP will survive without RSS. The more the party tilt towards the allies, it runs the risk of losing its most precious asset, i.e., the huge network of Hindu Nationalists movements, the more it asserts its identity the allies will become apprehensive, which in turn will make the BJP's the task of forming government more difficult. How the party is negotiating with this difficult task for its survival is the question, I want to look into in the last chapter. Chapter IV deals with the BJP's attempt to form government at the center by forming a widespread coalition with regional parties and at the same time maintaining close relation

with the RSS. BJP'S dilemma of projecting itself as a liberal centrist party or the one hand and its continued dependence on fundamentalist forces like the RSS and the VHP remains a serious issue.

## **SCOPE**

In my dissertation I intend to look into the nature of Hindutva and its concept of Indian nationalism; how this ideology had gained acceptability in the Indian political scenario; how the BJP, i.e., the political arm of the RSS attempts to legitimize the Hindutva ideology in political front; and, the compulsion of Indian politics that pull even such an extreme ideology toward the main stream of India politics. I envisaged in my dissertation to study the situations that compelled the organization, such as, the RSS to enter the realm of political gambling which is otherwise completely against the original intention of its founding fathers. The implication of such adventure or misadventure for a country like India also demands thorough discussion. The attempt to acquire political power for smooth implementation of its programmes and policies, which will cast a doom for the future of this country, has been made considerably more difficult by the allies. The opinion that the allies will pull the BJP towards the mainstream of Indian politics is growing among some scholars of Indian politics. Connected to the above discussion is the nature of the present party system in India.

## **METHODOLOGY**

To write this dissertation, I have employed different methods. I have relied both on the primary and the secondary sources. Primary sources consisted of discussions with

my friends, attending seminars, reading of daily newspapers, etc. Secondary sources are mainly in the nature of reading books, journals and party documents which are available in the Library. The method of my dissertation is however a non-statistical, descriptive and extensive review of secondary sources.

## **HYPOTHESIS**

The hypothesis is, 'Without the allies, the BJP cannot form government at the center'.

## CHAPTER: ONE

### BJP's CONCEPT OF NATIONALISM

Hindu Nationalism is a growing force in India. The rise of Bharatiya Janata Party with its emphasis on Hindu Nationalism had posed a serious threat to the secular national ideology, which have been the foundation of India since independence and also to the heterogeneous and composite culture of India. In the secular national ideology differences or diversities were celebrated as the richness of India where as in the eye of the religions nationalism it is seen as a threat to the existence of India as one nation. This has generated a heated debate on the very basis of Indian national identity. At the same time it has created fear whether Indian state will survive if the BJP implements its ideology of Hindutva.

#### I. GROWTH OF INDIAN NATIONALISM

The rise of nationalism in India is a modern phenomenon. Despite being a geographical entity since time immemorial, India lacked the ingredient of political homogeneity, except on some specific occasions, throughout her long and chequered history.<sup>1</sup> In spite of the existence of powerful rulers in the past history of India, many subordinate principalities continued to exist with full local autonomy. Neither the Hindu emperors not the Sultans and Mughals could do away with this system. In fact the Britishers regarded the existence of an Indian nation as an Utopia. In the ancient past, a

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<sup>1</sup> K. Jayaprasad, *RSS and Hindu Nationalism: Inroads in a Leftist Stronghold*, (New Delhi: Deep and Deep publication, 1991), p.18.

sense of belonging to one state was absent among the people of Indian subcontinent. There was no India, as it is understood today.

It was the British that built a united India. For the first time the whole of India was integrated under one administrative unit. It was under the British rule that India's political unity became a reality. But the mere emergence of political unity did not lead to the emergence of nationalism. Nationalism emerged out of a number of interaction produced by numerous measures introduced by the British. The improvement in the means of transport and communications, introduction of western education, single currency, contact with the outside world, etc, helped the emergence of the consciousness of nationalism. The Britishers not only created a single political entity, but also a consciousness that they all belonged to one political unit. The term 'national' was used in India originally to signify opposition and resistance to British colonial rule.<sup>2</sup>

India is known more for its diversity than of its unity. But this diversity had never been a problem. Throughout the history, India has been able to absorb different races and imposed on them one culture and tradition. There is said to be a fundamental unity in spite of all these diversities. The most important cementing factor has been the Hindu religion.<sup>3</sup> As Vincent A. Smith has said, European writers as a rule have been more conscious of the diversity than of the unity of India. India beyond all doubts possesses a deep underlying fundamental unity, far more profound than that produces either by

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<sup>2</sup> W.V. Pochchamer, *India's Road to Nationhood*, (Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1981), p.431.

<sup>3</sup> Subhash Chandra Bose, *Indian Struggle 1920-42*, (Calcutta : Netaji Publishing Society, 1948), p.10.

geographical isolation or by political suzerainty. That unity transcends the innumerable diversities of blood, color, language, dress, manners and sects.<sup>4</sup>

## II. ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF HINDU NATIONALISM

Hindu Nationalism has been defined as a feeling of pride in the ancient glory of the Hindu culture and tradition. It is believed that Hindus are bound together by the most sacred and enduring bonds of a common Fatherland and common Holy land. Hindu culture is treated as the sole basic foundation of Indian Nationalism. This concept of Hindu Nationalism is a synthesis of modern Indian Nationalism and Hindu renaissance, both of which have been in existence in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The growing knowledge of the glory and greatness of ancient Hindu past served as a powerful weapon for the rise of Hindu nationalism. The past greatness of India acts as a source of inspiration, generated in their minds a spirit of self-confidence and held out before them a bright vision of their future destiny. The idea of Golden Age was to become one of the cornerstones of Hindu Nationalism.<sup>5</sup> Hindu nationalism developed as a reaction against the official Indian Nationalism. The proponents of Indian Nationalism were mainly western educated Middle class. They were secular and utilitarian in their concepts. "Having at its base on anti-traditional liberal democratic, secular and politically oriented concept of the nation", the early nationalism developed an ideology which ' could properly encompass all Indian cultures and religious."<sup>6</sup> They did not think it proper to

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<sup>4</sup> Vincent . A. Smith , *The Oxford History of India*, ( Oxford : Oxford University Press ,1958 ), p.10.

<sup>5</sup> Christophe Jafferlot, *Hindu Nationalists Movement and India politics 1925 to 1990s*, (New Delhi: Hurst and Company, 1996), p.150.

<sup>6</sup> Charles H. Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reforms*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969 ), p. 139.

base their concept of nationalism on Hindu culture, though they constituted the majority of India's population.

The Hindu Nationalism had its birth in the reform movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Being synergetic in nature, the movement aimed at social reform by incorporating western values and sought their validation through reinterpretation of Hindu sacred text.<sup>7</sup> Its fundamental principle is adhering to the fundamental spiritual philosophy of ancient Hindus. To the Hindu elites in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the concept of India Nationalism was inseparable form the Hindu identity.

### III. THE CONCEPT OF HINDUISM

Hinduism, the oldest religion of the worlds has its origin in India and is followed by the majority of the people. The Persian who invaded India through the North-Western passes of Himalayas gave the name Sindhu to the region, watered by the river Indus, and the word Hindu is only a corrupt form of Sindhu<sup>8</sup> The word India too is derived from Sindhu and means the Land of Indus. Hinduism means the faith of the people of the Indus land.<sup>9</sup> The word Hindu is said not to have acceded at all in the ancient Hindu literature. The name had originally a geographical significance. It is certain that the word 'Hindu means a people and not the followers of a particular religion. The use of the word Hindu in connection with a particular religion is of very late occurrence.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Yogendra K.Malik and V.B.Singh, *Hindu Nationalism in India: The rise of Bharitiya Janata Party*, (Boulder: Westview Press , 1994), p.3.

<sup>8</sup> T.M.P. Mahadevan, *Qutlines of Hinduism*, (Bombay: Chetana Limited, 1956), p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *Discovery of India*, (Calcutta: Signet Press, 1996), p. 52.

The indigenous names by which Hinduism is known are Sanatana Dharma and Vaidika Dharma.<sup>11</sup> Sanatana Dharma means eternal religion. By this it means to say that religion itself knows no age, it is eternal. The other name Vaidika Dharma means the religion of the Vedas. The Vedas are the scripture of the Hindus. Unlike Buddhism, Jainism, Islam and Christianity Hinduism has no founder and date of origin. Hinduism, as a faith, is indefinable, amorphous, many sided, accepting to all men. It is hardly possible to define or indeed to say definitely whether it is a religion or not in the usual sense of the world.<sup>12</sup> From its very past to the present form, it embraces many beliefs and practices often appearing as oppose or contrast to one another. The greatest feature of Hinduism is its catholicity. The richness and uniqueness of Hinduism lie in its spirit of accommodation. The very fact that it has survived to this day in spite of the vicissitudes and without any sign of decay, signifies that there is a soul to it. Hinduism believes that there is only one God, but is revealed in various ways. Historically, the great achievement of the Hindu religion is that it has enabled Hindu society and culture to survive through vicissitudes which have destroyed other societies and cultures contemporaneous with it.<sup>13</sup>

#### **IV. V.D. SAVARKAR AND HINDU NATIONALISM**

Though the early reformers had worked for the regeneration of Hindu religion, it was V.D. Savarkar who gave the form to the ideology and finally formulated it into an integrated doctrine of social and political outlook of life. Savarkar was, therefore, to this

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<sup>11</sup> T.M.P. Mahadevan, *Outlines of Hinduism*, op. cit. p. 12.

<sup>12</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *Discovery of India*, op. cit. p. 53

<sup>13</sup> K. Jayaprasad, *RSS and Hinduism: Inroads in a Leftist Strong hold*, op. cit. p. 12



Hindu ideology what Newton was to the law of gravitation or Karl Marx to socialism.<sup>14</sup> He wanted to reform Hinduism in order to strengthen it. Savarkar's ideas on Hindu Nationalism are set forth in his treatise *Hindutva*. In his treatise, he detailed the geographical, racial, religious and various other factors, which contributed to the making of the 'Hindu Nation'. According to Savarkar, "every person is a Hindu who regards and owns this land (India)- the land from Indus to the seas, as his Father land and Holy land". He believed that there were three fundamental bonds, which united the Hindus-the territorial, racial and cultural. These three bonds constituted the *Hindutva*. Savarkar emphasized the cultural and historical aspects in the Hindus are bound together by the dearest ties, most sacred and most enduring bonds of common Fatherland and common Motherland. The Hindu nation is an organic growth and not something brought into existence through contract. He can be thus called as the Father of Hindu Nationalism.

The birth of such an ideology is contingent upon the particular situation prevailing at that time. It is a part of history that any ideology can't be born independent of social condition. It is clear that Savarkar was looking for a unity. Faced with the multiplicity of 'Hinduisms' existing during his own and earlier times Savarkar attempts to develop criteria for a definition of a Hindu. His agenda was to locate a unity which had existed from time immemorial and which could both stand out clearly against the recognized heterogeneity of Indian civilization, yet still accommodate the many different pluralities (language, religion, political) which had existed in India.<sup>15</sup> He also developed "The

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<sup>14</sup> Dhananjay Keer, *Savarkar and His Times*, (Bombay: India Printing works, 1950), p.223.

<sup>15</sup> Greg Bailey, *South Asia*, Vol XVII, Special issue 1999. p. 117

notion that there is an organized enemy against whom the Hindus have been fighting throughout their history”<sup>16</sup>

## V. RSS AND HINDU NATIONALISM

Today, the best-organized and largest group committed to Hindu revivalism in India is the RSS. The history of RSS is a story from rags to riches. It is a unique organization in socio-political scene of India. In spite of its tremulous history and series of bans, the RSS has continued to grow from strength to strength. Acting as a parent body, today its affiliated organizations are working in social welfare, labor, culture, students' body, politics, religion, etc. RSS today has the largest number of full time workers; over 5,000 workers are busy building up the organization through its various arms all over the country.<sup>17</sup> Though there are many organizations working for the growth of Hindu nationalism, in the present days the greatest and the most powerful exponent of Hindu nationalism is undoubtedly the RSS. The Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh was formed in September 1925, on the Hindu festival day of Vijayadashami, at Nagpur under the leadership of Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar.<sup>18</sup> What it wants is a restoration of a sense of community among the Hindus.

Various lines of division within the Hindu society and the increasing animosities between the Hindus and the Muslims during the 1920s led Hedgewar to form RSS that will work to build, reform and unite the Hindu Society. A major influence on his thinking was a hand written copy of Savarkar's Hindutva, which advanced the thesis the Hindus

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<sup>16</sup> *ibid.* p.178

<sup>17</sup> K. Jayaprasad, *RSS and Hindu Nationalism: Inroads in a Leftist Stronghold*, (New Delhi: Deep and Deep publications, 1991). p. 57.

<sup>18</sup> M.S. Gowalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., (Bangalore: Vikrama Prakashan, 1968), p.vii.

were nation. Although Savarkar and the RSS leadership were unable to work together, Savarkar's thesis profoundly influenced the RSS definition of Indian Nationhood. Savarkar asserted: 'To the Hindus Hindustan being their Fatherland and Holyland, the love they bear to Hindustan is boundless. What is called nationalism can be defined as in fact the national communalism, of the majority community...thus in Hindustan it is the hindus, professing Hindu religion and being in overwhelming majority, that constitute the national community and create and formulate the nationalism of the nation'.<sup>19</sup> And he discovered the cause of India's weakness as psychological and that what was required was an inner transformation to rekindle in the minds of Indians a sense of national consciousness and social cohesions.<sup>20</sup> In short RSS was formed to organize the people to maintain the freedom of the country by preventing further disintegration through a cadre of patriotic people with an intense love of their motherland and its cultural glory.

After Hedgewar's death, Madhav Sadashiv Gowalkar popularly known as Guruji in the RSS circle became the head of the organization. His explanations of Hindu Nationalism is well known: 'The non- Hindu people in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of glorification of the Hindu race and culture, i.e., they must not only give up their attitude of intolerance and ungratefulness towards this land and its age- old traditions but must also cultivate the positive attitude of love and devotion instead—in a word they must cease to be foreigners, or may stay in the country,

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<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Prabhat Dixit, ' *The Ideology of Hindu Nationalism*', in Thomas Pantham and Kenneth L. Deutsch (eds), *Political thought in Modern India*, (New Delhi: Sage publications, 1986), p .133

<sup>20</sup> Walter K.Andersen and Shridhar D.Damle, *Brotherhood in Saffron: The RSS and Hindu Revivalism*, (New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, 1987), p.33

wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privilege, far less any preferential treatment—not even citizens rights.’<sup>21</sup> The Sangh Parivar, especially the RSS has an entirely different vision of India, very different from the vision of the founding fathers enshrined in the constitution of India. BJP’s concept of nationalism cannot be understood without understanding the basic belief of the RSS for it is the RSS that had been its ideological and organizational backbone. Most of the senior leaders of the BJP are members of the RSS and this membership in the RSS greatly influenced the ideological belief of the party. The greatness of Motherland was the emotional center of RSS ideology. It believed that Hindu culture was the sole binding force of Indian Nation. The feeling of burning love for Mother India has become the basic tenet of RSS philosophy.<sup>22</sup> Dr. Hedgewar founded the RSS in order to organize the Hindus on the basis of pride in their culture.<sup>23</sup> The RSS and its ‘family’ organizations, including the BJP constitute the movement for Hindu Nationalism in the present Indian politics. The RSS emerged during a wave of Hindu Muslim riots that swept across India in the early 1920s.<sup>24</sup> The Kshatriya model was called upon to overcome the perceived cowardice of the Hindus. Many believed that the ‘weakness’ of the Hindu community could be overcome only if Hindus strengthen community bonds and adopted an assertive Kshatriya outlook.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Craig Baxter, *The Jana Sangh: A Biography of an Indian Political Party*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1969), p.31.

<sup>22</sup> K. Jayaprasad, *RSS and the Hindu Nationalism: Inroads in a Leftist Stronghold*, op. cit. p.38.

<sup>23</sup> Shanker Ghose, *Political Ideas and Movements in India*, (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1975), p.178.

<sup>24</sup> Walker K. Andersen and Shridhar D. Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayam sevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*, (New Delhi: Vistaar publications, 1987), p.26.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.* p. 26.

While the disintegration of Hindu Society was perceived as advancing at a rapid pace in contemporary period, the malady is traced back at least to the Islamic invasion of India”<sup>26</sup> In contemporary times, the RSS clearly realized that it can only bring about a cohesive union by differentiating ‘Others’ from ‘We’. Therefore unity has to be constructed by targeting others. “They will avow that in their political lexicon ‘Hindu’ covers all who are born in Hindustan. In definite pronouncements and policies, however, it is Hindus as ‘the majority community’ harassed by the very ‘minorities’ (read; Muslims and Christians) when they had ‘appeased’”.<sup>27</sup> Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism are not seen as alien because they have their roots in India. Muslim and Christianity are seen as potentially ‘disruptive’ forces because the values they preached might result in denationalizing their followers.

The metaphor of divine mother is used to describe both the nation and the ‘sacred’ geography where the nation resides.<sup>28</sup> The nation is revered as mother who gives life to all her children. Supreme devotion to one’s motherland is seen as devotion to God. The partition of India was described as a ‘rape’ and those who defiled the land are projected as lustful masculine figure. Apart from giving a sacred place to the territory, the nation is said to possess a soul. Devotion and service to the nation is seen, as doing service to almighty and hence this becomes their supreme duty.

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<sup>26</sup> *ibid.* p.72.

<sup>27</sup> A.G.Noorani, *The RSS and The BJP: A division of Labor*, (New Delhi: Left wood, 2000), px1.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.* p. 77

## VI. BJP AND THE IDEOLOGY OF HINDUTVA

Hindutva is Indian Nationalism pure and simple.<sup>29</sup> As Indian nationalism it encompasses all the people, their culture and the whole country. It is seen as the only force that can take India into the bright future. The moment this force-Hindutva is weakened, the vigor and vitality of the nation will also decrease. But the recognition of Hindutva as an ideal form lies in the fact that India is basically a Hindu land. And that the spirit of India is Hindu and therefore her culture, national ethos, must also be based on Hindu culture. Thus it follows that without Hinduism India is nothing and only the Hindus can save India. In the present time, 'Hindutva' is India agenda for coming into its own after centuries of vicissitudes. It is believed that there will be all round development in every field when this nation rediscover its soul and have pride in its past. Today this is the basic philosophy of the BJP.

