

**CONSTRUCTED APPEALS OF HINDUTVA:  
THE CULTURAL NATIONALISM OF THE SANGH PARIVAR.**

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**PRANOTI CHIRMULEY**



**Centre for the Study of Social Systems  
School of Social Sciences  
Jawaharlal Nehru University  
New Delhi- 110067  
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जवाहरलाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय  
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY  
NEW DELHI 110 067

Centre for the Study of Social Systems  
School of Social Sciences

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**CONSTRUCTED APPEALS OF HINDUTVA: THE CULTURAL NATIONALISM OF THE SANGH PARIVAR**” submitted by Pranoti Chirmuley in partial fulfillment for award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree to any other University and is her own work.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Prof. Anand Kumar  
(Chairperson)

**Chairperson**  
**CSSS/SSS**  
Jawaharlal Nehru **University**  
New Delhi-110067

Prof. Dipankar Gupta  
(Supervisor)

**Professor**  
**Centre for the Study**  
**of Social Systems**  
School of Social Sciences  
Jawaharlal Nehru University  
New Delhi

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## INTRODUCTION

The resurgence of the right wing in Indian politics since the 1980s, has called for a detailed analysis of their socio-cultural ideology. By right wing the reference here is to the cluster of the RSS-VHP-BJP and the Shiv Sena as well. After the initial success of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the Lok Sabha elections of 1989, their journey into Indian politics gathered momentum. The BJP is the latter day incarnation of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) commonly referred to as the Jana Sangh. The Jana Sangh (set up in 1951) was the first of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's (RSS) attempt at political activism. Since its inception in 1925, the RSS till date remains formally a cultural organization committed to the cause of Hindu regeneration in India. The RSS, is nevertheless the inspiration behind the BJP. The latter is infact the parliamentary wing of the RSS. The BJP reigns but it is the RSS, which governs much of its political strategies. The Sangh Parivar seeks to unite people regardless of their caste, class or religion, into a Saffron/Hindu brotherhood. It has built the façade of being progressive, secular and development oriented. Behind this front, their true intentions and motives are nevertheless evident. <sup>2</sup>The central concern of this analysis is to see how such anti-pluralist movements gain support from a wide cross section of the population. The attempt here is to engage with questions relating to their politics of *Hindutva*.

Unlike most political parties in India, the BJP strongly holds on to an unusual mix of cultural, social and political concerns. This is not to deny that other political parties too have similar considerations. However, over the past two decades, the nature of right wing politics in India has largely been a combination of religion and politics. ✓ The Sangh Parivar has essentially constructed this image of itself as the only party that is seriously committed to Indian culture. The Sangh Parivar has fostered the myth that ✓ Hinduism is under threat and thus portrayed itself as the saviour of indigenous cultural traditions. Religion, which is largely restricted to our personal spheres, has now become an endemic public feature in India. Today, open manipulations of religious issues are common.

↳ The imaginations of national identities along religious lines like a Hindu identity for instance, have been prevalent in India. However such imaginings never received electoral endorsements on a large scale. The lack of a central leadership after the decline of the 'Congress system' (Kothari, 1964) and the weakening of the Left forces in India, has led to the rise of the Saffron parties. It came up then as the only alternative to fill the ideological and organizational political vacuum. The Parivar through its affiliates soon became a significant force to reckon with for all political parties. It has introduced a

renewed sense of Hindu identity in Indian politics. Secularism, the official doctrine of India since Independence in 1945, defines a nation with due consideration to all castes, creeds and religions. It does not discriminate against any faith or culture that a person may belong to. It holds the State as central and relates to the political and territorial concerns of the nation. On the other hand, however the Saffron combine defines the nation with a strong reference to Indian culture. For the Parivar cultural parameters define an individual's nationality. The Saffron combine holds completely different notions of nation, nationality and citizenship. It denies the claims made by territorial nationalism. By proposing cultural and religious connotations to nationalism, the Parivar has challenged the secular ethos of India. It professes the idea that those who share a common culture, i.e. the Hindu culture, are the only rightful citizens of this country. Those who do not share this common bond are looked at with suspicion and contempt.)