Hindutva is a religio-political ideology. The Sangh Parivar sees the revival of such thought as the continuation of the tradition of Dayanand and Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Tilak. It is a matter of great surprise that the ideology as propagated by Savarkar was rejected by the masses when the nation was under the British rule. Not only that when the Muslim nationalism was at its peak headed by Muslim League, this ideology did not find any place with the masses of India. Yet at a time when India had gained independence and painstakingly working for the economic development, a large section of Indian population is lured by this ideology of Hindutva. The reasons for the revival of such thought are varied and many. All the neighboring countries of India have

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<sup>29</sup> K.R. Malkani, '*Understanding Hindutva or Indian Nationalism*', World Focus, Feb.- March, 1995, p.11.

become religions states. Pakistan and Bangladesh Islamic state, Sri-Lanka and Bhutan Buddhist state; Nepal a Hindu Kingdom. Many in India think that the Nehruvian concept of Secularism is not suitable for India and India should also become a Hindu state keeping the fact that the Hindus constitute an overwhelming majority of India's population.

It is also accompanied by a thinking that India will become stronger only when the Hindus, that is the majority assert themselves move aggressively than what they are. The revival of such thought, which was rejected during the anti-colonial struggle as a wild imagination of a 'lunatic fringe' of a section Hindu Society, in the present time is rooted in the belief that Hinduism is endangered. This perceptions come form many sources: the growing dissatisfaction with the Nehruvean model, efforts to convert Hindu into other faiths, suspicion that foreign political and religious ideologies undermine community bond.

BJP self confidently preached the Hindutva ideology. The election manifesto of 1996 reads, "Hindutva or cultural nationalism shall be the rainbow which will bridge our present to our glories past and pave the way for an equally glorious future; it will guide the transition from Swarajya (self rule) to Swarajya (good governance)"<sup>30</sup> The Indian are defined in terms similar to those of Savarkar as that person who 'regards this land as ours, this Bharat Bhoomi, that stretches from the Indus to the seas as his sacred motherland'<sup>31</sup> and this point is further elaborated in relation with the issue of Ayodhya:

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<sup>30</sup> *Bhartiya Janata Party, 'For a strong and prosperous India', Election Manifesto 1996, New Delhi, p.6*

<sup>31</sup> *ibid p.7*

Hindutva is a unifying principle which alone can preserve the unity and integrity of our nation. It is a collective endeavor to protect and re-energize the soul of India, to take it into the next millennium as a strong and prosperous nation".<sup>32</sup> The election manifesto also says that 'on coming to power, the BJP government will facilitate the construction of magnified Shri Ram Mandir at Somnath, than in Ayodhya which will be a tribute to Bharat Mata. This dream moves millions of people in our lands: the concept of Rama lies at the core of their consciousness."<sup>33</sup> According to this philosophy, 'desh' an 'dharma' are inseparable. It is this identification of religion with nation that will give India strength and length of life. It was also because of this that India had been able to save herself from the onslaught of foreign rulers, religions and cultures.

## VII. HINDU NATIONALISTS IMAGINATION OF A NATION

The spokesman for Hindu Nationalism stresses the unity of the Hindus at the cultural level. In this instance we can cite Advani's statement: "Ram is a binding factor for unity and integrity of the country since he is a part of the Indian tradition and culture".<sup>34</sup> A strong emotional issue was built up on Ayodhya. The religious dimension of this sentiment exists primarily in the name of Ram in North India because of the Ramlila and the Ramcharitmanas and other religious ambience surrounding the Ramayana itself. The great mission of founding a nation and a country was said to have been completed when the king of Ayodhya made victorious entry into Ceylon and brought the whole land stretching from Himalayas to the sea under one sovereign ruler. While the founding of a

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<sup>32</sup> *ibid* p.15

<sup>33</sup> *ibid*.p.15

<sup>34</sup> *Times of India*, 2 July 1992, p.11.



nation was said to have completed thus, the real birthday or national day was said to be when the horse of victory returned to Ayodhya and loving allegiance was sworn to the king.

Stories of Hindus who have sacrificed their lives and their valours were told to the public. The first aggressor was said to be the notorious king of Lanka and the latest the King Babur and his general Mir Baqi. The Hindu history of Aydhoya was full of the story of foreign aggression, valour of the nations, the eternal Hindu activism and sacrifice. Tough black stones pillars were said to have been used for building the ancient shri Ram Temple. And these pillars are said to stand for Hinduism, Hindu culture and spirit, not just Aydhoya. They are revered as the symbol of eternal, undefeated Hindu nation. 'Interestingly, however, the recent Hindu history of Ayodhoya- which may also be described as the Hindu history of India- is not about the construction of Ram Janmabhoomi temple. It is about its destruction. To that extent, it is a history, not of the temple, but of the mosque built upon it---not of the greatness of 'The Hindu' but of the evilness of 'The Muslims'.<sup>35</sup> The Muslims are projected as evils, foreigners, invaders and irreligious beings who may be seen to be scheming, greedy, lustful and bigoted. Whereas the Hindus are said to be tolerant, hospitable, liberal and part of the divine. Hindus 'construction' of the original Ram Janmabhumi temple, and its destruction represent these different orders the divine and the mundane.

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<sup>35</sup> Gyanendra Panday, 'The New Hindu History', South Asia Vol. XVII, Special issue, 1994 p.108.

Muslim rulers are demonized. The period before the advent of the Muslim rulers is represented as the golden age of progress in economic, social, cultural and intellectual fields. The Muslims rulers are accused of bringing destruction and catastrophe to this civilized nation. The period, in which they ruled India, is seen as age of barbarity, forced conversion, cultural decay, religious repression and economic collapse. Temples were destroyed throughout the land and looted

A large gathering of the Hindu religious leaders was convened by VHP in April 1984 at Delhi called Dharam Sansad (Assembly of the faith). In this meeting an unanimous call was made to liberate the temples in Mathura, Varanasi and Ayodhya, but the Ram Janmabhoomi in Ayodhya was chosen before the temples in other places for initial focus. Ayodhya was chosen because, 'Ayodhya juxtaposes two figures well known to most people in north India-Ram and Babur. God and human, they are made to stand for two religious- 'Hinduism ' and 'Islam' in a lopsided manner.<sup>36</sup>Ram serves the rhetorical purposes of the VHP better than any other deity of the Hindu pantheon, certainly better than the lovable – but untrustworthy Krishna or the often remote and nonhuman Shiva.<sup>37</sup>

A strong rhetoric is also directed against the secular Hindus. Secularists are accused of acting as a Trojan horse weakening India from within. In their discourse only Hindutva alone can provide the spirit for nation's survival. The BJP effectively denounced the official Congress secularism as 'pseudo-secularism.' It is 'pseudo'

<sup>36</sup> Vinoth Ramachandra, *Faiths in Conflict? Christian Integrity in a Multicultural World*, (Secunderabad: O.M Books, 2000), p.55.

<sup>37</sup> Richard H.Davies, 'The Demography of Ram's Chariot' in David Ludden (ed), *Making India Hindu: Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), P.35.



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because it does not respect the wishes of the Hindus who constitute the overwhelming majority, but only 'Pampers' the Muslims and other minorities. They also criticized it because it does not live up to the expectation of equal respect for all religion. Accordingly true secularism should be based on the Hindu philosophy of 'Sarva dharma Samabhav'. The BJP argued that true secularism means rule by the Hindu majority according to ancient Hindu principles.

The worldview of the present Hindu nationalism is derived from the ancient glory of Hindu civilization. The west is thus essentially and inherently Greco – Roman-Christian, the Arab world is Islamic, China is Confucian/sinic, and India is fundamentally Hindu.<sup>38</sup> They also assert India's spiritual superiority and offer it as a spiritual corrective to the materialist and hedonist west. The desire to become a strong nation and recognized by the neighbors and the west is upper most in their minds. For this a homogenous nation is seen as a sign of strength. And to achieve this all the impurities are to be removed. Therefore the removal of the mosque only amounts to what every people will do in order to shed the chain of oppression. Jai Dubashi in Dec 16,1990.wrote in Organizer that, if it is right to pull down Hitler columns in England, and Lenin Mausoleums in Russia, I see nothing wrong in pulling down a Babur's monument in Ayodhya. He accused Nehru for the division of the Akhand Bharat, who was to eager to please the British and imitated them completely ignoring the national culture. Hindu nationalist fetishisation of national strength and honor, and at the same time of being a virtuous and pure Hindu nation can only be achieved by displaying strength and determination. Such slogan as 'we are

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<sup>38</sup> Thomas Blom Hansen, ' *Globalization and Nationalist Imaginations: Hindutva's promise of Equality through difference* ', Economic and political weekly, March 9, 1996, p.609.

reduced to beggars', 'we lack work culture', 'India will not allow itself to be raped', 'the west needs India', etc are used to regenerate new spirit among the masses.

In culture, economics, and politics the discourse of the Hindu nationalist appeals to the middle class audiences of India. It has a brahmanical undertone in its appeal to patriotic selflessness and devotion, recovery of ancient values and prides, its fantasies of strength and honor. This isolation is also its historical problem. The most effective instrument of arousing the feelings of the urban middle classes, slum dwellers and rural communities is to systematically 'demonize' Muslims as threat to the Hindus as individual, community and nation. Islam is portrayed as aggressive and intolerant, and anathema to any form of civilized society. They view their religious identity as more important than the national identity and hence accused of being anti-national more attached to Islamic countries and a threat for India. They are also seen as anti-democratic for by sacrificing the individual choice they vote en bloc to further their own community interest. Muslims are depicted as anti-modern and patriarchal because of their treatment of their women and their refusal to practice family planning. It is said that the masculine 'excess' of the Muslim community weakens the Hindu community. It is believed that Muslim population growth threatens to overpower Hindus and to dominate the India policy with a regressive and anti-modern culture. India Muslims are seen as a stumbling block for the full realization of modernity in India. They are seen as a source for the dislocation of the Indian nation.

The construction of Hindu-Muslim antagonism resulted into depicting the Indian Muslim as an impediment for the Hindus in their path of realizing what Hindus really are.

And only removing completely this obstacle can solve this. The Hindu Nationalists question whether the Muslims can place the national interests of India above Islamic interests. They stress that the concept of Indian nationalism based on liberal democracy and Fabian socialism might have been unsuitable for the Hindus, but it could not have been acceptable to the Muslims. According to this view, 'the concept of nationalism.... is fundamentally alien to Islam, emphasizing as it does loyalty to the rival principle of international ummah.'<sup>39</sup>

But the nationalists are not anti-modern form of religious affirmation. They do not intent to take back India to a medieval period. Rather they want a strong India that will embrace scientific and technological fruits of modernity. They are anti-secularists, anti-pluralists, but not anti-democratic. Their understanding of democracy is of 'majority rule'. And since the Hindus constitute the majority of Indian population, they are certain that this numerical advantage will give them continuous comfortable majority in the event of elections. From the above discussion, it becomes clear that BJP is committed to, "One culture, one people, one nation and the rule of law." The Nehruvian model of economic development and secularism are seen as imported and hence not suitable for this country. They are undeniably committed to the making of India a strong nation that will occupy a rightful place among the comity of nations. But India must become powerful in its own way. In their view, nation is seen as a corporate entity and its strength depends on the individuals working in that corporation.

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<sup>39</sup> Girilal Jain, '*Secularism and Nehruism*', in M.M.Shankdher (ed.), *Secularism in India: Dilemmas and Challenges*, (New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications, 1992). P.123.

## CHAPTER: TWO

### THE RSS AND THE BJP

The founder of RSS emphasized and demonstrated the value of discipline. Its founder, Dr. Hedgewar had the belief that the building of a nation was beyond the capacity of political parties and politicians. He was of the view that the future of a nation lay secured only in the hands of those individuals, who can sacrifice personal gains for the common good of all. Hedgewar greatly stressed on the educational role of the RSS, commonly known as the character building. This overemphasis on character building led some of its senior leaders who wanted a more activist role, left the organization. Hedgewar permitted RSS members to participate in political activities in their individual capacity. He himself participated in the Congress satyagraha of 1931 called by Mahatma Gandhi. But he tried his best to keep RSS away from politics.

Hedgewar also maintained a close relationship with the Hindu Mahasabha. Many have thought that RSS might become the youth wing of the Maha Sabha. But RSS remained nonpolitical. Savarkar was trying to turn the Mahasabha into a political party at a time when Hedgewar was seeking to insulate the RSS from politics.<sup>1</sup> The relationship between the RSS and the Maha Sabha was not good. And this trend of sour relationship between the RSS and the Mahasabha continued even after Hedgewar's death. After his death, the leadership of the organization was taken over by Gowalker. Gowalker was strictly apolitical. He had a saintly dispensation in his

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<sup>1</sup> Walter K. Andersen and Shridhar D. Damle, *Brotherhood in Saffron: The RSS and Hindu Revivalism*, (New Delhi: Vistaar Publication, 1987), p. 40.

nature. Savarkar did not like the ascetic lifestyle of Gowalkar. Whereas the members of the RSS were not in a position to accept Savarkar as the supreme leader of the Hindus as considered by some of the Savarkar's followers. His saintly style convinced many that the RSS had become more concerned with character building.

The RSS earned enormous goodwill during the partition of India. They organized rescue squad to save the helpless Hindus, protected their house, organized relief camps and helped them to settle in their new country. The activities of the RSS helped to bolster the confidence among the demoralized Hindus. There was a widespread sympathy for the RSS among the refugees. They were convinced that the RSS was genuinely concerned with the welfare of the Hindus. But the assassination of Gandhi on January 30, 1948, by Nathuram Vinayak Godse represented a remarkable twist of turn for the RSS. Nathuram Godse was preciously a member of the RSS. But at the time of assassination he was the editor of a pro-Mahasabha newspaper in Pune. Because of his past background, the government suspected the RSS and the Mahasabha. All the leaders of the two were arrested including Gowalkar, and the RSS was banned. RSS officers from all level of organizations were arrested. Government imposed a strict ban on RSS. Even those suspected of participating in RSS activities were not spared. RSS records and funds were confiscated, properties and equipments were impounded

## **I. ENTRY INTO POLITICS**

Subsequently the ban was lifted, but with great difficulty. The ban on it was lifted when it gave an undertaking to respect the Constitution and the National Flag, to confine itself only on cultural field, to eschew politics, to work according to a

written constitution and to admit minors only with specific permission of their parents.<sup>2</sup> A section of the RSS leader began to realize that it was an organization with mass following but with no political voice. A need was felt to have a political party closet to the ideology of the RSS. After independence, there was a need to reassess the programmes and policies of the RSS. RSS had become a national organization and the leaders of this organization wanted to participate in the country's development. Many young leaders of the RSS strongly began to demand that the RSS should come out from its narrow character building activity and become a more dynamic organization. Some wanted RSS to support the Hindu Mahasabha whereas the other wanted it to support the Congress. To salvage the image of the RSS, it began to involve in various social welfare activities. But there were also some activists who were also interested to involve in political activities.

There was an increasing demand especially from the younger generations of the RSS that it should also participate in the political activities. For them political activities cannot be kept aside to achieve the national objective of the RSS. Political objective become one of the most contentious issues in the post-ban period. It arouses considerable internal disagreement because the leaderships had to recast the entire strategy and goal of the RSS. Article 4 (b) of the RSS constitution states that the RSS, "had no politics and is devoted to purely social work"

But at this juncture, Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee who had resigned from Hindu Mahasabha and Nehru cabinet attracted the attention of the RSS. He did not

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<sup>2</sup> D.R. Goyal, *Rashtirya Swaym Sevak Sengh*, (New Delhi: Radhakrishna Prakashan (p) Ltd, 2000), p. ii.



agree with the Mahasabha for its policy of excluding non-Hindus. His disagreement with Nehru was over the latter's policy of peaceful negotiation with Pakistan. The cooperation of RSS and Mahasabha was virtually ruled out because of V.D. Savarkar's dislike for Gowalkar. At this time Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee emerged as a tall figure to rely upon. The party 'resulted from a combination of a partyless leader, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, and a leaderless party, the RSS'.<sup>3</sup> This marks the entry of the RSS into politics either by proxy or by remote control.

But Gowalkar was initially unwilling to back any new political party. Gowalkar also wanted an assurance from Mukherjee that his views on Bharatiya Rashtravad (India Nationalism) was not different, but compatible with the RSS views. Gowalkar allowed several pracharaks to assist Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee in establishing the Jana Sangh in 1951. Gowalkar might have done this to satisfy those activists who wanted to participate in political activities or to support a political party that will be of help to the RSS. The first state unit of BJS was formed by a group of RSS activists in Jalandhar in May 1951. RSS pracharak were selected to spread out the party branches in other states. RSS activities took the leading role in organizing the new party in various regions. The new party resembled the RSS in terms of its organizational structure. The RSS members occupied most of its important posts at different levels. Gowalkar did not want to institutionalize the relationship between the RSS and the BJS. Gowalkar and other leaders of the RSS wanted to keep the RSS outside politics, but he wanted to exercise some moral influence over the new party.

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<sup>3</sup> Craig Baxter, *The Jana Sangh: A Biography of an Indian Party*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1969), p.54.

## II. SPECIFICITIES OF THE BJP AS A POLITICAL PARTY

The Bhartiya Janata Party began as a modest party. The name-Bhartiya Janata Party was adopted to emphasize the continuation of real Janata traditions, both in ideology and political aspiration. The leadership of the party made a conscious effort to distance itself from the legacy of the Jana Sangh. It was necessary for the party to expand geographically and demographically to capture power at the center. In his inaugural address delivered in December 1980 in Bombay, for instance, Atal Behari Vajpayee, the founding president of the party, stressed that the Bhartiya Janata Party was not simply a new name for the former Jana Sangh and added that it represented the inspiration of Narayan.<sup>4</sup> Bharatiya Janata Party was born under a circumstance over which it had no control, circumstances which were both tragic and grotesque. Tragic because they marked the shattering of Jaya Prakash Narain's dream of building a party which was to be a national alternative to the Congress and was meant to safeguard the interests of the poor: grotesque because a set of dubious politicians without a political base but with unlimited and unprincipled ambition succeeded in destroying a mass party.<sup>5</sup>

The RSS is the driving force behind the project of establishing a fascistic Hindu Rashtra. Though it claims to be apolitical, it is the RSS which provides the political and ideological direction to the saffron brigade, be it the Vishwa Hindu Parishad in the arena of mass mobilization on religious issues or the Bahrtiya Janata Party in the realm of electoral politics.<sup>6</sup> The RSS has a misplaced nostalgia about the

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<sup>4</sup> Atal Behari Vajpayee, *India at the Crossroads*, (New Delhi: Bhartiya Janata Party Publications, 1980) p. 2

<sup>5</sup> Gurdas M. Ahuja. *BJP and the Indian Politics: Policies and Programmes of the Bhartiya Janata Party* (New Delhi: Ram Company, 1994), p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> Sitaram Yachury, *The RSS*, World Focus. Feb- March. 1995, p. 16.

glorious past of India. It is the relationship with the RSS, which makes BJP a very unique party in Indian Politics. It projected itself as the most patriotic organization, but in reality, the RSS's concept of nationalism is full of negative aspects. In the name of character building, it indoctrinated the minds of the young to target the minorities. The RSS leadership wants to influence the political direction of the country without directly participating in the electoral process. To this end, the BJP is controlled by the RSS. Because of this the RSS has been able to escape and kind of accountability. At least three Commission of Inquiries –Reddy, Vythayathil, Venugopal – have found RSS inspiration behind anti- Muslim and anti- Christian riots.<sup>7</sup> The RSS has various affiliated organizations working in various fields. The RSS will confine itself to 'cultural activity' whereas its various other organizations would branch out into the various sections spreading the message of Hindu Rashtra. The concept of Hindu Rashtra is an extremely patriarchal, hierarchical and upper-cast controlled project.

The strategy has helped the organization to hide its political intentions and confused its opponents. The party on the other hand provided the organization with effective cover to infiltrate into various walks of national's life without encountering any handicap, which it would have encountered as a political party. The RSS on the other hand boosted its political fortune by creating Hindu vote bank by sharpening communal cleavages among religions communities.

Today, RSS is BJP's Rajguru.<sup>8</sup> The concept of Rajguru dates back to mythology. Its verdict is unquestionable and willingly carried out by the ruler. It is also

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<sup>7</sup> ibid 16.

<sup>8</sup> The RSS has been described a the Rajguru not by its detractors but by one of its ardent followers, K. R. Malkani. He said RSS stands above and beyond politics.

beyond reproach and human frailty. Where the rulers were accountable to the people for their acts of omission and commission, the latter were not. It was thus an institution above rulers. India, the largest democracy in the world today, has the unique distinction (if the phenomenon could be so called) of having a party – The Bharatiya Janata Party or BJP – which proudly claims to have a rajgurru and yet enjoys the right of acquiring power to govern the country.<sup>9</sup> Now the party, nourished and nurtured by the RSS has become the alternative to the party that led India to freedom and ruled for almost a half century. The party wants to project as a party with a difference. However, the party has not been very different from other parties in the political field in matters of factionalism within the party, corruption, power struggle and breaking promises to the people. The only difference it has, is its relationship with the RSS. It is also important to note that the RSS ideologue Golwalker had great admiration for the Nazis. The techniques and approaches of the RSS wholly resembled that of the fascists.<sup>10</sup>

The RSS has a definite political aim though it claims itself to be a cultural organization. It is against the present Constitution of India and has wanted to rewrite again which will be in accordance with the vision of its founding father. The RSS members have been working only for the BJS and BJP though it says that they are free to join any political party. The BJP is no different from the RSS. The RSS does not draw its members from the BJP and other organizations, rather the members of the RSS are recruited by different organizations. These cadres in turn control the fronts on behalf of the parent organization. “The Bharatiya Jan Sangh”, wrote Craig Baxter in

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<sup>9</sup> D.R. Goyal. *RSS*, op. cit. p.ii.

<sup>10</sup> For detail, please see, Govind Sahay, *RSS: Hitler's Heirs*, (New Delhi: Sampradayikta Virohi 1976).

1968, “enjoys a unique position among the national political parties of India”, three decades later, this is equally true of the Bharatiya Janata Party, both the legal and natural heir of the erstwhile Jan Sangh.<sup>11</sup> Some leaders of the party wanted to project party as the true inheritor of Jai Prakash Narayan’s legacy, but as long as it functions as the appendix of the RSS it cannot achieve that goal.

Today the greatest threat poses by the rising tide of Hindutva is the plural cultures of India. Hindutva is a monolith force. Hindutva in fact, represents the socio-politics of the neo-elites of post-colonial societies, which emerged out of colonial diplomacy, belonging to the majority religio-socio-cultural segment and eager to achieve hegemonic position to establish their domination within the colonially demarcated nation-state and to mobilize ethno-religious movements by adopting suppressive, hegemonic tactics to create monolith religio-ethnic identity by destroying plural identity of real existence, for a chauvinistic unity to gain power.<sup>12</sup> The RSS is the architecture of such an aggressive ideology and the BJP is the political wing of the RSS entrusted with the task of translating this ideology into political action. Hindutva wants to change India into one cultural entity. However, India is a multi-cultural and multi-religious country. It has 1652 languages (including dialects), 190 religions (including different religious sects), 26 states (the states comprises of different regions claiming autonomy) and 3742 castes.<sup>13</sup> Hindutva attempts to cement this diversity into a unified whole. In their lexicon the meaning of Indian nation is synonymous with

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<sup>11</sup> K.K. Bharadwaj, *An Open Government: Scenario Political Parties and Ninth Lok Sabha*, (New Delhi: ABC Publication House, 1990), p . 117.

<sup>12</sup> Kiran Saxena, ‘*Hindutva of the Sangh Pariwaqr and the Plural Society of India*’, in Arun K. Java and Bhupan Sarmah (eds), *Class, Ideology and Political Parties in India*, (New Delhi: Sout Asian Publications Pvt. Ltd., 2002). P.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.* 169.

‘Hindu Nation’ or ‘Hindu culture’’. In this way, Hindutva is basically attempting to impose its view on the plural society of India.

### III. THE BJP AS THE POLITICAL ARM OF THE RSS

Atal Bihari Vajpayee while visiting the RSS headquarters at Nagpur on August 27, 2000 observed that, ‘There should be no confusion over politics of rashtra nirman (nation building). There are no fundamental differences between RSS and BJP but views and opinions of individual may differ’.<sup>14</sup> Vajpayee further stated that: “I am Prime Minister today but may not remain tomorrow. But I was a Swayam Sevak yesterday and will remain one till my death”.<sup>15</sup> He had joined the RSS shakha in Gwalior in 1939. On August 11, 2000 Vajpayee and Advani offered a month’s salary as guru dakshina at a function held at Murli Manohar Joshi’s residence in New Delhi. Doubtless, all the three, and other senior BJP leaders beside had taken the RSS pledge which reads thus: Remembering Almighty God and my forbears, I take this oath. For the betterment of my sacred Hindu religion, Hindu culture, and Hindu community, I will devote myself to the prosperity of my Holy Motherland. I swear that I shall serve the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh with my body, my mind, and my money. I will be faithful to this oath throughout my life.<sup>16</sup> RSS remained for a long time in the periphery of Indian politics with a distinction for its ever willingness to participate in communal violence. It has taken for itself the task of teaching lesson to the minorities, especially the Muslim of where they belong.

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<sup>14</sup> A.B. Vajpayee: *The Indian Express*, New Delhi, August 28, 2002 p.3.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in A.G. Noorani; *The RSS and the BJP, A division of Labor*, (New Delhi: LeftWood, 2000), p.5.

BJP had come to power by using the vast organizational network of the RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal etc. Today BJP represents the political front of the Hindu Joint family as was done by Bharatiya Jana Sangh before. BJP was formed in April 1980. Initially, the BJP tried to project itself as different from BJS. It also deliberately moved away from RSS. But it lost little time to return to its old identity. Rajiv Gandhi's decision to open the lock at the gate of Babri Masjid in February 1986 gave the BJP a shot in the arm. It was feared by the party that the Congress party will pull away the RSS as well as the 'Hindu vote' toward them. The Palampur resolution helped the party to regain the Hindu identity of the party. In his presidential address at the 9-11 May 1986 annual party session Advani emphasized the BJP's Jana Sangh roots.<sup>17</sup> In 1989 election, the RSS cadres worked whole-heartedly for the BJP and the party gained 88 seats compared to 2 seats in 1984.

Hindutva has become an instrument in the hands of Sangh Parivar to capture political power and gain political legitimacy in a democratic political system. The BJP without Hindutva is a hollow and rotten shell.<sup>18</sup> BJP cannot be understood without its ideology of Hindutva and an ideology which is religio-cultural is carried forward by the activists of the multiple organizations of the joint family of the Hindus. The key to the understanding of the BJP lies in unraveling the essential reality of the RSS. Every luminary of the RSS is trained by the RSS and once the RSS certifies about their strong Hindu credential leaders can rise in the hierarchy of Hindu organization.<sup>19</sup> During the cabinet formation of 1998 and 1999, the BJP's team of council of Ministers was cleared and approved by the RSS leadership. It is also not without any

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<sup>17</sup> Advani: *Indian Express* (Delhi) 13 May, 1996.

<sup>18</sup> C.P. Bhambri: *Bharatiya Janata Party: Periphery to Centre*, ( New Delhi: Shirpa Publications, 2001) . p. XIX.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid* p.7.

reason that during the Janata Party rule of 1977-79, the BJP nominees in the government were A.B.Vajpayee and L.K.Advani, the two important members of the RSS. The RSS exerted influence on both policy and personal selection without abandoning its apolitical orientation. The BJP has a commitment to the ideology of Hindu Rashtra and it has a committed an army like trained and disciplined cadre of the RSS to spread and propagate its ideology. The RSS is the most valuable asset of the BJP. The BJP is different from every other political party of India because of its exclusionist Hindu ideology. It self confidently preach the Hindutva ideology.

RSS claims itself to be a cultural organization but is in control of a political organization. Its control extends from choice of personal to the framing of policies. According to Kalyan Singh, 'I have spent a greater part of my life in this organization [RSS] and I can say that right from the distribution of election tickets [to candidates] in BJP to selecting cabinet Ministers, it is only the RSS which calls the shots. What else is political activity'.<sup>20</sup> If we look at the remark of some leaders, sometimes this kind of interference is taken with a pince of salt by the political leadership. A senior minister with strong RSS links said, ' I am ideologically close to the RSS you know. But it is becoming impossible to function at government level and it's not just the ideological gaps with the NDA agenda. Sangh functionaries are interfering in things as basic as postings and transfers of officials, for instance. You cannot take a step without them.'<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Kalyan Sing Feb 8, Aligarh qouted in A.G. Noorani: *The RSS and the BJP*, op. cit. p.12.

<sup>21</sup> *Times of India* (Delhi) Monday October 28,2002 p.9.



The relationship between the RSS and the BJP can be studied from two aspects. First, we can study it by analyzing the background of the BJP'S leadership and their close connection with the RSS. The second is by looking into the policies pursued and implemented by the BJP emphasis their sameness with the Sangh Parivar. Since it is not possible to study the background of all the BJP leadership, I will focus on some of the top leadership of the party, such as, A.B. Vajpayee, L.K.Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, Pramod Mahajan, Rajmata Vijaya Raje Scindia, Sunder Singh Bhandari, Krishan Lal Sharma etc. They are the senior most leaders of the party and also the future of the party squarely lay on their shoulders.

A.B.Vajpayee: He is one of the best-known leaders of the BJP. He is an expert, an extremely charismatic and flexible person. During his earlier life, he was a founding member of the Bhartiya Jana Sangh. He was president of Jan Sangh from 1968 to 1973 and leader of the Jan Sangh parliamentary party from 1957 to 1977. He joined the RSS in Gwalior and had a long and close association with the RSS. But in spite of this he never gave the impression of being a spokesman of Hindu nationalism. In BJP he is seen as a liberal face. He is sometimes misunderstood by his party men and his opponents. According to Subramian Swamy, a harvard educated economist and a former colleague of Vajpayee, 'Vajpayee is as wishy-washy as Nehru was, I don't think he has any ideology'.<sup>22</sup> However in recent interview he admitted that; there is no difference between Hindutva and being Indians...[as the very] basis of Bharatiya [Indianness] is Hindutva"<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Quoted from Janardhan Jhalam, *All the Janata Men* (New Delhi, Vikas) 1978 p.137 in Yogendra K.Malik and V.B.Singh : *Hindu Nationalists in India; The rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party*, (Boulder: Westriew Press, 1994), p.12.

<sup>23</sup> *Panchjanya*, March 29, 1992 p.1

Lal Krishan Advani: Advani also came from the RSS. Before joining the Janata Party, he was the general secretary and the president of the Jan Sangh. Advani is, 'described as blessed with an analytical mind, endowed with enormous powers of logic, and possessing killer instincts, which Vajpayee lacks.'<sup>24</sup> In 1986 he took over as the president of BJP from A.B.Vajpayee. He advocated the cause of Hindu nationalism in its purest form with a clear electoral strategy. He has little mercy for Nehruvian concepts. He believed that 'India is what it is, because of its ancient heritage. Call it Hindu or Bharatiya. If nationalism is stripped of its Hinduness, it will lose dynamism.'<sup>25</sup> He joined the RSS at the age of 15 and was actively involved in the RSS activities in Rajasthan. His technique of mass mobilization and his brand of nationalism have created fear in the hearts of the minorities, specially the Muslims.

Murli Manohar Joshi: He was the president of the party in 1991. He was accused of trying to build a base for himself. Earlier Joshi was active in ABVP. He rose through the RSS and the BJP. He is considered as a party hardliner, close to Vishwa Hindu Parisad (VHP-World Hindu Council), a Hindu revivalist organization, and favors adopting a militant and unambiguous Hindu stand on political and social issues.<sup>26</sup>

Sunder Singh Bhandari: He was a former RSS pracharak and hailed from Udaipur city of Rajasthan. He joined the RSS at the age of Seventeen. He still has unrestricted access to the inner recesses of the RSS. He is also known as the "Ambedkar of the BJP" due to his contributions to the formulation of the party

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<sup>24</sup> Pramod Mahajan, February 27, 1992 in Yogendra K. Malik & V.B.Singh, op. cit. p.40.

<sup>25</sup> *Sunday observer*, January 7, 1991 p.5.

<sup>26</sup> Yogendra K. Malik and V.B. Singh, op. cit. p.44.

constituion.<sup>27</sup> In his capacity he had served on the deputy leader of the Janata Party in Rajya Sabha. All India General Secretary of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh etc.

Pramod Mahajan: He is one of the rising stars of the party. He possesses the oratorical skill of Vajpayee and organizational efficiency of Advani. He was also a former a RSS pracharak. He was active in Jan Sangh, ABVP and the Bharatiya Janata Party Yuva Morch. He has the reputation of being an alert and active MP and one of the most eloquent speakers of the parliament.

Besides these key national leaders there are several old and young leaders working at the State level, who exercise considerable influence within both the BJP and the RSS. Some of them are, Bhairon Singh Sekhawat from Rajasthan, Kashubhai Thakre from Madhya Pradesh, Baldev Prakesh of Punjab and Kedarnath Sahni of Delhi. From among the young members Arun Jaitly from Delhi, Sushil Modi from Bihar, and Narendra Modi from Gujrat are being groomed by the party's national leadership, They represent the advance, sophisticated and intellectual image of the party. There are also leaders like Uma Bharati, Vinay Katiyar, Mahant Avidyanath and Ashok singhal, all BJP MPs, who openly appeal to latent Hindu religious hatred and bigotry and create anti-Muslim hysteria. This group is especially popular with the lumpen element of Hindu society.<sup>28</sup> Their growing popularity is seen as a threat to the democratic and secular ethos of the country.

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<sup>27</sup> *Onlooker*, July 31, 1990 p.17.

<sup>28</sup> Yogendra K. Malik and V.B. Singh, op. cit. p.52.

From the above discussion it becomes clear that the commitments of these leaders to the ideology of Hindutva are unmistakable. BJP is the political face of the believers and practitioners of Hindu Rashtra. RSS and BJP are indistinguishable both at the level of organization and ideology because they are the two faces of Hindu Rashtra. Their relationship can also be examined by analyzing the kind of policies pursued by the BJP in power. The BJP has vigorously pursued the agenda of the RSS while in power. It must be stated here that the RSS had never agreed with the democratic, republican, federal and secular constitution of India. Vajpayee while campaigning during the Lok Sabha election of 1998 proposed a 'Presidential system' instead of the chronic instability of parliamentary democracy. In 1999 election, the party made a proposal for the 'Review of the Constitution of India'. The BJP government has appointed an eleventh member constitution Review committee. It deserve to be mentioned that the review of the working of the constitution has been an ongoing process during the last fifty years and there is absolutely no role for a commission appointed by the BJP government unless its task is to redefine the constitution for a 'unitary Hindu Rashtra' as desired by the RSS founding father.<sup>29</sup> At the instigation of RSS, the BJP has also launched a determined attack on the interpretation of Indian history by the so-called secularists and leftist historians.

Though RSS claims to be a cultural organization it remains the mentor and effective manipulator of a political party. The participation in politics helps them to interpret their ideology into political arena. It also comes as a great help for the RSS in times of crisis. BJP effectively protects RSS that it can continue to remain its greatest asset in the garb of 'cultural organization'. It is of this organization that Prime

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<sup>29</sup> C.P.Bhambri : *Bharatiya Janata Party: Priphery to Centre*, op. cit. p.39.

Minister Atal Bihari Vajpyee said on February 5, 2000. 'Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh is not a political outfit. It is a cultural and social organization and I do not think objections should be raised on anybody joining it'<sup>30</sup>. This was in defence of the Gujarat government's order permitting civil servants to become members of the RSS. The president objected to this amendment. Predictably, Union Home Minister L.K. Advani, not only defended the move, but proceeded to declare that the central Government would review the ban on its employees from participating in RSS activities.

The RSS is greatly influenced by the role of an enlightened sage. The sages are those men or women who lived in detachment from the world. They are the persons who have the authority to interpret the higher law and hence they are not bound by human law. Sometimes they can reject the human laws and traditions. Enlightened sage who possessed great insights stay in forests far away from human degeneration. But they were sought after by the kings of the time for advice and guidance in matter of law and governance. The sages were held in high esteem though they lived a simple life. And their words were taken as authority. The RSS, in present time, seeks to replicate the role of these enlightened sages. In other words, they want to hold an empire without becoming an emperor. In the words of Gowalker 'We have kept before ourselves the ideal of Bhagwan Shri Krishna who held a big empire under his thumb but refused to become emperor himself'.<sup>31</sup> And this ideal can fully realized if the BJP, kept under the RSS thumb, captures power as the 'national alternative'.

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<sup>30</sup> *ibid.* p. 50.

<sup>31</sup> quoted in A.G. Noorani, *The RSS and the BJP: A division of Labor*, op.cit.

In order to drum up the NDA coalition, the BJP temporarily removed from its three contentions issue. They are implementation of Uniform Civil code, abrogation of article 370 of the constitution and the construction of Ram Temple at Ayodhya. The BJP makes not secret of its intention that all these three will be implemented, if the party enjoys comfortable majority in the parliament. One can see, why the RSS is so understanding. They understand that the BJP is in the power game. And there is no question of BJP giving up the Hindutva ideology. The RSS is today spread out in every sphere of activity which influences social and political life of the country. The list is virtually endless. The most prominent among them are BJP in politics, VHP in religion, ABVP in student, Bajrang Dal in the youth, etc. These organizations play an important role for the survival of the BJP in the centre and the state governments. They also try to extract maximum benefit from the party.