The Sangh and its front organizations that come to make up the Parivar, have successfully managed to carve out a niche for themselves in India. Within a period of two decades or more, the Parivar has been able to gain the support of a vast multitude of people. (Like the Sangh, its affiliates as well, have moved beyond their urban settings into the rural set up. The Parivar devised a very efficient system of reaching out to people by participating in their various activities. It skilfully became a part of the rituals and celebrations of people and thus was soon looked upon as inseparable features of their lives. )

In the first chapter, the focus is laid down upon the emergence of a Hindu consciousness in India. The wave of Hindu nationalism essentially began with this new sense of one's identity. In order to put into perspective this aspect certain events of the Independence movement of India are put forth. After the revolt of 1857, the socio-cultural ethos of India began to undergo significant changes. Once referred to as the most characteristic example of Hindu-Muslim unity, after 1857 India witnessed the breaking up this very unity. Gradually the relations between the two communities became excessively bitter. In addition, the periodization of Indian history by Orientalists and Western scholars reinforced the angst between Hindus and Muslims. It has to be borne in mind that these communities were not a figment of the British political imagination but overlapped with forms of classification prevalent in India. Nonetheless we cannot deny the fact that the relations between the two communities were surely tense. It has to be kept in mind that there has always been an aversion for the alien,

strange or the 'other.' The Muslims have continued to be looked at with doubt, suspicion.

During the freedom struggle, efforts were underway to build a strong resistance to colonial rule in India. Alongside these attempts to bring about a unified struggle to oust the colonial forces from India there were other movements that sought to unite people on religious lines. The Hindu revivalist movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century is an example of this phenomena. Several other events from the history of the Independence movement have also been discussed. The rise of the Congress, crucial events under the leadership of M K Gandhi and B G Tilak are narrated here. The need to recall these crucial phases of Indian history is to put into perspective the aggressive outlook of the Hindu nationalists at present.

The second half of this chapter deals with the rise of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Established in 1925, during a very tense and chaotic phase of Hindu-Muslim rioting, the RSS was seen as the legitimate guardian of Hindu interests. The ideological inspiration behind the RSS was Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's book titled *Hindutva*. It was essentially a detailed account of Indian history from the point of view of a proud Hindu. The central argument in the book was the essential criterion for defining a Hindu. Savarkar's ideas were the inspiration behind Dr. K B Hedgewar's (founder of the RSS) dream of establishing a *Hindu rashtra* (nation). Over time the RSS became a strong, disciplined organization strictly dedicated to the cause of the Hindus. It displayed distinct Hindu symbols and imagery, like the saffron flag supposedly belonging to Ram the mythological Hindu god. Ram has continued to be a central figure for the Sangh and its affiliates till date. Finally, the last section of the chapter elaborates the writings of V D Savarkar and M S Golwalkar. They have added a new perspective to our commonly held ideas of nation, nationalism, patriotism, and loyalty.

The second chapter looks at the progress of the RSS since the Partition of India. After Golwalkar became the head of the RSS in 1940, several changes were brought into its functioning. For the RSS, the years following the Partition were extremely difficult. In 1948 the RSS and many other individuals were implicated in the murder of M K Gandhi. Nathuram Godse, who killed Gandhi, was closely associated with the RSS. These are claims that the RSS persistently denies. Thus a ban was imposed on the RSS, and its leaders were arrested. After an eighteen month ban the RSS diligently began its work to reach out to people and more importantly change public opinion in its favour. The focus of the chapter is on how the Sangh expanded and built a strong network by



floating various front organizations. The Sangh shaped Hindu consciousness into a strong ideology of Hindu nationalism. The Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), and a variety of other organizations came to form the Parivar of the Sangh.

(The RSS began its political journey initially with the Jana Sangh. By the 1980s, the Jana Sangh was revived as the Bharatiya Janata Party in April 1980. By this period the Sangh had managed to penetrate into areas beyond urban settings. This was possible with the help of its front organizations working in several rural areas as well. Parallel to this political career of the Sangh Parivar, I have mentioned the socio-political and economic set up in India under Congress rule. The political trajectory of the Parivar is incomplete without any mention of the workings of the Congress. Some loopholes in the governing system of the Congress proved profitable for the Parivar. There were times when the Congress too used religious issues to its advantage. (However, between 1980 and 2002, the Parivar has repeatedly manipulated the 'communal card' to extreme levels. In so doing it has created a mass frenzy among Hindus in India. People were mobilized to believe that Hindus were being discriminated against, vis-à-vis the Muslims. This frenzied mood finally culminated in the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya.) (The Sangh Parivar had pitched the temple issue as a counter-point to the Mandal recommendations (1990). The real reason was that the Mandal report called for reservations for the OBCs, which would divide the Hindu vote bank in the country. The report basically posed a challenge to the upper caste hegemony and that is why it was strongly protested against by the Sangh Parivar.)