Vishwa Hindu Parishad was founded in August 29,1964 in Mumbai. The VHP set up the Bajrang Dal in May-June 1984. The timing was in tune with its passing of resolution for the 'liberation' of the site of Ramjanmabhoomi in Ayodhya. RSS men have been put in charge of all the three organizations, the BJP, the VHP and the Bajrang Dal- Advani, Vajpayee, Murli Manohar Joshi of the BJP, Ashok Singhal of the VHP, and Vinay Katiyar of the Bajrang Dal. They are leading the assault on Indian polity and society. The BJP in its attempt to become a national alternative from other parties has not entailed a break from the RSS. Initially, during its infant stage it claimed to be real heir of the Janata Party of Jayaprakesh Narayan. But today they claim to be closer to the RSS and the Jan sangh. Speaking to an RSS gathering in coimbatore in 1990, Advani said: 'While in the case of the BJS the linkage with the RSS was only ideological, in the case of the BJP the linkage is both ideological and

historical.’ He asked his audience to realize that ‘the BJP which you described as a good party is good only because of its association with the RSS’<sup>32</sup>

BJP is also no different from VHP and the Bajrang Dal. Vinay Katiyar of Bajrang Dal was made the party president of the BJP in Uttar Pradesh. They are partners in a common enterprise run by their parent, the RSS. Peter Van Der Veer holds that ‘the political success of the BJP depends squarely on its alliance with two Hindu nationalist movements, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), an organization of religious leaders, and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). This alliance allows it to use religious discourse and mass – scale ritual action in the political area’. In 1989, the BJP made Ayodhya an ‘absolutely central’ issue, and: ‘At least from this point onward – and probably already in 1986-the political agenda of the BJP can not be separated from that of the VHP. There is a direct coordination of rituals, agitation and political manoeuvring by the high command of the BJP, the RSS, and the VHP who in fact overlap to a significant degree. Vajayee Raje Scindia is a vice president of the BJP and a leader of the VHP; Lal Krishan Advani and Atal Behari Vajpayee are leaders of the BJP, but have a background in the RSS; an important leader of the RSS, Manohar Dingle, has the VHP as his portfolio’.<sup>33</sup> Recently in Gujarat, the VHP and the BJP are seen as the main culprits responsible for putting up communally provocative posters on the eve of the state Assembly elections after the widespread communally riots. The EC had asked the Gujarat government to remove these posters.

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<sup>32</sup> The Telegraph, May 17,2000.

<sup>33</sup> Paten Van der Veer: *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.3-9.

Based on a field work in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, Virginia Van Dyke discusses in detail the relationship between the VHP Sadhus and the BJP. During the movement to build a temple to Lord Ram in a town in Uttar Pradesh, the Sadhus took the roles as spokesmen and instigators. 'There are implications for democracy as Sadhus ask for votes while accepting the reverence of the faithful coming to touch their feet...'<sup>34</sup> The BJP successfully used than as the symbol of Hindutva, The use of sadhu Sants during the 'Ram lahar' (Ram wave) of 1989 and 1991 had yielded impressive results for the BJP. The BJP-VHP-RSS combine brought the sants together in a common platform. The use made of political Sadhus by BJP underwent a restructuring-in 1996 a the BJP consciously distanced itself form the VHP, both because Hindu nationalist issues were failing to resonate with the votes, and because the Sadhus as individualistic and unruly sorts had proven difficult to control.<sup>35</sup> She wrote that earlier, there was even a 'VHP Qouta' for the party ticket in elections.

Richard H.Davis, in his incisive essay on the iconography of Rama's chariot notes how the VHP played a very important role in Advani's rath yatra in 1990. The procession was planned jointly, with the VHP leadership setting the stage and offering strategic advice behind the scenes. The Sangh campaign was an enormously successful mobilization in which an aggressive, risky and adept manipulation of cultural symbols through a variety of mass media provoked widespread popular response, transformed the marginal VHP into a major religio-cultural organization, and generated considerable electoral gains for the BJP.<sup>36</sup> The forces of Hindutva have

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<sup>34</sup> Virginia Van Dyke: *General Elections, 1996: Political Sadhus and Limits to Religions Mobilization in North India*, Economic and Political Weekly, Dec. 6, 1997 p.3149.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Richard H. Davis: *The Iconography of Rama's Chariot*; in David Ludden(ed), *Making India Hindu: Religions Community and the politics of Democracy in India*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.42.



catapulted priests and god-men to the political center stage turning the Dharam Sansad (Parliament of religion) and the Sant Sammelan (convention of Sants) into key determinants of decision making process. BJP is different from all other political parties not just because of its Hindutva ideology, but also because of the way it functions. In the case of other political parties, it is the party that founded various wings, such as; youth, women, social welfare, labor, culture etc. All the organizational wings of the BJP are not founded by it, but have their roots in the RSS and are accountable only to it. BJP exists as the offshoot of the RSS. Leaders trained in the RSS occupy the key positions in the party. The close relationship between the BJP on the one hand, and the RSS and the Sangh Parivar on the other is revealed by the fact that a key RSS leader Madan Mohan Devi liaises between the BJP and the parivar.

The BJP was also helped by the Bajrang Dal to propagate its ideology of Hindutva. The Bajrang Dal first came into the limelight in December 1985, when it called for a general strike in U.P to demand the removal of the lock on one of the gates of the Babri Masjid.<sup>37</sup> The Bajrang Dal had a central role in Advani's Rath Yatra. The Bajrang Dal's volunteers offered him a cup of their blood as a proof of their commitment and kept him company throughout. The riots that followed were their handiwork. At Ujjain they presented him with weapons, and as the scholar, prof Richard H. Davis of Yale, recorded, 'often welcomed him by applying a ritual mark (tilak) of blood on his forehead'.<sup>38</sup> He tried to humor them at times: 'what are these weapons (bows and arrows] in the days of the AK.47'. Paul Brass characterized it as "a fighting protection' squad for the other organizaions, a somewhat pathetic, but

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<sup>37</sup> Ashis Nandy, Shikha Tirvedy, Shail Mayaram and Achut Yagnik, *Creating Nationality: The Ramjanmabhoomi Movement and the Fear of the Self*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 97-98.

<sup>38</sup> Richard H. Davis, op. cit. p. 45.

nevertheless dangerous version of the Nazi S.A.”.<sup>39</sup> The Bajrang Dal consists mainly of uneducated lumpen in contrast to the thoroughly trained and disciplined cadre of the RSS.

In the 90s, the BJP gradually shifted from the ethno-religious mobilization of the Ramjanmabhoomi movement towards a softer policy. But this was only after considerable gains had been made from the Ayodhya issue. The party’s electoral performance in the 1996 election and afterward was not linked directly to the propagation of Hindutva as it was in the 1991 election. However there is a continued ambivalence between the ideological purity and political pragmatism in the Hindu nationalist movement. There is a little reason for BJP to give up its commitment to Hindutva. Free from the RSS influences the BJP may be set for a more independent course, but will also lose the widespread organizational infrastructure of the Hindu nationalist movement. BJP can ill afford this given the fact that many of its party, leaders come from the mother organization and its linked to RSS, VHP network has proved decisive for its recent growth. Now as before the BJP faces the same dilemma which Walter K.Andersen and Shridhar D.Damle mentioned in their book; ‘It is questionable if the BJP could survive politically without the RSS cadre, and the cadre will not stay unless the leadership of the party stays firmly in the hands of the “brotherhood”’.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Paul R.Brass: *Theft of an Idol*, (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1997), p.17.

<sup>40</sup> Walter D. Andersen and Shridhar D. Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron, The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*, (New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, 1987) p.177

## **CHAPTER: THREE**

### **THE RISE OF BJP**

#### **1. BJP A NEW VERSION OF BJS**

Bharatiya Janata Party was founded in April 1980 as a result of second split in the Janata Party after its defeat in the seventh general elections. It is a general opinion that Bahratiya Janata Party (BJP) is the new and modified version of the Bharatiya Jan sangh that was founded on 21<sup>st</sup> October 1951, under the presidentship of Dr. Shyamaprasad Mukherjee. The organizational backbone of Bharatiya Jan Sangh was the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) founded by Dr. Keshaw Baliram Hedgewar in 1925. The objective of founding the BJS was the rebuilding of Bharat as a modern, democratic society in accordance with religious precepts and four fundamentals of "One country, One nation, One culture and rule of law" BJS and RSS actively supported Jai Prakash movement, especially the anti-emergency from 1975-1977. On the eve of the 1977 General election, BJS dissolved itself to the newly formed Janata Party and became one of its major constituents. This new party swept to power in the strength of the anti-emergency wave.

However, the 'Janata experience' did not last long. Basic contradictions began to emerge and manifested in ugly personal bickering and factional fighting. The basic contradiction between the constituents gradually came to be known as the issue of "dual membership". A number of Janata leaders from the socialist stream objected to the practice of the former Jan Sangh members continuing to remain members of the RSS.

Due to their relationship with the RSS, they were accused as 'communal' and outside the mainstream of regular politics. They maintained that the members of the former BJS were guided by the RSS and hence they could not be the member of the Janata party and the RSS simultaneously. The Jan Sangh insisted that the RSS was a 'cultural' organization and there is no conflict with their political identity. It was feared that the Jana Sangh contingent, with its more disciplined organization and ideological (RSS) moorings, would use the Janata platform to increase its strength, infiltrate the state apparatus and further its ideological motives<sup>1</sup>. Janata party's defeat in 1980 elections and accusations continuing the members of the erstwhile BJS came out of the Janata and formed Bharatiya Janata Party.

Initially they tried to appear something new, as different from Bhartiya Jan Sangh. The new party (BJP) under the leadership of A.B Vajpayee who cultivated the image of liberal statesman, tried to fashion itself as a broadly centrist party inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, Jaya Prakash Narayan and Deendeyal Upadhaya. BJP consciously moved away from the RSS, partly because of the latter association with Gandhi's assassination. Vajpayee instead emphasized 'Gandhian socialism' and exhorted party cadres to concentrate on Sangathan, Sangharsh and Sanrachna (organization, struggle and constructive work) to build the party<sup>2</sup>. By and large the party was still on the making and seeking its identity.

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<sup>1</sup> Maneni Chatterjee, ' *The BJP: Political mobilization on Hindutva* ', South Asia Bulletin , Vol.XIV No.1(1994), p.15.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* p.15

## II. RETURN TO OLD IDENTITY

In the general election held in December 1984, a badly mauled BJP just won two seats in the Lok Sabha. This was the real turning point for the leadership of the party. Many began to ask the reason behind it. When the party was trying its best to shed its old Jan Sangh image, the Congress (1) under Indira Gandhi had started flirting with the “Hindu” vote. This was evident in the Jammu election of 1983. The 1984 election was held after the assassination of Indira Gandhi. Many opposition parties attributed the verdict as ‘Sympathy Wave, but to BJP it reflected something more fundamental. It indicated that the elusive “Hindu vote” which they had been chasing since independence and given up and lost, was actually in making.<sup>3</sup> Congress (1) under Rajiv Gandhi rose the bogey of the danger posed by minority secessionism succeeded in getting the ‘Hindu’ vote. The ‘nation in danger’ captured the hearts of many.

A committee was set up under general secretary Krishan Lal Sharma to study the cause of defeat. Many began to feel that the BJP had lost its earlier identity and hence must now come back to its old identity by coming closer to RSS. It seems that as Bharatiya Janata Party, contrary to Jan Sangh has lost some of the political ground which it has managed to capture on the Hindu platform with the help of RSS cadres. Many began to argue that it could have a future only if it returned to the old identity. Accordingly BJP’s main plank since 1985 has been the criticism of minorityism allegedly followed by congress governments. They emphasized national integration with the party

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<sup>3</sup> ibid

projecting itself as the voice of patriotism. It clearly emphasized that the nation's unity and progress could be ensured if the Hindus assert themselves more vigorously than they are. It was against this background that Advani took over as party president at the BJP's plenary session in New Delhi in May 1986.

### **III. A PARTY WITH CLEAR HINDU IDENTITY**

To signal the new path, the BJP decided to emphasize three demands from its old agenda: abrogation of Article 370 which recognizes Jammu and Kashmir's special status; the replacement of Minority Commission by a 'Human Rights Commission' and Uniform civil code. That the party is no longer feeling shy of its Hindu colors is brought out clearly in speeches lauding its RSS links and in the revival of the demand to ban Cow slaughter and above all building of 'Ram Temple' after demolishing 'Babri' Masjid'. The success of the strategy of revival of the Hindu factor was evident in 1989 elections when RSS cadres worked for the BJP whole heartedly and the party not only won 88 seats compared to two in 1984 but also emerged in formidable king maker.

Rajiv Gandhi's government decision to overturn the supreme court verdict on the Shaha Bano case by adopting the Muslim women's (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill in May 1986 and the opening of the dispute Ramjanmabhoomi temple at Ayodhya for public worship in February the same year greatly helped BJP in its effort to become a party of Hindu nationalism. Shaha Bano case was taken up as an example of the successive Congress government attempt to please the minorities so as to gain vote in election. The feeling that the congress party government is ever willing to accept and

implement the dictates of the orthodox religious leaders of the largest minority, coined as 'minorityism' by the BJP gained wide acceptance with in the majority community.

On June 1989 at Palampur, its National executive adopted a resolution on Ayodhya with an eye to general election due in November. It demanded that 'the sentiments of the overwhelming majority in this country- the Hindus 'be respected and' the site in dispute should be handed over to the Hindu and a mosque built at some other place. Immediately on the passing of the palampur resolution on Ayodhya on June 11 1989, Advani said, 'I am sure it will translate into votes'.<sup>4</sup> Advani has acknowledged with unconceded pride the dividends which this plank in the election campaign yielded to the BJP. According to the wing President of Vishwa Hindu Parishad BJP succeeded with their support. "We created the Hindu wave and the BJP capitalized on it by playing the Hindu card" he said.<sup>5</sup>

While it may be right to agree with some commentators that BJP gained on the basis of communal mobilization it was not wholly correct. BJP's electoral gains were also due to its organization, voters rejection of the congress, weakness of the left and Janata, and more so because of the failure of National government in 1989-1990. According to the analysis of election results of 1991 BJP leaders themselves came to the conclusion that the mood of the people was with them, not just because BJP built a big agitation for the Ram Temple, because the voters all over the country saw it as a well knit political party, with clean and candid policies which often promise an entirely new direction to

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<sup>4</sup> A.G.Noorani, *The RSS and the BJP: A Division of Labor*, (New Delhi: Leftwood, 2000), p.7.

<sup>5</sup> Bhaskar Ray, '*Pitching for Power*,' IndiaToday, February 28, 1990, p.50

Indian polity.<sup>6</sup> The 80s was a crisis time for India. The emergence of BJP is a rude answer to all the engulfing distortions. Religious mobilization was just one simple instrument used to capture the hearts of the people. The deeper factors are the various problems faced by India especially in the 80s.

#### **IV. REAPING THE DISCONTENTS**

The Congress had become deeply unpopular in the minds of the people because of corruption and inefficiency. In early 1987, the country was rocked by the 'Bofors Scandal' Swedish company Bofors, had paid kickbacks at the highest level of the Indian government to secure the sale of howitzers to India. Rajiv Gandhi initially hailed as 'Mr. Clean' rapidly lost his popularity. The successive Congress government under P.V. Narasimharao gave more distressing picture on corruption. All these scandals revealed the corruption of the ruling classes. V.P. Singh became an important rallying point for anti-corruption campaign. The political leaders were accused of sucking the blood of the umpteen numbers of poor people. The dismal performance of National front government in 1989-90 and the congress in 1991-1996 left people gasping for change. The BJP leadership took full advantage of the Blunders the rulers have been committing. They presented before the masses the clean image of its top leaders, and the party's not for sale' stock. In the absence of any other alternative people began to opt for such remedies. Over the last decade or so there has been a rapid debasement in the standards of public life in the country. The body politics has suffered on ideological vacuum. In this

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<sup>6</sup> Bhabani Sen Gupta, '*Power Shift*,' Economic and Political Weekly, June 29,1991,p.1583.



atmosphere of utter frustration and moral degradation, “Hindutva” appeared to a large number of the youth, as an easily understandable and a familiar ideology to hang on.<sup>7</sup>

Writer such Thomas Blom Hansen sees the rise of Hindu nationalism as a reaction against the growing process of globalization.<sup>8</sup> The influence of globalization is seen as having potentially destructive consequences for the social and cultural life. Western life style is particularly seen as pernicious for the locals. To control this they attempted to control the fragmentation of this social world. Diversity, which was earlier celebrated, is now seen by the advocates of Hindu Rashtra as a sign of weakness. A strong homogenous nation is seen as a sign of modernity, which will give strength, sovereignty, self-confidence and political integrity. With globalization Indian economy was integrated with the world market. Indian economy had to compete now at the global level. In this Indian economy, which was highly bureaucratized, planned and rigidly controlled ‘License Raj’ was found to be in bad shape. It was also revealed that the ‘third path’ India had taken which is a half way between capitalism and communism was unable to compete with other model of economic development. The sudden economic development of East and South East Asia helped all the more to realize that there was something really mistaken notion in the concept of plan economy. There was an increasing resentment, among the upward mobile strata of India’s population, against the under performing political and administrative machinery.

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<sup>7</sup> Upendra Baxi, “*High Discourse Vs People’s Truth*” Seminar No 385, Septmeber 1991, p.30.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Blom Hansen, ‘*Globalisation and Nationalist Imaginations: Hindutva’s Promise of Equality through Difference*’, Economic and Political weekly, March 9, 1996. p. 608.

BJP's rise to prominence is also because of the general rise of communalism in the country. They intentionally created an anti-Muslim Hindu vote bank to counter the Muslim vote bank. So-called Hindu-Muslim rifts were of extraordinary importance both before and during the election campaign. First of all, it precipitated communal polarization. This polarization was associated not only with a concentrating of Hindu voting for BJP, but a high turn out among Hindus as well. In contrast to the charges that Muslims were storing arms and attacking the workers, there were widespread report that Muslim voters felt intimidated to such an extent that they either did not turn out to vote at all or they turned out in very low numbers. The emphasis on riots and communal tension in the election also brought scheduled castes in some areas to the BJP. Many scheduled castes voters living in mohallas side by side with Muslims in cities and towns voted along with upper caste Hindu for the BJP.

Prosperity also bred resentment and anger by the traditionally better of upper caste. India in 1980s witnessed the highest economic growth rate in the last five decades. Moreover liberalization and this economic growth enormously expanded the opportunities for many Indians. There was a tremendous increase in agricultural production popularly known as 'Green revolution'. Many new input such s high yielding variety of seeds, use of modern technology and fertilizers, improvement in irrigation etc. were made resulting in rich harvest. Those educated at government's expenses also began to find public sector job. Such a massive social mobility in a strictly hierarchical society created social stress and bred envy and resentment. Old established Hindu middle classes, mostly from the upper literate and landed castes, suddenly see a whole range of Johnny

come latelies at their side who only yesterday were their inferiors in status and income, both low-caste folk and Muslims.<sup>9</sup>

It was at this time that the Hindu nationalist discourse evoked a broad popular response by portraying the non-Hindu minorities as 'other', which had prevented India from becoming a complete nation and thus prevented India from occupying a rightful place among the other strong nation of the world. The BJP after the Palampur resolution, on the face of being defeated by the congress becoming increasingly real, "embarked on a strident anti-Muslim discourse and a high-profile construction of Ram as the symbol Par excellence of the subdued true Hindu nationhood".<sup>10</sup> Muslims do not enjoy quotas in government job and education. The only 'privilege' they enjoyed is the right to regulate their own religious based family law, which allows multiple marriage and easy divorce. Though this is not a substantial privilege, but to the upper castes in the event of increasing threat to their position, it is easier to resent minority 'privileges' for Muslims than for other minorities. At present, though Muslims constituted 11 percent of India's population they are more vulnerable than the proportionately more numerous and politically more powerful marginalized section of the Indian society.

This attitude of hatred towards the Muslim has also economic cause. In the aftermath of the partition in 1947, many Muslim landlords and educated professionals who were mainly the descendants of the Mughal courts went to Pakistan. They left

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<sup>9</sup> Susanne H. Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph , ' *Modern Hate: How ancient animosities get invented* ', The New Republic, March 22, 1993, p. 24.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 26.

behind silk weavers in Banaras, gem cutters in Jaipur, poor cultivators and unskilled laborers, hewers of wood and drawers of water. The well to do Hindus businessman and professionals always expect the Muslims to serve them as tailors and bakers. They want them to stick to their traditional occupations weaving, gem cutting, brass tooling, etc.

Militant Hindus saw Muslim mobilization over the 'Shaha Bano affair' as a part of the same pattern as an earlier renewal of Islamic fundamentalism.<sup>11</sup> In their view, Indian Muslims were participants in the international Islamic revivalism, which had found expression in the Iranian revolution. The outbreak of war between Iraq and Iran was blamed on the expansion of the latter by the Organizer, where one could read that Iran's target is not just Iraq but the entire Muslim World.<sup>12</sup> "The idea that Indian Muslims were potentially the final link in this pan-Islamic front gained momentum on account of the increasing number of them who were finding employment in the Middle east and Persian Gulf. A large portion of India's guest workers is mainly Muslims. From their earnings they sent money to their poor relatives in India. The relatives built highly fashionable house. The money they sent was also used for constructing schools and mosques. This newly rich Muslims marched ahead rather than respectfully lagging behind.

However, militant Hindus' sense of insecurity was heightened in the wake of a series of conversions to Islam in south India in early 1981. Many observers attributed the

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<sup>11</sup> Christophe Jafferlot, *Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics, 1925 to 1990s*, (New Delhi: Viking, 1996), p.339.

<sup>12</sup> Organizer, 23 May 1982, p. 6.

conversations to the external funds available to Muslim proselytizing propaganda. From now on the underlying theme of all public discussions among militant Hindus was 'Hindu society under siege'. H.V.Seshadri wrote: 'It is to convert 10 crores of Hirijans to Islam and see that the Muslim percentage becomes sufficiently high to enable them to carve out, in the first instance, independent Islamic status in Bharat, and finally to Islamise the entire India.'<sup>13</sup> This feeling of vulnerability was discussed and communicated to other Hindus through the appearances of other threats such as Sikh separation, the influx of Immigrants, visit of Pope John Paul II etc. Thus early 1980s was marked by the emergence or reaffirmation of threats-real or perceived as such from the minority communities.

The educated middle class Indians have become both more assertive about being Hindu Indians and more anti-Muslim. Many will assert with a straight face and with apparent true belief that Muslims have been receiving 'special facilities' in India since independence in comparison with Hindus, that they are given attention in government offices before Hindus, that they are taking up arms, and that they are responsible for riots in the country in which innocent Hindus are killed.

## **V. MOBILISATION ON MANDAL AND MANDIR**

The electoral progress of the BJP at the general election in May-June 1991 was these two factors: Mandir (temple) and Mandal. On August 7,1990 without giving the BJP and the Communists Party any advance warning, V.P Singh announced the Report that 27% of posts in the center administration and public corporations be reserved for

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<sup>13</sup> Organiser, 16 May 1982. p.6.

OBC-would be implemented. It may be mentioned here that the Mandal Commission Report was first delivered to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1980. But neither Indira Gandhi nor Rajiv Gandhi dared to touch this politically explosive issue. It was Prime Minister V.P. Singh who announced the implementation of Mandal Commission Report. The announcement sparked violent protests across northern India (including self immolation by 75 young people) and led to Singh's parliamentary defeat in November 1990.<sup>14</sup> The Backward classes are mainly agricultural castes that have been mainly benefited by the Green revolution. They have been demanding jobs and education for decades. V.P. Singh realized the importance of this group as a political force. Their demands threaten the position of urban upper castes who respond to an appeal to Hindu identity, whose long tradition of literacy have given them the advantage in merit-based competitions, and who disproportionately control such jobs.<sup>15</sup> Upper castes student fearing of losing jobs opportunities took their protest to streets. The BJP sets out with a Hindu communal unity appeal.

The RSS reacted strongly to what it considered an attempt to exacerbate the internal division of the 'Hindu nation'. What V.P.Singh through Mandalisation of the society intends to achieve is a division of Hindus on forward, backward and Harijan lines.<sup>16</sup> In fact they were highly critical of reservation policy. "The havocs the politics of reservation is playing with the social fabric is unimaginable. It provides a premium for

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<sup>14</sup> John R. Wood, *'On the Periphery but in the Thick of it: Some Recent Indian Political Crisis Viewed from Gujarat'* in Philip Oldenburg (ed.), *India Briefing; Staying the Course*, (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), p. 36.

<sup>15</sup> Susanne H. Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph, *'Modern Hate: How Ancient Animosities get Invented'*, *The New Republic*, op. cit. p.26

<sup>16</sup> *Organiser*, 26 August 1990, p.1.

mediocrity, encourages brain drain and sharpens caste divide.”<sup>17</sup> On September 12, Advani announced his decision to undertake a 10,000 Kilometre rath yatra from Somnath in Gujarat to Ayodhya to mobilize mass support. The agitation on Ram temple was seen as an unifying element. Anti-Mandal sentiments reflect deep-seated concerns on the part of the upper caste groups about the growing threat to their economic and political power from the middle castes. The BJP could not openly reject the reservation policy though they were very much opposed to it for fear of alienating the OBC which constituted 52% of India population. The party then shrewdly dubbed the debate on reservations by launching its counter-offensive in the shape of Rath Yatra. The Rath Yatra erased any line that divided BJP and the advocates of fascist Hindu Rashtra bent on destroying the secular fabric of India. Thousands of men and women lined up on the roads in villages and towns to see the Rath and this new Avtar of an avenging Lord Ram. On December 12, the Babri Masjid was demolished in the presence of a galaxy of RSS, VHP and BJP leadership including Advani.

This party has come to power after it had plunged the country into turmoil and its president, L.K. Advani, had waded through the blood of his fellow countrymen during his Rath Yatra in 1990.<sup>18</sup> Behind the BJP’s religio-cultural rhetoric, however, there has always been cold political calculation. BJP leader Sushma Swaraj admitted in Bhopal on April 14, 2000 that the Ram Janmabhoomi movement was purely political in nature and had nothing to do with religion.<sup>19</sup> The goal of restoring the sacred city of Ayodhya to its

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<sup>17</sup> *ibid.* p.15.

<sup>18</sup> A.G. Noorani, *The RSS and the BJP: A Division of Labour* (New Delhi: Leftwood Books, 2000), p.2.

<sup>19</sup> The Telegraph, April 16, 2000.

prestigious position by rebuilding the temple, destroyed by the alien invaders, was far more potent in uniting the Hindus than the cow protection movement or any other earlier movement of the Hindu nationalists.<sup>20</sup> For most of the mobile middle class religion played a minor role compared to their opposition to the reservation policy and commitment to a more discipline form of politics and clear image of the BJP. These are the people whose values are based on merit gained through hard work and hence have no concern for the social needs of the lower classes. In 1993, an opinion poll conducted by MARY (a sample of 1,715 adults in Mumbai, Delhi, Calcutta, Madras and Bangalore, many of whom were probably from the middle class) revealed that 58% of interviews agreed with the following proposition: 'If the country is to progress it needs a dictator'.<sup>21</sup> This trend became increasingly apparent in 1990-1991 at a time when the BJP reaffirmed its faith in a presidential form of government intended to guarantee a stronger center.<sup>22</sup>

The politicization of Hindu sentiments ensured rich harvest to the BJP. This strategy helped to bury the class and caste disparity in the Hindu society, which otherwise will have ailed against the party. It directs popular discontent into essentially racist's channels thereby diverting it from challenging the cultural status quo with its attendant economic and status advantages for those at the top that the BJP leadership is genuinely committed to preserve.<sup>23</sup> The Ram Janmabhoomi movement helped BJP to penetrate to

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<sup>20</sup> Bruce Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics: The Origin and the Development of Bharatiyajana Sangh*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) in Yogendra K. Malik and V.B.Singh, *Hindu Nationalists in India: The Rise of Bharatiya Janata Party* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994). P.130.

<sup>21</sup> Sunday, 9 January 1994 , p.59.

<sup>22</sup> Statesman (Delhi) 16 January 1991 and 2 February 1991.

<sup>23</sup> Harold A. Gould, "*Mandal, Mandir and Dalit: Mixing class with ethno religions conflict in India's Tenth General election*" in Harold A. Gould and Sumit Ganguly (ed), *India Votes: Alliance politics and Minority government in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> general elections* (Delhi: Westview Press, 1990 ), p. 298.



the rural areas where as it had no hold before, where as the agitation on Mandal arouse the hearts of the upper caste to vote for the BJP. The Rath Yatra bestowed certain legitimacy to the Hindutva force. It helped to erase people's mind that it is unconstitutional, undemocratic and illegal. In an effort to get rid of V.P.Singh both Chandrasekhar and Rajiv Gandhi did not mince a word of condemnation for the damage inflicted on India's secular republic. This further emboldened the BJP.

Though there are many temples destroyed by the Muslim rulers, the concept of 'Ram' was assiduously chosen. They were of the view that the essence of all the Hindus is ever the same and the concept of Ram lies at the core of their consciousness. True to it, many young men who earlier had no association with nationalist movement were attracted to it. The firing on Kar Sevak had a profound psychological effect arousing the feeling of Hindu vulnerability. These young men invoked their devotion to Ram, but not to any political party except that stood for Ram. But other women participate in order to assert their position in the public sphere, while urban youth, who played a highly significant role, were motivated largely by a militant reinterpretation of the character of Ram, an emphasis on activism for its own sake and by hostility to the policy of implementing the job reservation scheme recommended by the Mandal commission.<sup>24</sup> BJP leaders and workers claim to believe that Hindus of all castes were' awakened by the Ayodhya movement. They point to the support given by the Backward castes and scheduled castes to the BJP as evidence that the Hindu consolidation was not simply an upper caste phenomenon. In contrast, leaders and workers of non-BJP parties argued that

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<sup>24</sup> Christophe Jafferlot, *The Hindu Nationalist movement in Indian politics 1925 to 1990s*, op. cit. p. 424.

it was the Mandal backlash not the Ram now, Mulayam Singh's harsh response to the Kar Sevak movement and not a spontaneous upwelling of sentiment for the new political cult of Ram, which brought success to BJP. From this point of view, the vote for the BJP was negative and impermanent rather than a positive vote for the values and ideology of BJP.<sup>25</sup> The vote of the upper castes in U.P. in 1991 election for the BJP was primarily because of Mandal decision. Their vote for most part was said to have been not for the BJP, but was anti-Mandal.<sup>26</sup> Y.K. Malik and J.F. Marquette show that the BJP has less number of activists working as agriculturist than the other parties and more number of white-collar activists than the others.<sup>27</sup>

The implementation of Mandal committee recommendation for OBC reservation, the BJP's Rath Yatra that catapulted the Babri Masjid dispute into national prominence and the forex crisis leading to the implementation of the first phase of IMF sponsored package of 'liberalization' created an extraordinary opportunity for reworking the established political alignments. The rise of BJP to power and a consistent rise in its vote share with every elections since 1984 has been accompanied by three dimensional expansion in the 1990s. In geographic terms it has expanded much beyond its north India, Hindi heartland core to include Gujarat and Maharashtra in its core areas. More importantly it has developed substantial presence in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Bihar and a foothold in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu. In social terms it is no longer

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<sup>25</sup> Paul Brass, 'The rise of the BJP and the future of party politics in UP', in Harold A. Gould and Summit Ganguly (ed) *India votes*, op. cit. p.271.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid* p.266.

<sup>27</sup> Y.K. Malik and J.F. Marquette, *Political Mercenaries and Citizens Soldiers*, (Delhi: Chanakya, 1990) p.113.

an urban bania-brahmin party. It has developed a formidable rural base, extending well into the lower OBCs and adivasis. The BJP and its allies were the highest vote getter not only among the upper class Hindus but also among the OBCs as a bloc. In political ideological term, the party has extended to win the confidence of various allies who have little patience with its Hindutva ideology.

It is a well-known fact of history that any powerful 'ideology' or 'social idea' can become acceptable when social situation is ripe for it. In the era deep social, political and economic crisis, Hindutva has thus come to fill the void in Indian politics. The 1990s has been a real decade for the Parivar and the BJP. The rise of the BJP and the acceptance of the ideology of Hindutva can be examined in the light of the happenings in during the 90s. India of 1990s witnessed the emergence of powerful struggles on the basis of assertions of identity, and manipulative politics of identity occupied central public space in India. Identity verses identity politics was on the run and the forces of Hindutva jumped into the ocean of identities with a goal to protect, project and integrated 'Hindu identity'.<sup>28</sup> The decade of 90s also witnessed serious financial crisis and India was on the verge of an economic collapse. This was reflected by the balance of payment crisis of 1991 when the P.V.Narasimha Rao government approached the World Bank, IMF and western industrial countries to launch a 'rescue operation for Indian economy'. The middle class blamed this as a result of wrong policies pursued during the earlier period. Indian democracy was presented before the masses by the fiery orators of Hindutva as

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<sup>28</sup> C.P.Bhambri , *Bharatiya Janata Party: Priphery to Centre*, (New Delhi: Shirpa publications, 2001), p.54.

immature, full of corruption, manipulators and in the hand of the masses unable to make a 'qualified choice'.

At this time also India witnessed two remarkable changes in the social and political field. The first was the growing regionalization of politics. This regionalization was widely debated in the 1980s, and due to arm insurgency in Punjab, Assam and Kashmir often perceived as a threat to the unity of the Indian state.<sup>29</sup> The second transformation was the emergence of OBC and SC as a self-conscious political constituencies based on their distinct identities. Thus particularism and factionalism of society became a distinctive feature of the politics of 1990s. Religion, region and caste appeared to divide India for its own benefit. It was at this time of deepening crisis that 'the dream of great and powerful Hindu India has been effectively and successfully sold by the Hindu 'Joint family' to the upcoming rural and urban middle classes who on the one hand have global aspirations and on other they aggressively identify themselves with Hindu rituals, temples and other religious symbols."<sup>30</sup> The thirst of the Indian middle classes was shrewdly tapped by the BJP. In summation, it may be mentioned that crisis-ridden India is finding answers in the ideology of free market economy and construction of political Hinduism.<sup>31</sup>

It may also be mentioned that BJP had made enormous gain by making alliances with the so-called Secularists. While the BJP and RSS have been always involved in

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<sup>29</sup> Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jafferlot (eds), *BJP and the compulsions of politics in India*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998) p. 8.

<sup>30</sup> C.P. Bhambri, *Bharatiya Janata Party, Periphery to Centre*, op. cit. p.56.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.* p.56.

spreading the ideology of Hindu Rashtra, the so-called secularists and socialists parties have surrendered themselves before the powerful 'logic of power'. Hindu nationalists have come to power by fully obeying the procedure of parliamentary democracy. Its growth lies not in the subversion of democracy but is the product of a series of intensely fought elections over the last decade, and of equally intense battles over religions sites, rituals, and spaces: Over the meaning of shared symbols of Indian culture; Over the meaning of secularism and so on. So far, the Hindu nationalists party could make progress only on the basis of a militant strategy or of a nation wide seat adjustments. Let us now turn to its strategy of coming to power, that is, building alliances.

## CHAPTER: FOUR

### THE BJP AND THE ALLIES

In the immediate years following the independent of India from the colonial rule, the Congress party had comparatively better chances of achieving power. In the first three General Elections, the Congress Party won the elections with decisive majority in both the center and the state levels. James Manor has observed that, in Indian politics 'Congress occupied not only the broad center of the political spectrum, but most of the left and right as well. This relegated the opposition parties not only to the margins of Congress, but to the margins of the political and party system as well.'<sup>1</sup> This was mainly because of the historical loyalty of the people as it inherited the legitimacy of the Independence Movement. But from the beginning competitive parties existed.<sup>2</sup> The Congress Party dominance in Indian Politics was shattered in 1967 elections as the party was overthrown in a number of states in 1967. The emergence of 'coalition polities' is linked with the process of the gradual decline of the Congress party and the growth of regional state parties. Inextricably linked to this is also the rise of the parties based on distinct caste interests and identities. Coalition governments are a logical result of multiplicity of parties as a response to the new felt needs of caste and sub-castes of India.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> James Manor, 'Parties and the Party System in India', in Atul Kohli (ed.), *India's Democracy: An Analysis of State-Society Relations*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> Horst Hartmann, *Political Parties in India*, (Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1971) p.1.

<sup>3</sup> C.P. Bhambrī, *B.J.P- led Coalitions and Elections of 1999*, (Delhi: Shirpa Publications, 2000) p. 11.