In a separate section, this chapter also discusses the growth of the Shiv Sena. The Shiv Sena is a regional party established in 1966 in Mumbai. It shares several features of the Parivar, including its antagonistic feelings for minorities, especially Muslims. The manner in which the Sena has evolved over the years, displays a pattern very similar to the Sangh Parivar. Both were averse to political activism and later came to be strong contenders in Indian politics. Their political journeys are full of accounts of atrocities against minorities like the Muslims and Christians. The Sena and the Parivar both have significantly strengthened the antagonism between the Hindus and Muslims. The violence perpetrated against the Muslims and other minorities are apparent features of their agendas, which cannot be ignored.

(The third and final chapter looks at the Parivar's concept of cultural nationalism. This conception of the Sangh Parivar differs considerably from the commonsensical

understanding of nationalism. It has typical upper caste, Brahminical orientations. The dream of establishing a Hindu rashtra clearly stood by Savarkar's imaginings of *Hindutva*, and Golwalkar's insistence on the assimilation theory. It was in other words, a homogenous understanding of the nation. Only the Hindus are seen as the rightful citizens of the Hindu rashtra. The minorities are expected to assimilate into the Hindu culture or accept a subordinate status in the country. The cultural nationalist project essentially held an anti-pluralist and neo-fascist vision. It did not object to perpetrating violence against the minorities. The justification forwarded was that they did not fit into the Hindu cultural ethos. They were looked down upon as traitors and unpatriotic people.

(I have tried to show that in the recent past, this project has mobilized the various sections of society into participating in activities of the Parivar. Different sections of the society were mobilized in diverse ways. The anxieties of different sections were efficiently manipulated to garner support from these numerous classes. (The Sangh Parivar has diligently worked over the past several decades and has managed to reach out to a vast and mixed population. It has even convinced the lower sections of the society like the dalits, tribals or adivasis. The involvement of these groups of people has surprised many commentators and scholars. among people in India. The reason is that these sections have repeatedly put up strong resistance in the past to upper caste domination. Today however, many of them stand in unison with the saffron forces, which continues to hold onto their high caste ideological orientations.)

I further attempt to highlight two important aspects of the Sangh Parivar's cultural nationalist project. The Parivar's politics of *Hindutva*, in essence, displays its anti-pluralist and neo-fascist vision. The Sangh and its affiliates clearly stand by the idea of one nation, one race, one blood and one culture. The reference here was in obvious ways only to Hindu nation or culture. Over time, it had created the category of the 'other.' The 'other' for the Parivar refers to the minorities, and the alternative voices that opposes its homogenising ideology. Fascism is a term that is often avoided in possible characterisations of right wing formations like the Sangh Parivar, or the Shiv Sena.. It brings back several discomfoting images, ideas and memories. Nevertheless, this term holds other significant and relevant connotations as well. It is a totalitarian, repressive vision that does not object to ordering the systematic killing of minorities. The neo-fascist perspective of the Parivar closely controls the lives of people. This Foucauldian notion of surveillance that the saffron combine holds onto, closely monitors daily life in

order to curb all opposition. (The unfamiliar, the alien and rebellious are all condemned. Democratic voices are muzzled by systematically banning dissent and dubbing any opposition as anti-Indian. (In reality, the Fascism in Italy, Nazism in Germany and neo-fascism of the Parivar display some similar features. The Parivar too introduced the race theory into nationalism, when it revived the debate around the notion that the Aryans were the original inhabitants of India. In the process, they synonymously used the terms Aryans and Hindus. The question of racial superiority was replaced by upper caste orientations. They have systematically doctored history and other pedagogical systems in order to fit their ideas and theories. The Parivar has proposed a homogenous conception of the Hindu rashtra. This concept clearly denies any rightful privilege or special treatment for the minorities. The system of reservations too does not really find justification in their ideology.) (This notion of *rashtra* pushes the minorities in India to the status of secondary citizens. As in the Nazi regime in Germany all forms of communication, print media, magazines, theatre, films etc., were closely supervised. The intention was to control the system in order that no one would challenge the authority of Hitler. The Parivar has clearly stood by all such measures. These are ways to make sure that people do not express views that go against the ideology of the Parivar.)