The growing regionalization of the party system in India is a logical development in a federal polity and society like India with diverse cultural and linguistic regions, and wider process of democratizations since independence. It was only in 1967, 1977 and to great extent in 1989, that the monopoly of the Congress was broken at the state and central levels, respectively, and a region based multi-party system could begin to emerge. These two parallel trends, of decline of the Congress system and the growth of regionalization, underlie the new emerging party system.<sup>4</sup>

There were two progenitors of the Bharatiya Janata Party – The Hindu Mahasabha and the Jana Sangh. The ideas of Hindu Nationalism are the fundamental principles of these three parties. The RSS constituted the very life- blood and the nervous system of the BJS and it still constitutes the same of its new edition, the BJP. The RSS and the BJP are tied by an umbilical cord.

## **I. POLITICAL PHENOMENON IN THE 90s**

The politics of the 1990s is a break with the past. The states in the Indian Union have come to occupy a central position in the national politics. In the immediate years after independence, the state played a peripheral role because of the emphasis on the unity and integrity of the nation, presence of a dominant party system, absence of strong regional parties, etc. But in the late 80s and early 90s the situation took a drastic change. Since then the power to be in the center is decided by the events unfolding in the capitals of the states. The strategy of mobilization on caste or religion has acquired a significant proportion in the elections of 1990s. In the 1990s elections have been contested on

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<sup>4</sup> Sudha Pai, *State politics in India*, (Delhi: Vistaar Publications, 2000), p.24.

fragmented social mobilizations of castes and communities. And the elected leaders are openly identifying themselves with their respective social constituencies. The fragmentation of society with limited 'vote bank' creates a situation where no party can secure majority of seats in 545- members Lok Sabha. This was evident in Lok Sabha Elections of 1991, 1996, 1998 and 1999. In 1998, the United Front of Deve Gowda or Inder Kumar Gujral consisted of thirteen parties. And the Atal Behari Vajpayee – led coalition Government consisted of more than eighteen parties.

Forty-three parties recognized by the Election Commission of India competed in the Lok Sabha elections of 1998. The political developments of this phase of Indian politics reflect that the voters gave neither a clean verdict in favor of any political party nor were the coalitional arrangements based on any commonality of policies. Hence most of the coalition governments formed in this period were short lived. The most remarkable feature, as far as the Indian party system is concerned, of the 1989-1999 period is the relative decline of the Congress and the rise of the BJP and regional or state based parties. The BJP emerged as the party with the greatest majority in the 1996, 1998 and 1999 parliamentary elections.

## **II. BJP'S ELECTORAL PERFORMANCES**

The electoral verdict of the 1997 Lok Sabha election was against the Emergency regime of Mrs. Gandhi. The political parties who opposed the emergency were benefited. It brought to power at the center a coalition government headed by Janata party. In this period the erstwhile Jana Sangh dissolved itself and merged with the Janata party. The



Janata Party Government was a conglomerate consisting of Congress (0), Congress for Democracy, Jana Sangh, Bharatiya Kranti Dal of Charan Singh etc. However, this conglomerate disappeared from political scene in 1979. The main feature of this coalition was that dissimilar groups combined together to form a coalition. Over a period of time serious differences arose within the coalition over the issue of some former Jana Sangh members remaining as members of the RSS. The inner contradictions persisting the Jana Sangh moved out of the Janata party along with some of its members and formed the BJP.

The decline of the Congress and the gradual abandonment of the Nehruvian national consensus created an ideological vacuum on fundamental issues such as secularism, state's role in economic development, nationalism and social justice. The parties sought an alternative national consensus. The BJP leadership felt that its new platform of Hindutva was an effective instrument to capture power in the states and at the center.

The Ninth Lok Sabha election again brought a strange arrangement for governance in India. The V.P. Singh government manufactured a parliamentary majority on the basis of outside support of the Bharatiya Janata Party on the one hand, and the Communist parties on the other. This arrangement of 1989 was based on absolute contradictions, because the communists, the BJP and the Janata were ideologically opposed to one another.<sup>5</sup> V.P. Singh government lasted for eleven months on the basis of

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<sup>5</sup> C.P. Bhambri, *B.JP- led coalitions and elections of 1999*, op. cit. p.11.

an outside support of the BJP and the Left parties, and the Chandrasekhar government left the office after six months, because the outside support of the Congress (1) was withdrawn and new Lok Sabha election was held.

The predecessor of the Bharatiya Janata Party, i.e. the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the political arm of the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh had never exceeded 10 per cent of votes or 35 seats nationally in the elections before 1977. It was only in 1977 that as a component of the Janata party it won 99 of 295 seats won by the Janata party. The Bharatiya Jana Sangh had a dismal performance in 1984 general election, when it won only 2 seats in the Lok Sabha. It experienced a meteoric rise in seats from a derisory two in 1984 (despite 7.4 percent votes) to 86 (out of 226 contested, mostly in de- facto alliance with the Janata Dal) in 1989 owing to the combination of three-effects-seat adjustments with Janata Dal resulting in one-on-one contests against the Congress in most of the seats it contested in U.P., Delhi, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Himachal pradesh and Madhya pradesh, a sizeable swing in its favor, and the regional concentration of this increase in votes.<sup>6</sup>

In the 1989-91, the BJP decided to go alone against the backdrop of the Babri Masjid agitation, the upper caste backlash against the National Front Government recommendation for the implementation of Mandal Commission Report, and the Rath Yatra launched by L.K. Advani for the liberation of the disputed site in Ayodhya and the

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<sup>6</sup> E. Shridharan, *The Fragmentation of the Indian Party System, 1952 – 1999: Seven Competing explanations*, in Zoya Hasan (ed.), *Parties and Party politics in India*, ( New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002) p.485

communal tension and violence following in its wake. It considerably increased its vote share to 20.1 percent, winning 120 seats of a unprecedented 468 contests. It swept the key state U.P. in both the Lok Sabha and the state assembly election. It also swept the poll in Gujarat and performed considerably well in its strongholds of M.P., H.P, and Rajasthan. It also took 20.2 percent of the vote and five seats in Maharashtra in alliance with the Shiv Sena. The BJP came to form government on its own for the first time ever in 1990. In M.P. and H.P. it was able to form government on its own, whereas in Rajasthan and Gujarat it formed coalition governments with the Janata Dal. In Rajasthan, the BJP dominated with the state BJP leader becoming the Chief Minister. When it was part of the Janata party in 1977-79, the Jana Sangh component of the Janata party dominated the government and occupied the Chief Minister's post in M.P., H.P. and Rajasthan. Thus the BJP arrived as a regional political force, whereas earlier it had essentially been sub-regional, thereby contributing to national party system fragmentation.<sup>7</sup>

The demolition of the Babri Masjid Mosque in Ayodhya by Hindu Militants, and its aftermath, dramatically highlighted the growing influence of political Hinduism and the rise to power of the BJP.<sup>8</sup> With its redefinition of Indian nationalism based on Hindu identity, the BJP emerged as the single largest party that gradually filled the gap created by the decline of the Congress party. A new alternative –Hindu nationalism is provided by the BJP. The BJP's rise to power has been a remarkable feature of the post-independence India in general and of the Indian politics over the last decade in particular. The Congress, which was the natural party of governance, lost out to this new political

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<sup>7</sup> *ibid* p.486.

<sup>8</sup> Zoya Hasan,(ed.), *Parties and Party politics in India*, ( New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002) p.13.

force. The BJP has emerged as the single largest party in the last three elections. Its seat tally is increasing in every general election and had won two elections in a row, the only party to do so since 1984.

The Tenth Lok Sabha election was held in 1991 in the aftermath of the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. The Congress party formed a government under the leadership of P.V. Narasimha Rao as the single largest party though it was in minority. The BJP improved its position in the Lok Sabha from 2 seats in 1984, to 85 in 1985 and 119 in 1991. The party improved its position substantially in the northern Hindi states, gaining a total of 59 seats in 1989 and 81 seats in 1991, a region where in 1984, it had not won a single seat.

### **III. LIMIT OF HINDUTVA STRATEGY**

At a party conclave in April 1995, it identified five issues which it would use in the Lok Sabha elections: Ayodhya temples issue, Art 370, infiltration of foreigners, the uniform civil code and particularly, economic nationalism of Swadeshi following the scrapping of the Enron power project at Dabhol in Maharashtra by Shiv Sena –BJP government.<sup>9</sup> In the Eleventh General elections held in April /May 1996, none of the three major political formations—the Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party, the National Front gained a clear majority in the Lok Sabha. The gaining of seats by large number of regional and state level parties has inaugurated a period of unstable coalition government. The transition towards a new party system is not a sudden development but the

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<sup>9</sup> Sudha Pai, op.cit. p.8.

cumulative end product of changes taking place over a considerable period of time. More specifically, it arises out of two interlinked processes: the decline and break down of the 'Congress system' in the 1980s, and a parallel process of regionalization of politics, and consequently of the party system.<sup>10</sup>

In the 1996 election, BJP increased its share of seats and votes, consolidated its regional and social base, and emerged as the single largest party in the parliament. The 1996 Lok Sabha election result clearly pointed out the fact that regional party will play an important role in the making and unmaking of government at the center. No party has filled the political vacuum left by the demise of the Congress system. What we have today is a two-tier party system in which the two tiers articulate with each other in a complex manner.<sup>11</sup> Regional party is dominant and another is that all-India and state parties compete for power.

The eleventh Lok Sabha elections of 1996 repeated the story of the ninth Lok Sabha elections of 1989. With the outside support from the Congress and the CPI(M), H.D. Deve Gowda of the Janata Dal constituted a working majority consisting of thirteen political groups in parliament.<sup>12</sup> It was an extremely inconvenient arrangement of thirteen parties who claimed to agree on Common Minimum Programme for the governance of India.

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<sup>10</sup> *ibid*, p.20.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*, p.39.

<sup>12</sup> C.P. Bhambri, *op. cit.* p. 20.

After the 1996 general election, the president of India invited A.B. Vajpayee to form the government as the head of the largest party. But the BJP led government that came to power suffered a humiliating defeat of being in office for only 13 days. This was because no other party was prepared to provide support to it in the Lok Sabha apart from its few pre-election allies. To avoid such humiliation again, the BJP made a vigorous attempt to enter into as many alliances it can with the regional and state parties in the pre-election period on the eve of the 1998 general election.

Since there are few takers among the allies of the conservative ideology of the BJP, there arose sense of urgency for the BJP to newly revamp the ideology of the party so as to be acceptable to its constituent allies. Since BJP emerged from the Jana Sangh it had its widest appeal to the conservative element of the Indian society and is mainly an upper caste party. Its politics of religious based mobilization underlie its meteoric rise by the mid 1990s, moving from a mere 86 seats in the Lok Sabha in 1989 to 177 in 1998.<sup>13</sup> However by the mid 1996s, the BJP leadership began to realize the limitations to religious mobilization. Many disapproved the destruction of the Mosque. The party had exploited the Hindutva issue to saturation and hence cannot go further on it anymore. To broaden its social base it was necessary to moderate its stand on Hindutva. Moreover, the success of Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samajwadi party in Uttar pradesh and Janata Dal in Bihar proved that caste based identities are more important than religions based identities. In 1996, the BJP started facing the problems of contesting alone with a communally polarizing agenda. Its vote share remains stagnant at 20.3 percent and it

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<sup>13</sup> Sudha Pai, op.cit. p. 48.

failed to win parliamentary support from other party parties to form a minority or coalition government. The 1996 election was an eye opener for the BJP as far as its attempt to form government at the center is concerned. And the basic lesson of 1996 was that; 'If the BJP had to come within striking distance of power, it had to be able to expand to non-traditional states, by alliances or otherwise, as well as expand its social base in its stronghold states'.<sup>14</sup>

The Congress and the BJP drew a diametrically opposite conclusion from the results of the April 1996 general elections. While the BJP was increasingly convinced of coalition formation and hence went for a vigorous search for allies, the Congress party under Sitaram Kesri become more and more complacent and chalked out an entirely different strategy. The Congress rejected the inevitability of the coalitions form of government and reaffirmed their faith in the attainability of single party majority rule in its Calcutta plenary session of the Congress on August 1997. This session firmly believes that the Congress party has the will and capacity to ensure and acquire the support of the people of this country for a viable and stable one party government in the country.<sup>15</sup> The Congress party took it as too simplistic to come to conclusion that the days of simple party majority was over from the result of one or two general elections. It was in pursuance of this line that the Congress party provoked and went to the polls in February 1998, without forging much needed electoral alliances regional parties.<sup>16</sup>The Congress

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<sup>14</sup> E.Shridaran, op. cit. p. 488.

<sup>15</sup> *Political Resolution of the 80<sup>th</sup> plenary session of the INC held at Calcutta on August 9-10, 1997*, cited from Balveer Arora, 'Negotiating differences: Federal coalitions and National cohesions', in Francine Frankel et al (ed), *Transforming India*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988) p. 180.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid* p.188.

accentuates the dichotomy between the national and state party. The BJP, on the otherhand, seized the opportunity and occupied the space left vacant by the Congress.

#### IV. INDIA'S EXPERIENCE WITH COALITION GOVERNMENTS

No party has achieved a parliament any majority for the last five general elections – 1989, 1991, 1996, 1998, 1999, necessitating minority or coalition governments. The first four general elections to the Lok Sabha 1952, 1957, 1961 and 1967, coincided with elections to all the state assemblies. In the first three of these, the Congress party won an over two-third majority of seats in the Lok Sabha. The 1967 election mark a break, with the Congress winning only 283 seats on the basis of its lowest ever vote share until then, 40.8 percent, and losing power in eight of the sixteen states. The 1967 general election was seen as a watershed in the history of coalition politics as it marked the end of the Congress dominance and the advent of the first non-Congress government in the states on a large scale. For our purpose, it is Emergency of 1975-79, which has a stronger claim to this description because it permitted, or rather provoked, the forging of the first federal coalition to capture power at the center. It was a defining moment for state institutions, just as partition was for civil society, thirty years earlier.<sup>17</sup> The Janata government of 1977 –79, marked the beginning of India's experience with coalition governments.<sup>18</sup> But,

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<sup>17</sup> Nirmal Mukherjee and Balveer Arora (eds), *Federalism in India: Origin and development*, (New Delhi, Vikas, 1992), cited from Balveer Arora, 'Negotiating differences: Federal Coalitions and National Cohesions' in Francine Frankel et al (eds), *Transforming India*, Ibid p

<sup>18</sup> *ibid* p.180.



the evolution of alliance began with broad front anti-Congressism in the immediate pre-1967 period, promoted by the socialist ideologue, Ram Manohar Lohia.<sup>19</sup>

The nineties have witnessed a succession of minority or coalition governments. Both the National Front governments (1989-90) and the United Front (1996-98) were minority governments. They were precarious from the start and shortlived. V.P. Singh (4.12. 89-10.11.90) quit when the BJP withdraw support, and Chandrashekhar (11.11.90 – 21.6.91) resigned in March 1991 when the Congress pulled the plug. The 1991 Lok Sabha elections were conducted in two stages, and Rajiv Gandhi's assassination in the intervening period demonstrably improved the Congress tally. The United Front Prime Ministers, Deve Gowda (1.6.1996 – 21.4.97) and Inder Gujral (22.4.97 –18.3.98) were both victims of the abrupt withdrawal of support by the Congress.<sup>20</sup> This unpleasant experience gave rise to an apprehension that coalition governments will not be suitable for a country like India. They were criticized as dominated by regional leaders that were interested in solving only regional problems and hence lacked the vision to rule and take the nation forward. Most of the coalition partners are seekers of their own future. They wanted to use their presence in the central government as a means to realize their goals.

In the context of India, coalition seeks to reconcile the different territorially based identities within a cohesive framework even in the absence of shared ideologies. While the struggle between castes and class dominates political life in the primary arena of state and panchayat politics in India, regional aspirations are significant factors in the political

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<sup>19</sup> E. Shridharan, *op. cit.* p.492.

<sup>20</sup> For details, please see Balveer Arora, *op. cit.* p. 202.

calculations that parties make when they enter the secondary arena, which is more concerned with national cohesion and federal government.<sup>21</sup> The regional aspirations are higher in most of the regional or the state parties even than the ideological affinities and programmatic alliances. Explanation for such can be found in the Shiv Sena – BJP alliance in Maharashtra.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, federal coalitions based on the accommodation of regional aspirations can arguably be converted into stable arrangements with greater ease.<sup>23</sup> It is true that regional interests drive most of the regional parties. And states that feel marginalized in the national agenda seek to maximize the returns for their representation. It has been noted that while state parties may join federal coalitions for a variety of reasons, they invariably seek favorable policy outcomes, which could enhance their local political prospects.<sup>24</sup>

## V. THE BJP AND THE POLITICS OF ALLIANCES BUILDING

The twelfth Lok Sabha elections held in February 1998, less than two years after the eleventh general elections, could not produce a decisive verdict in favor of any political party. However, BJP improved its seats and vote tally. The Twelfth Lok Sabha witnessed the emergence of BJP as the single largest party and the collapsed of the United Front particularly of the Janata Dal Party. With the decline of the United Front, only two parties – the Congress and the BJP appeared tallest to compete for power with the help of the regional parties. Despite no party having gained a majority, two ‘poles’

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<sup>21</sup> Francine Frankel and M.S.A.Rao (eds), *Dominance and State Power in India*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990) 2 vols, in Ibid p.177

<sup>22</sup> Mahesh Vijaypukar, ‘BJP forces Sena to concede its demands’, *The Hindu*, 20 August 1998.

<sup>23</sup> Balveer Arora, op. cit. p. 178.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid*, p. 179.

have become visible – the INC and the BJP –within the ‘regionalized’ multiparty system.<sup>25</sup> These two poles recruited, several regional parties around them by forming pre- and post –poll alliances. Thus the emergence of a bipolar situation at the center supported by regional parties at their respective poles was a central feature of the 1998 elections. Many saw BJP as the stronger of the two contestants and hence there was an exodus to the BJP-described less and less as ‘untouchable’ or ‘anti-secular’, by individuals and groups that were interested in the formation of a stable government. But the most important was the regional alliances forged by the party. These alliances took the form of pre-election seat adjustments and post election alliances. In ‘seat adjustments’ the concerned parties agree not to contest each other directly in any particular constituency and thus enable the party dividing the votes. Implication of the formation of pre-poll alliances was also making a firm commitment to share power with them at the center.

In the 1998 elections the BJP leaderships tried not to use its Hindutva platform during the campaign. The party put forth Atal Behari Vajpayee, the moderate face of the BJP as its Prime Ministerial candidate and adopted the slogan of ‘stable government, able PM’.<sup>26</sup> In Vajpayee’s speeches no major references to Ayodhya was made. Instead, he concentrated on the price of onions, the problems of sugarcane farmers, the Bofors kick back scandal, and attempted reassurance to Muslims that they had nothing to fear from the BJP.<sup>27</sup> Advani emphasized stability as the main plank of his party, with concern over corruption in high places coming a close second. The party manifestoes nevertheless

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<sup>25</sup> Sudha Pai, *op. cit.* p.37.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*, p.45.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*, p. 45.

mentioned that the BJP planned to build the Ram Temple but would achieve this goal by exploring consensual, legal, and constitutional means. The BJP continued its efforts to moderate its ideology after the elections. This meant that stability would be given more important than any ideological issue, and the national agenda it formed with allies will prevail. Advani's speech changed the party's definition of nationalism –until now synonymous with Hindutva and building of a Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, to one of building a 'Rashtra Mandir' (National Temple), meaning creating a prosperous and secure country for all citizens.

In 1998 election, the BJP for the first time shed its Hindutva agenda in order to strike an alliances with a ranged of state-based political parties. The BJP's strategy was greatly helped by the fact that the Congress has toppled the United Front in several major states, such as, West Bengal, Kerala, Tripura, Assam, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka. Thus in 1998, the BJP contested the elections with as many as 13 pre-election allies, including two independents, with seat sharing arrangements spread over nine states. These were the Akali Dal and Independent S.S. Kainath (Punjab), Samata Party (Bihar and U.P.), Haryana Vikas party (Haryana), Biju Janata Dal (Orissa), Trinamool Congress (West Bengal), Lok Shakti (Karnataka), and AIADMK, PMK, MDMK, TRC and Janata Party (Tamil Nadu). The BJD won 25.5 percent votes and its allies 11.6 percent votes, totaling 37.1 percent for the alliance, and won a total of 254 seats, of which were distributed as: Samata Party 12, BJP 9, AIADMK 18, PMK 4, MDMD 3, Tanighaza Rajiv Congress 1, Janata Party 1, Akali Dal 8, Shiv Sena 6, Lok Shakti 3, Trinamool Congress 7, Haryana Vikas Party 1, BJP-allied independent 3. Thus BJP led the single

largest pre-election alliances and it emerged as the single largest party capable of forming government at the center. With the help of 24 post election adherents from seven parties and two nominated members it grew to 282, but this included the 12 members TDP and 2- members National Conference supported it from outside only.<sup>28</sup> State wise, the BJP fared better in 1998 compared to 1996 due to the crucial support of its allies. It may be mentioned here that BJP led coalition government of 1998 was an ideologically divisive minority government.

The parties of the United Front (96-98) took a serious beating during and after the 1998 election. While the left parties managed to substantially retain their earlier tally, there was a sharp decline in the political fortunes of some key non-left members of the Front, with others detaching themselves and moving towards a closer understanding with BJP- led majority.<sup>29</sup> The BJP greatly benefited from anti-Congressism. The cementing strength based on secularism was found weaker when confronted with the compulsions of anti-Congressism.

The BJP, with its specific agenda and carefully nurtured support base, had never really been comfortable with the idea of federal coalitions.<sup>30</sup> Its preference was for like-minded parties, viz., the Shiv Sena and the Akali Dal. The thirteen fateful days in parliament during May 1996 taught an important lesson to BJP. Vajpayee stood alone,

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<sup>28</sup> For details of the alliances pre-election and post election in 1998, see Balveer Arora, *Negotiating differences: Federal coalitions and National cohesion* in Francine Frankel et al (eds); *Transforming India*, p. 184-5, 190-194. op. cit.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.* p. 191.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p. 192.

with open arms for others to come and join him. In the 1998 elections, while its own tally increased only marginally, it moved towards a parliamentary majority on the strength of its alliances.<sup>31</sup> Though the agenda of Hindutva and Ram Mandir were fundamental for the growth of BJP, a plateau was reached very rapidly. The social base of the party also put constraints on its expansion, given the fact that it is mainly a party of the upper castes. While stressing the rapid advances of the party during the period 1989-96 were due largely to ideological factors, party president L.K. Advani admitted the limits of Hindutva agenda; 'But since the 1996 elections, it is not the same ideological factors which have sustained our growth. Equally emphatically, it is not these ideological factors, which have brought in new political allies in different states'.<sup>32</sup>

The coalition partners are pulled together as one not because of ideological affinity among them, but simply because of their interests to have a share in power sharing. Distribution of ministerial perth is an important means to sustain coalition. The 1998 majority was constructed painstakingly. An eleventh hour deal with Andhra Padesh Chief Minister Chandra Babu Naidu, who ultimately secured the speaker's chair for TDP nominee helped the Vajpayee- led alliance to secure majority in the parliament. The AIADMK- led group of parties, viz., PMK, MDMK and TRC, engaged in stiff bargaining prior to government formation. Most of major the pre-election allies were included in he government. It is amazing that the party was able to hold together such a vast coalition. This was mainly because of the personality, capability and flexibility of its leadership. However, keeping in view the composition of the majority put together by the BJP, it is

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<sup>31</sup> *ibid*, p. 193.

possible to argue that the verdict was not as much a mandate for the BJP as a vote of confidence in its leader, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and his capabilities.<sup>33</sup>

It is not easy to get parliamentary majority, harder still is to convert it into a coalition government. To smoothen the relationship among the twelve - poll alliances, representing eight states, a co-ordination committee was set up. Jaswant Singh was initially appointed as convenor, with Advani representing the BJP on the committee. George Fernandes assumed the role of the convenor in October 1998 because Jaswant Singh's service was required for the delicate post-Pokhran diplomatic talks with the United States. The committee however proved largely inadequate. Within the short thirteen months, the Vajpayee government had to face many problems from the allies. For instance, an increase in the price of fertilizers included in the Union budget for 1998-99 had to be reversed on the insistence of the Akali Dal and the AIADMK, who also demanded and obtained major changes in the proposed reform of the electric power sector to protect the interests of their farmers.<sup>34</sup> The AIADMK also pressured vociferously for the dismissal of the government in Tamil Nadu, while the Trinamool Congress even suspended its support to the coalition for a week to express its dissatisfaction with government policies concerning West Bengal.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *Presidential address at the meeting of the National Executive on 11 April 1998*, cited in Hindu 12 April 1998.

<sup>33</sup> Balveer Arora, op.cit. p. 195.

<sup>34</sup> *Power Reform: Stalled again?* Economic and Political weekly, 23 May, 1998 p. 1215.

<sup>35</sup> Balveer Arora, op. cit. p. 196.

The Vajpayee government in 1998 lacked an effective co-ordination to resolve intra coalition conflicts. Some of its partners repeatedly complained that they were ignored or not adequately consulted on major policy issues. Its relationship with the Sangh Parivar and the activities of the latter provoked sharp protests from the allies. On the eve of September 1999 election, the party decided to enter into even more alliances. It decided to extend a power-sharing offer to all regional parties engaged in state-level contests with the Congress and declared: 'India's interests can be served best by involving regional parties in the process of governance.'<sup>36</sup> What is even significant, the party decided not to issue its own election manifestoes afresh but to work towards a joint manifesto based on the national agenda for governance evoked earlier. It will thus steer clear of controversial items like; Ayodhya, Uniform civil code and Art 370. Advani said, 'we have not changed our views but the issues have been kept in abeyance as per requirement of coalition politics.'<sup>37</sup> When the Congress was still harping on its confidence in the dominance of single party, the BJP seemed to have whole-heartedly accepted the strategy of coalition. This at the time when the state parties are increasingly seeking the means to extend their influences and defend their interests in the national policy arena using every possible leverage, even at the risk of being charged with opportunism and inconsistently. To the credit of the BJP, we can say that the party has mastered the art of building alliances. And its skill is being polished in every forthcoming election.

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<sup>36</sup> *Political Resolution adopted at the New Delhi session on 2 May 1999*, The Hindu, 3 May 1999.

<sup>37</sup> Indian Express, 3 May 1999.



The 1999 election, the third in as many years, was held after the AIADMK withdrew support from the BJP led government in April 1999. The BJP on its own was not able to increase its seats, and in terms of vote share it actually lost nearly two percentage points, declining from 25.6 percent in 1998 to 23.7 percent in 1999. However, the BJP –led alliance won the election with a comfortable majority. This was not because of the electoral gains by the BJP but on account of the acquisition of new allies by it. It forged an alliance of eighteen parties for the 1999 elections. But even this did not help it to win a majority. However, it managed to form a majority by getting the support of TDP and NC. The Congress party a catch all party, cutting across the ethnic, class and caste divisions; dominated the first phase of the party system. By contrast, the second phase is based on a form of sectarian politics that draws on cleavages of caste, class and region. If social integration and coalition building based on a social welfare programme was the objective of a Congress-style centrist party, the principal goal of the emerging party system is to secure material and political benefits for particular groups and / or region. Yet, because it heads a coalition of 23 parties BJP's politics is not simply caste based or community based.<sup>38</sup>

In the 1999 general election, the BJP led coalition fought the Congress led coalition. The United Front was reduced to the Left Front and the Janata Dal (Secular) of Deva Gowda. The National Democratic alliances comprised of 24 parties led by the BJP. They are – BJP, Shiv Sena, Akali Dal, Samata party, Lok Shakti, Janata Dal (Sharad Yadav), TDP, DMK, MDMK, PMK, TRC, MCRADMK, Sikkim Democratic Front,

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<sup>38</sup> Zoya Hasan (ed), *Parties and Party Politics in India*, op. cit. p. 31.

Arunachal Congress, Indian National Lok Dal, Democratic Bahujan Samaj Morcha, Independent (Menaka Gandhi).<sup>39</sup> The NDA got 299 seats out of the 537, since six seats were deferred. The BJP alone got 182 seats. With the post election adherents the number went up to 305. However, in terms of vote share, the BJP declined to 23.8 percent while the Congress rose to 28.4 percent.

The BJP led National Democratic alliance government headed by Atal Bihari Vajpayee which was sworn in on 13 October 1999 was the first since the end of the Indira Gandhi – Rajiv Gandhi phase that a pre-electoral alliance obtained a clear majority and an incumbent Prime Minister was returned to office. The 1999 Lok Sabha elections marked a significant break in the succession of hung parliaments. State parties, aggressively pursuing the development interests of their respective states, joined hands with the BJP after the dissolution of the 12<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha in an alliance which marked the advent of electoral federation.<sup>40</sup> Compared to 1998, the preparation for the 1999 election were done systematically and much more carefully. For the first time, a major national party pursued a comprehensive strategy of alliances and seat-sharing arrangements accepting to field fewer candidates in the bargain.<sup>41</sup> The BJP fielded 310 candidates in the 1999 elections on compared to 384 in 1998 and 471 in 1996. However, with 183 seats in 1999 it was almost 90 short of a majority and its share of valid votes has declined from 25.6 percent in 1998 to 23.7 percent in 1999. The majority of its MPs (61 percent) in the thirteenth Lok Sabha were returned from north India, as against 74 percent in 1996.

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<sup>39</sup> For detail, please see E. Sridharam, op. cit. p. 490.

<sup>40</sup> Balveer Arora, *Electoral federalism New Coalition in the Party System*

<sup>41</sup> E. Shridharan in Zoya hasan (ed), *Parties and party politics in India*, op. cit. p. 513

Gujarat is the only state beyond the Hindu Belt where the BJP has established a state base; it won 20 of the 26 seats.<sup>42</sup> In all other non-Hindu belt states the BJP remains a marginal player or depends upon regional parties. Its recent expansion is clearly through alliances with regional parties.

## VI. ROLE OF THE ALLIES

The emergence of BJP as the ruling party has generated a considerable debate, among the Indian and the western scholars on the nature of the BJP. The main concern is the ideology it represents based on Hindu consciousness and identity. Scholarship on the BJP can be divided into two broad groups. The first group comprises those who believe that the BJP is a right-wing party underpinned by an aggressive, homogenizing, Hindu nationalism committed to rewriting history by distorting the principal plank of the post-independence project of secularism, nationalism, and democracy. Scholars in the second group believed that BJP cannot pursue this agenda and it will have to adjust to the pluralism of India society; a pluralism that compels parties to move towards the center.<sup>43</sup> The allies specially play two roles in regard to their relation to the BJP. First, they help it to form the government at the center and the other is that they played a great moderating role. In other words, they pulled the BJP to the center in terms of its ideological stands. Some of the scholars of the Indian party system argue that all parties that seek power in India are subject to centripetal influence that drives them to the center.

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<sup>42</sup> The data is from Christophe Jafferlot 'Afterworld', in T.B. Hansen and Christophe Jafferlot, *The BJP and the compulsion of politics in India*, new edition (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001.)

<sup>43</sup> Zoya Hassan(ed): *Parties and party politics in India*, op. cit. p.14.

The BJP functions as a party, a movement, often, as a government at the state level; it operates differently when in power than in opposition, and it has deep and enduring ties to a range of allied organizations.<sup>44</sup> Thus we can say that the BJP is a party with a multiple identities. BJP has to a great extent moderate its aggressive stance due to strong political pressure, but it still periodically succumbs to militant Hindu Nationalism. The surge of Hindu nationalism in the early 1990s posed a serious challenge to Indian democracy. But this danger was short lived. Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph have argued persuasively that one of the most striking features of Indian politics in its persistent centrism.<sup>45</sup> The political parties that seek to exercise power are subject to centripetal pressures.

Although it rose to power on the basis of disruptive, violent movement in Ayodhya and the violence that followed in its aftermath, the closer it comes to the corridor of power, the more moderate has been its functioning. They hoped to reap rich harvest from its action in Ayodhya on 6 December 1992, but barely a year latter they suffered humiliating electoral shocks. Public opinion polls conducted after the demolition of the mosque showed that 52 percent of the population disapproved, 39 percent approved, and 8 percent has no opinion. Fifty two percent of those who were surveyed believed that he BJP has broken the law.<sup>46</sup> The BJP's loses were greatest in Madhya Pradesh, followed by Uttar Pradesh, states in which it posture was most militant and riots

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<sup>44</sup> Amrita Basu, *'Transformation of Hindu Nationalism? Towards a Reappraisal'*, in David Ludden (ed), *Making India Hindu*: p.380

<sup>45</sup> Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, *In pursuit of Lakshmi: The political economy of Indian state*, (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1987) in *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *'A Nation divided'*, India Today, 15 January 1993 p. 18.

were numerous. The election fiasco suggested that attempt to polarize voters on religious line had ceased to pay. At its national council meeting in Bangalore in June 1993, it projected itself as a responsible alternative to the Congress party and highlighted its commitment to opening up the economy and ending corruption. It reaffirmed its faith in a secular state and downplayed the possibility of building a temple in Ayodhya.<sup>47</sup>

In the short run, moderation is necessitated by electoral calculations and the compulsions of coalition politics.<sup>48</sup> However, after the demolition of the Babri Masjid Mosque in Ahodhya in December 1992, the vote share of the BJP reached a plateau. Its core support accounting for 85 percent of its total Lok Sabha seats came from the three Hindi heartland states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh plus the three western states of Maharastra, Gujarat and Rajasthan.<sup>49</sup> It is because these states have majority Hindu population and are eager audience to the Pro-Hindu rhetoric. This rhetoric has however few takers in the South and the East and the BJP needs to penetrate in these areas in order to get the required number of seats to form government at the center.

In the 1998 and the 1999 elections, the BJP entered into a massive alliances with regional parties. This in turn helped the party to widen its electoral base. However, it made a great sacrifice on its ideological position. This was manifested in the National Agenda of Governance, which dropped four controversial issues: building of the Ram

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<sup>47</sup> Amrita Basu, 'Transformation of Hindu nationalism? Towards a Reappraisal.' op. cit. p. 385.

<sup>48</sup> Atul Kohli, *Enduring Another Election*, Journal of Democracy, July 1998, p. 15-17.

<sup>49</sup> Zoya Hasan (ed), *Parties and party politics in India*, op. cit. p. 15.

temple at Ayodhya; enacting a uniform civil code; abolishing the National minority commission and abrogating Art.370 of the constitution, which gives 'special status' to the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Most of the BJP's allies in the 1999 election were regional parties, of which only the Shiv-Sena could be described as a like-minded right wing party.<sup>50</sup> The party has shown repeatedly its willingness to enter into alliances with regional parties at the national and state levels. This strategy had greatly helped the BJP to erase its image of being a Brahman –Bania party, most of the regional parties have the support of the lower castes, and this social blocs supported the NDA, not the BJP as such.

Doubtless the compulsions of power and the demands of running a coalition government forced the BJP to moderate its position on various issues. L.K. Advani observed that the moderate phase began in 1996 when the BJP failed to form the government.<sup>51</sup> Thus for the BJP, coalition strategy is both an ideological and managerial challenge, which consists of harmonizing ideology with quest for power.<sup>52</sup> In order to sail smoothly together with the allies having different agendas, the BJP has to tampen its distinctiveness. Above all, it is the struggle for power and the desire for survival, which are the keys to understanding the changing nature of the party's organizational structure.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *ibid.* p. 16.

<sup>51</sup> India Today, 1 November 1999.

<sup>52</sup> *Report on the two-day national Council meeting of the BJP in Chennai*, India Today, 27 December 1999.

<sup>53</sup> Angelo Panebianco, *Political parties: Organization and Power*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) in Yogendra K. Malik and V.B. Singh, *op. cit.* p.175.

However, its link with the RSS or the Sangh Parivar is unmistakable. Among the political parties, the BJP is a typical.<sup>54</sup> It has a blood ties with a range of Hindu religious organizations, particularly with the RSS and the VHP. Though it had kept the core issues on the back burner because of the tension of coalition government, it has not deviated from its core commitments. There has been a systematic effort to 'saffronise' education, bureaucracy, etc. Therefore, moderation can change the agenda of the BJP-led NDA government but it cannot modify the fundamental character of the BJP, unless there is a change in its relationship with the RSS.<sup>55</sup>

The more successful the BJP has been in occupying office at the state level and in attaining power at the center, the more it has been forced to participate in coalition government.<sup>56</sup> It is essential for BJP to make in roads into South and East India in order to form government at the center. The BJP must also make significant gains among the lower castes. Political compulsions force the BJP to moderate its views and on the other hand there are various reasons that prevent the BJP from pursuing a centrist path. One is its membership in a broad network of Hindu organization, the most important being the RSS and the VHP. In the BJP, the RSS has found a vehicle for influencing political life without incurring the risk of direct participation.<sup>57</sup> By loosening its ties with the RSS, it would be easier for the BJP to win over more allies thus increase prospects of electoral success. But the BJP is unlikely to do so for very good reasons. The RSS and its affiliated organizations have been vital to the BJP's phenomenal growth since the late 1980s. Their

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<sup>54</sup> Zoya Hasan (ed), *Parties and Party politics in India*, op. cit. P.18.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid* p. 19.