Irrespective of the anti-pluralist and neo-fascist vision of the Saffron fraternity, a vast multitude of people in India supports it. My central question is to see how or why do such anti-pluralist movements gain support from such a cross section of the population. The Sangh Parivar seeks to unite people regardless of their caste, class or religion, into a Saffron/Hindu brotherhood. It has built the façade of being progressive, secular and development oriented. Behind this front, their true intentions and motives are nevertheless evident.

In the end I would say that the need is to carefully analyse the workings of the saffron fraternity. It essential to explore and engage with several crucial questions and debates like that of anti-pluralism and neo-fascism. To avoid these concerns would mean to restrict our analysis of these crucial issues. (The cultural chauvinism of the Parivar has constructed more faulty and illusive ideas of nation, patriotism and citizenship. In order to understand the direction of contemporary politics in the Indian subcontinent, it is essential not only to look at the methods of expansion used by the various organisations under consideration here, but also to engage with debates which question whether these organisations do in fact fit terms like 'anti-pluralist', or 'neo-fascist') Any analysis of the Sangh parivar, for instance, has to look at the ideological moorings of its various fronts,

the popular appeal of its praxis, and also its organisational histories. It is their political appropriation of doctored histories that holds the potential to obscure the plurality, which characterises the history of the subcontinent.

## CHAPTER I

### THE RISE OF A HINDU CONSCIOUSNESS

At present, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the parliamentary front of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, once again underwent several changes in light of the General Elections 2004. In its tenure at the centre, as the ruling party in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, the BJP has had a successful turn. Once branded as conservative, it has completely transformed its image in Indian politics. Today, they are largely considered as a 'development centric' political body. Their 'India Shining' advertising campaign of 2004 is highlighted its progressive, secular and development oriented image. However behind this motivated myth they seem to create, their fundamental ideas and views remain unchanged.

It is a well-known fact that, the BJP has always worked hand-in-glove with the RSS and the VHP and several such organizations. However, the primary concern of this dissertation is with the relations between the RSS and the BJP in terms of the political ideology of the Hindu Rashtra, that they propose. It is believed that the successful expansion of the BJP in India since the 1980's, has been possible only due to the efforts of the work of the RSS over the past 75-80 years. The RSS was founded in the 1920's on the Vijaydashmi day in Nagpur, was limited largely to the territory of Maharashtra. Over the past seven to eight decades it has worked rigorously to expand its outreach beyond the boundaries of the Marathi speaking masses. It is on these efforts of the RSS that the BJP's popularity thrives today.

In this chapter, I shall look at the history of the right wing, with a central focus on the RSS. The rise of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh is analysed here in the context of the political climate, which existed after the revolt of 1857 till the 1920's. Various events from the history of India's Independence movement have been used to develop an ideologically majoritarian notion of nationalism couched as the need to protect the Hindu dharma and the Hindu cultural ethos. I have taken up a selective manner of analysis of the right wing history with the broader perspective in mind of analysing the phenomena of Hindu nationalism. The rise of the RSS is regarded as an important link in the evolution of Hindu nationalism. The attempt here, in the process of recounting some events of the Independence movement, is to develop a coherent understanding of the structure of the political ideology of the Sangh Parivar today. This section is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the events of the Indian Independence movement, which provides a lead to the second that in detail speaks of the RSS.

The third part of this chapter elaborates with the views of the chief ideologues of the Sangh Parivar namely V D Savarkar and M S Golwalkar. The former developed the

concept of *Hindutva*, which today is the cornerstone of the BJP ideology. M S Golwalkar succeeded Dr. K B Hedgewar, as the *sarsanghchalak* of the RSS. He had introduced certain significant changes into the RSS functioning. The writings of these two thinkers are analysed here with regards to the main theme of *Hindurashtravaad* of the Sangh Parivar. V D Savarkar and M S Golwalkar have distinctly contributed to the very themes of nationalism. Their writings proposed a novel interpretation of a *rashtra* (nation) that was exclusively meant for the Hindus who they believed to be the only truly indigenous group. The writings of these ideological mentors of the Sangh Parivar help us to understand the ethos of the Hindu nation, religion and culture that is constantly recalled even today by the *Hindutva* fraternity.