<sup>56</sup> Amrita Basu, 'Transformation of Hindu Nationalism ? Towards a reappraisal', op. cit. p. 385.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid*. p 391.

activities and campaigns have enabled the BJP to mobilize people on a larger scale than any other political party. The second is that the BJP's leadership is dominated with the men of RSS background. Approximately 70 percent of BJP officials at the national level, and 60 percent at the state level are RSS members. In the BJP's central office, 28 out of 41 BJP officials are of RSS background.<sup>58</sup> The RSS is also useful for mending the rifts in the party.

Although it had moderate its stance, it had not entirely abandoned militant, nationalist appeals.<sup>59</sup> BJP is a combination of two very different identities: militant social movement and moderate political party.<sup>60</sup> When the BJP initially started functioning as a political party, it adopted the path of moderate politics. The parliamentary election results of 1984 when it won only 7 percent of the votes was seen by the BJP as repudiation of the path of moderation it pursued under the leadership of A.B. Vajpayee. However, the BJP also recognized that by functioning as a moderate party, it might be able to participate in coalition government at the state and national levels.<sup>61</sup> The BJP effectively combined party and movement base approaches. While BJP was pursuing a party based approach that entailed participation in coalitions and electoral arrangements, it also pursued a movement-based approach, which entailed close collaboration with the V.H.P. It attempted to reconcile divergent objectives in its Palampur session in June 9-11, 1989. While committing itself to work with the Janata Dal to defeat the Congress by playing the

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<sup>58</sup> N.k. Singh, 'Hindu divided Family', India Today, 15 December 1996, p. 69.

<sup>59</sup> Amrita Basu, 'The dialectics of Hindu Nationalism' in Atul Kohli (ed.), *The Success of Indian Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) p. 163.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.* p. 163.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.* p.170.



role of a responsible opposition party, it on the other hand decided to work with the VHP to build a temple at Ayodhya.<sup>62</sup> The seat adjustments with Janata Dal enabled the BJP to make significant gains in the 1989 elections. The BJP faced a major dilemma in 1991 in Uttar Pradesh when it was elected to power for the first time. The VHP put pressure on it to start construction of the temple. While the democratic system pulled the BJP towards the center, VHP drew the BJP away from it. The BJP could not afford to antagonize either its movements or electoral constituencies.<sup>63</sup>

The BJP valued mobilization only when it yielded electoral gains, the VHP viewed mobilization on Ayodhya as an end itself. The BJP has sought to keep the Ayodhya dispute alive. The BJP's 1996 and 1998 election manifestos reiterated its commitment to building a temple at Ayodhya. As a result, to a greater extent than other political parties, the BJP engaged in double speak, by seeking to demonstrate simultaneously its moderation and its militancy.<sup>64</sup> The BJP contested the 1999 election as the leader of the National Democratic Alliances. Its election manifesto dropped all references to contentious issues. However, even in this broadly moderate phase the movement dimensions of Hindu nationalism continue to surface, as do tensions between the BJP in power and the unelected Sangh Parivar, the latter often become active around cultural issues.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *ibid* p. 170

<sup>63</sup> *ibid* p. 171.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid* p. 179.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid* p. 187.

On one very particular issue, the BJP has completely abrogated the stand of the RSS, and that is on its, economic policy. The RSS remains deeply committed to Swadeshi while the NDA led by the BJP is committed to economic liberalization. The draft Chennai resolution of December 1999 records a shift in the BJP's stance from Swadeshi to favoring the speeding – up of reforms in insurance, banking and other areas of the financial sector, rationalization of subsidies, and cutting government expenditure to help restore fiscal discipline.<sup>66</sup> RSS leaders have responded by asking the Bharatiya Majdoor Sangh to oppose the 'anti-Swadeshi' policies of the Vajpayee government. The Sangh Parivar also organized a Chintan Baithak to oppose the BJP's economic policies.<sup>67</sup>

The major trends in the party system in the last decade are: the decline of the Congress, which has been the single most important development; the federalizations of the party system; a sharp rise in political mobilization on the basis of social cleavages based on ascriptive identities, in particular of religion and caste; and coalition form of government.<sup>68</sup> Ashutosh Varshney talks about the self-correcting mechanism of Indian democracy. By self correcting mechanism he does not mean an ethical or moral standards in politics, but that means 'the system punishes politicians or political party that go to an excess, violating democratic norms flagrantly, or pushing the system to ideological extremes of right or left, in other words, political and ideological excesses are checked; routine political misconduct on the whole, is not.'<sup>69</sup> Hence, Naxalism and Hindu extremism are said to be unacceptable to India's political framework. Heterogeneity, not

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<sup>66</sup> India Today, December 27, 1999

<sup>67</sup> Times of India, March 13, 2000.

<sup>68</sup> For detail please see, Anindya Saha 'The Indian Party System 1989-99, Seminar (4-25) August 1999.

<sup>69</sup> Ashutosh Varshney, 'The Self Correcting Mechanisms of India democracy', Seminar, January 1995,

homogeneity is the norms of Indian society. India's politics is oriented towards ideological centrism, i.e. a multi- religious political platform is necessary to capture power in Delhi.<sup>70</sup> Because of this there may be space for center-right or center-left at the core of Indian polity, but the left wing or right wing are most likely to be confined at the margins.

The present political situation shows that the BJP is sandwiched, between the Hindu Nationalists organization, such as, the RSS, the VHP, the Bajrang Dal on the one hand and the allies that have nothing to do with its ideology of Hindutva. When the right wings dominate the party, the political discourse and voting become more polarized. This hurts the BJP electorally. Contrary to this, when the moderate dominates the party, it is easier for the party to avoid polarization and hence benefit from aggregation. The first scenario – polarizing – is one of certain defeat; the second of aggregation does not guarantee victory but makes it more probable in parliamentary arithmetic.<sup>71</sup>

After the 1967 national elections, the election results have long ceased to produce straightforward results. The 1984 election was the last to deliver a majority government at the center. With the decline of the Congress party, the biggest gain was made by the BJP. The India political system demarcated by a variety of linguistic states with distinctive regional cultures, allows regional parties to thrive. A series of regional parties sprang up, appealing to the local sentiment, across the length and breadth of India. The advancement made by the regional parties make it difficult to foresee a national

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<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *ibid*

government that does not depend on a number of regional parties for its survival. The rise of the BJP and the emergence of the regional parties on the national stage define the context of the 1999 general election.

The extent and quality of alliances with the smaller parties determines the outcome of contemporary India general election. The notion of coalition government was given short shrift in Congress propaganda and to maintain a semblance of consistency between rhetoric and practice Congress only formed a limited number of electoral alliances, e-g, AIADMK in Tamil Nadu, RJD in Bihar. The BJP demonstrated a more acute understanding of the nature of electoral politics. It assiduously courted a series of regional parties. In return for alliance to gain vote and support in government, the BJP has to moderate its policies. The BJP alliance is now safe from the demand of one party that can break the coalition by itself.

The structural weakness in the coalition lies in the fault line between the ideologically focused parties, the BJP and the Shiv Sena, and the remaining regional parties. While they are prepared to ally with the BJP, they do not wish to be associated with the ideology or the extreme policies of the BJP.

So far no party is able to claim a national mandate. Individually, the regional parties are small and in ordinary circumstances would be insignificant at the national level. Collectively they are powerful and can be a formidable kingmaker. Nevertheless BJP is still a regionally confined party. The regional parties impose a check on the

rhetoric and well as the policies of the BJP. The policy of moderation and alliance building has enabled the party to gain power but the nationalist ambitions of the party cannot be achieved while it remains in coalition. One view is that the BJP remains at heart an extremist party and that its current moderation is a tactical move that will allow the party to gain credibility in government. In this view BJP will use the alliances to remain in power and build a national profile that it could then use to displace its regional allies.<sup>72</sup> Looking at the graph of India's internal politics during the period 1989-1999, it appears highly probable that for most of its immediate future at least, India will have coalition government. Coalition government can work only when the political parties mutually respect each other and have no serious differences among them. Problem arises when there is no such mutual goodwill for each other among political parties. There may not be differences on basic issues between certain political parties in India but unfortunately there are serious differences of a personal nature at the top level and this has made it difficult for the leaders to work together.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Jafferlot, Christophe, 'The BJP at the Center – a Central and Centrist Party' in T.B. Hansen and Christophe Jafferlot (eds): *The BJP and the Compulsions of Politics in India*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>73</sup> P.C. Alexander, *The Perils of Democracy*, (Mumbai.. Somaiya Publications, 1995), p. 25.

## CONCLUSION

Today, Hindutva has become a powerful force. Its resurgence, however, has not augured well for a great and beautiful country like India. The future of this great country lays greatly threatened not by the external forces, but by the advocates of strong India swearing in the name of Hindu culture, Hindu Religions. In their enthusiasm for establishing a Hindu nation modeled on the notion of its 'ancient glory', they discord the concrete facts that India is a multi-cultural and multi-facet country. Whoever accepts India as a nation must also accept that India is a land of diversity. It is this beautiful mosaic of unity in diversity that make up the composite culture of India.

It is not just a figure of speech, but also a historical fact that India has always been a multi-religious, multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-ethnic country. It never has any state religion. The constitution of India declares India to be a secular state. Every religion has equal status and all individuals are given freedom of religion. It also gives protection for the minorities. During the freedom movement, people belonging to different caste, creed, region, religion participated in the struggle against the Britishers to achieve independence. All the people born in India are her children whether he or she is Muslim or Christians, etc. The constitution makers referred to them as 'we the people of India'. They envisioned India a sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic republic. Never in their mind even for second, they entertained the thought that India will become a Hindu Rashtra.

Many scholars are of the view that the word Hindu refers to the people living in India and hence Hinduism as religion is of recent origin. Even then Hinduism as a religion is known for its elasticity, flexibility, pluralism and lack of dogma. Hinduism has accepted people of different faith and treated them with respect. And all of them together have great sense of patriotism. But unfortunately religious intolerance and hatred have been on the rise in social and political field. The Sangh Parivar and its socio-political units are trying to use religion to divide the people of India in order to acquire political power.<sup>1</sup> This has created fear and insecurity among the petrified minorities i.e., non-Hindus. The objective of 'Hindutva' is nothing but to establish a Hindu Rashtra where the people of other faith cannot enjoy liberty, equality, justice and fraternity.

Jawaharlal Nehru and the Congress party foresaw the danger of mixing politics and religion for a country like India. They were of the view that doing so will surely take India back to savage barbarism. Therefore, they were firmly committed to making India a secular country where religion will be confined to the private sphere and state will have nothing to do with it. At that time the efforts of the advocates of Hindu Rashtra to rally Hindus in the name of religion has little success. They were, in other words, completely overshadowed by the consensus that emerged from Nehru and the Congress party.

But after the death of Nehru this consensus was gradually waning from the Indian political scene. The successive Congress governments lacked the political commitment to uphold this grand legacy. Rather the compulsion of Indian politics compelled the Congress party to appease the majority and minority communities to secure their votes.

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<sup>1</sup> S. J. P.D. Mathew, *Hinduism, Hindutva and Secularism*, (New Delhi: India Social Institute, 1999), p.ii.

This process greatly helped the forces of Hindutva to emerge as a political ideology. In the process, the secular democratic framework was pushed back.

Hindutva has no place in Indian society, if it does not adopt its strategy of communalizing Indian society on religious lines. Christians and Muslims are seen as a threat to the unity and integrity of India. A part of the strategy is the construction of a threatening 'others' as enemy to garner mass support. They hold the view that the onus for harmonious co-existence lies with the minorities. The latter must learn to respect, obey and observe the culture of the majority. Their belief in democracy also stems out not from their love for democratic value, but from their evil intention that in democratic country only the majority will rule, and Hindus being the majority of India's population will always be the rulers. What was envisaged was for the minorities to be second-class citizens in a Hindu Rashtra.<sup>2</sup>

They want to rewrite the constitution so that minorities will not have any scope for protection of their rights enjoyed hitherto. Because of all these, there is a growing need to understand the true nature of Hindu Nationalist force operating in our country. RSS, the parent body of the Hindu Nationalist organizations knows quite well that acquiring political power is a good means to achieve its goal of establishing Hindu Rashtra in India. Because of this, it wholeheartedly campaigned for its political arm, the BJP. BJP has no policy independent of its parent organization. Its control over the party

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<sup>2</sup> "*The Corrosive impact of Hindutva*", by Malive Partha Sarathy, *The Hindu India*, August 15, 1997, p. 71-79.



is ensured by assigning its members as the key functionaries of the party. The party looks up to its leadership for guidance in every major decisions.

At times there arises conflict among its various officiated organizations. For example, serious differences arose between the VHP and the BJP over the date for the beginning of the construction of Ram Temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya. For the BJP participation in the Ram Janambhoomi movement is purely a political game. It is a means rather than an end for the party. But for VHP it is an end itself. It is increasingly becoming more and more impatient for the prolong delay to construct the temple. When such disagreement arises, the RSS acts as mediator. It acts not just as a mediator among its affiliated organizations, but also for maintaining discipline within the party. Its slogan of 'a party with a difference' was only in words. It is worse than other party when it comes to internal functioning. The level a confrontation within the party have reached to such an extent that the Telegraph wrote, 'Wanted a Bishma Pitamah for the BJP'.<sup>3</sup>

Though it is a party with an avowed Hindutva goal, its realization will not be easy keeping the reality of Indian society as has been evident from its experience in the past few years. When confronted with electoral and power politics, it has shown sign of immediate compromise with its principle to acquire power. It also resorted to 'horse-trading'. The BJP sized power in Uttar Pradesh in October 1997 by breaking the SP and

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<sup>3</sup> The Telegraph, October 19, 2002, p.1.

the Congress, reportedly offering the breakaway group portfolios and large amount of money.<sup>4</sup>

The BJP soon realized that it could not win power on its own strength in the state as well as at the central levels. It gradually gave up its strategy of political mobilization and diverted its attention on the strategy of making alliances and electoral adjustments.

On its own strength it feel short of MPs required to stake government. Hence to reach that majority, the MPs can come only from other parties. It felt the need to move out of its stronghold and even within its own stronghold it needs to expand the social base. It is a party of the Hindi heartland; its presences are marginal in the South and the East. In this sense the party is still not an All India Party. As a result, it began to moderate its stance; for example, it gave up its insistence on Hindi as the national language. Now it has clearly settled for forging alliances with the regional parties as the means for getting the required majority to form government. It is also useful to gain a foothold in the new places. While the allies help to acquire new territory and provide the much-needed support in the parliament, their supports come at a price. It is a fact beyond dispute that most of the allies have their own agenda. They are in short seeking to gratify their own regional needs. Therefore building of alliances is purely base on political expediency and has nothing to do with ideology. But this does not mean that the allies will remain blind to the havoc Hindutva forces have been committing against India's democracy. It may be noted here that, the BJP has decided to shelf its core issues for time being.

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Blum Hansen, Zoya Hasan and Christophe Jafferlot, *Short Cut to Power: From Lucknow to Delhi*, in T.B. Hansen and C. Jafferlot (eds.), *BJP and the compulsion of India Politics*, p. 315.

The party realized in 1996 election that there is a limit to its strategy of mobilization on religions issues. The destruction of the Mosque, quite contrary to its belief, was rejected by majority of the Hindus as was evident in the 1993 Vidhan Sabha election. It tone down its Hindutva rhetoric. However its commitment to Hindutva is unmistakable when we shift our analysis to the states. The most recent being the Gujarat incident where the fanatic Hindus massacred thousands of innocent Muslims.

The past general elections in India have confirmed the overall tendency towards regionalization of Indian politics. This demonstrated that the Prime Minister of India would henceforth be made and unmade in state capitals rather than in Delhi. The Congress party has suffered a major set back, but it is not merely the decline of one party and the filling of vacant space by other political forces. It is in short, the possible demise of an entire political culture based on 'majoritarian consensus'. In the contemporary scenario's of Indian politics, small parties, even independents enjoy significant positions in the parliamentary game. A new mode of political conduct base on negotiation for alliances and shifting of alliances is in fashion. Today, the BJP is a junior partner in most of the southern and eastern states.

In view of the growing regionalization of Indian politics, the party has entered a terrain of compromises and potential disorder, which many of its voters resent, and which furthermore, is anathema to the ideological 'purists' of the RSS and the VHP.<sup>5</sup> But, BJP has learned the art of making alliances. It knows quite well that many regional parties will find difficulty in accepting its ideology of Hindutva. Hence to facilitate the alliance

formation, the party evolved with its partner a common 'National Democratic Agenda'. It gave up three contentious issues: the building of Ram Temple in Ayodhya, the abrogation of Art 370 and the imposition of an Uniform civil code.

How long BJP can show flexibility is a big question, because of its relationship with the RSS. Other party such as the Congress has no such compulsions. The BJP is therefore in a dilemma. On the one hand it depends on allies for its survival. Also the support tendered by the allies is conditional. On the other, it has linked with the RSS. Going away from the Hindutva goal will jeopardize its relationship with the parent organization. The BJP government is brittle for various reasons. It depends on the uncertain support of the allies. The most important weakness is its relationship with the allies and the Sangh Parivar. The allies will expect to dilute its Hindutva ideology. Where there has been a widespread agreement between the allies the BJP and the RSS on security issues, the government did not comply with the Hindu nationalist doctrine on economic issues. BJP to become a mainstream party has to a great extent mutates its Hindutva ideology. Whether it will do or not, and how it will do is anybody's guess.

What the BJP is doing now is a tactical shift rather than a transformation in its ideological transformation. The BJP has set aside some of its core ideological issues to prop up a coalition, but there is no indication to suggest that the party's change in these issues have been completed because as on BJP leader said: 'These are decisions that we cannot implement on our own in the near future. So they will have to wait till such time

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 356

as we can do things unilaterally'.<sup>6</sup> This shows that its core Hindutva goals are still the hearts and souls of the party. Its present moderation is because it cannot get two-third majority. There is not reason to disbelief that party will alter its present moderation and return to its militant positions once it acquired the capability to get two-third majority.

As long as the party remains under the influence of the RSS, it will be not possible to adopt the path of moderation or dilute its Hindutva ideology. On the other hand if the party breaks its relationship with the RSS, it would cost the party very dearly given the fact that many of its top readerships are from the RSS. Moreover its relationship with the RSS-VHP network has proved decisive for its growth. Without this network, it will be impossible for the party to capture the Hindi heartland.

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<sup>6</sup> India Today, 29 December 1997).

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