Numerous studies have been carried out on the phenomena of Hindu Revivalism and Hindu- Muslim antagonism and rioting in India. Several interpretations have been drawn from such researches. I will be recalling some of these events in the beginning of this chapter. Perhaps no novel interpretations would be put forth, however their mention here is done in order to put in perspective the current religious conflict between the Hindus and Muslims that is clearly politically motivated.

#### EVENTS FROM THE INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

Colonial rule in India introduced the Indian masses to a new set of views and values. This was done through its modern style of education and administration. Educational policies were justified in terms of the civilizing mission and were geared towards creating efficient administrators (*babus* or clerks). It was through colonial education that people learnt the idioms of nation and nationalism. Those who were attracted to this modern education system belonged mostly to the upper caste Hindus. Nevertheless some from this very class later spoke of socio-religious and political reform. This new system of education as well as administration compelled the masses to see in a new light their own culture and religious practices.

The constant criticism by the British of Hindu religion with regard to its caste system and cultural rituals, developed the need to preserve and revive one's cultural tradition. This new wave to revive Hindu religion from the shackles of convention saw some Hindus also emulate modern values. Several Hindu practices were therefore given up or reshaped thus holding at bay strong criticism. During this period, the British tried to upset the harmonious coexistence of the Hindus and Muslims, especially after the

1857 revolt. The main motive was to break the unity between the two and thereby weaken the opposition against the colonial rule. In this process one saw that overtime Hindu revivalist organizations adopted an extreme attitude against the Muslims. The Hindu revivalist movement that took place during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, set the stage for the development of Hindu nationalism during the late twentieth century.

The idea of re-establishing faith in a golden past was central to Hindu revivalists. However this was not a commonly shared viewpoint. There emerged two peculiar kinds of ideological groupings. On the one hand were the modernists like Raja Rammohan Roy, who believed in socio-political change and reform. They were of the view that Hindu religion had to give up some of its oppressive social practices. Their ideas were modelled on Western views, which they eventually came to emulate. For the other group, 'religion' was the most central concern. These revivalists sought to rekindle pride and deep regard for a supposedly submerged golden past. They opined that the past too was rich and did profess the rationality of modern science. These revivalists often spoke in a traditional idiom and unlike their modern counterparts worked towards a mass movement. The traditional idioms that were used gradually appealed to a large number of Hindus. These revivalist activities initially began in Bengal, Bombay and Punjab.

The Bengal Renaissance is another important link within the evolution of Hindu nationalism. It was a phase that confused Indian nationalism with Hindu nationalism. The best expression of a nationalistic consciousness during this period was found in literature. The numerous writings done during this time, whether colonial or indigenous, tended to highlight cultural and religious differences between communities. The point that is being made here is that, in the nineteenth century, British historians led by James Mill periodised Indian history into 'Muslim' and 'Hindu' era and/or civilization. The colonial interpretation of Indian history was thus done on communal lines. The attempt was to depict a sense of antagonism between the Hindus and the Muslims that lasted over several centuries.

The textbooks written during this period were gradually propagating a Hindu nationalistic consciousness through its contents. For instance the first textbook on Indian history written in Bengali by Tarinicharan Chattopadhyay, reflected this feeling,

“India has been ruled in turn by Hindus, Musalmans and Christians. Accordingly, the history of this country is divided into the periods of Hindu,



Muslim and Christian rule.”<sup>1</sup> Some excerpts from the book: “Muhammad gave to his followers the name *musalman* i.e. the faithful, and to all other humans the name *kafir* or *infidel*. Directing his followers to take the sword in order to destroy the *kafir*....It was impossible that such people, always delirious at the prospect of conquest, would not covet the riches of India. Of all the Muslims, it was his [Mahmud of Ghazni] aggression which first brought devastation and disarray to India, and from that time the freedom of the Hindus diminished and faded like the phases of the moon.”<sup>2</sup>

A similar view was held with regards to the Buddha, however harsh criticisms were reserved for the Muslims alone.

For instance, “[The Buddha] became a great enemy of the Hindu religion, which is why Hindus describe him as an atheist and the destroyer of *dharma*. Nevertheless, the religion founded by him contains much advice of the highest spiritual value. He did not admit anything that was devoid of reason.”<sup>3</sup>

One can thus see that the Muslims unlike other religious communities were being regarded as aliens who were out to conquer and plunder rich countries like India.<sup>4</sup>

Another example that needs mention here is the writings of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. He popularised the concept that Hindus had a divine sanction to fight for a society in which their *dharma* could be expressed freely. Bankim’s poem ‘*Bande Mataram*’ used the symbolism of the mother. The poem especially likened the nation with the mother. His novel ‘*Anandmath*’ speaks of the sanyasi rebellion against the British. “Bankim Chandra Chatterjee saw in Islam a quest for power and glory, devoid of spiritual and ethical qualities, irrational, bigoted, devious, sensual and immoral, and a complete antithesis of his ‘ideal’ religion. He saw medieval India as a period of bondage, and interpreted a Hindu chieftain’s resistance to the Mughals as a form of national resistance.”<sup>5</sup> It was through such judgemental narrations of events in Indian

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<sup>1</sup> Partha S. Ghosh (1999)- *BJP and the Evolution of Hindu nationalism: From Periphery to Centre*. Manohar Publications, New Delhi, p.49.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.49

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p.49

<sup>4</sup> VD Savarkar’s tone completely alters and he begins to speak a harsh language when any reference is made to Mohammad Ghazni in particular and/or the Muslims, in *Hindutva* (1923). Making a reference to Sindhusthan in the feminine, he says, “At last, she was rudely awakened on the day when Mohamad of Gazani crossed the Indus...and invaded her. That day the conflict of life and death began. Nothing makes Self conscious of itself so much as the conflict with the non-Self. Nothing can weld peoples into a nation and nations into a state as the pressure of common foe....From year to year, decade to decade, century to century, the contest continued.”, p.37 (first edition).

<sup>5</sup> Mushirul Hasan (2002)- ‘The BJP’s Intellectual Agenda’, *South Asia*, Vol. 25, December, p.191 & 192. Such interpretations of history by renowned authors like Bankim are bound to create a biased, confused and more often an incorrect understanding of Indian history. Medieval India, considered to be the most culturally rich period of Indian history is spoken in such derogatory terms. “Suffice it to say that such images and representations led to the creation of opposite camps, each trying to create its own icons and golden epochs and constructing the past accordingly. Whereas ‘Hindu’ writers depicted the Turkish

history, along with the use of critical language for the Muslims and Buddhists, that a new consciousness among the Hindus was emerging.

Thus one observes that from within the struggle against colonialism in India Hindu consciousness was being born. In these struggles there emerged a tendency to make constant references to religious symbols and cultural traditions. Very often gendered symbolizations were also used in order that the masses could easily decipher the idiom of nationalism. The consciousness about a nation under alien threat and rule of the British was being propagated through such peculiar symbols.

Socio-religious movements in early nineteenth century also saw a deep regard for reform within Hindu religion. The Brahma Samaj set up by Raja Rammohan Roy in 1828 was one such example. A Hindu consciousness was being created but it believed in the ethos of 'reforming' the religion in the face heavy criticisms by the British. However, in the years that followed, a more exaggerated effort at Hindu revivalism like those by the Arya Samaj was seen. The Arya Samaj was founded by Dayanand Saraswati in 1875 in Punjab. It emerged as a prime mover of the Hindus, especially in North India. It challenged the proselytising efforts of missionaries during that period. The Arya Samaj also rallied to ban cow slaughter in India.

In 1885 the Indian National Congress was set up. Within this body, there emerged two ideologically different factions, i.e. the moderates and the extremists. The former believed in moderate, non-violent means of struggle whereas the latter were strongly in favour of political activism. The moderates in the Congress followed M K Gandhi, and B G Tilak led the Extremists. The Extremists under Tilak upheld the cause of the Hindus, however they did not ever form a purely Hindu organization outside the Congress. To revive the ethos of Hindu religion amongst the masses, Tilak started the Sarvajanik Ganesh Utsav (1893) and festivals to honour Shivaji (1896), the 17<sup>th</sup> century Maratha warrior. "Religious festivals were organized to revive the glory of Hinduism to praise the exploits of its heroes and more importantly to establish a national identity based on distinctly Hindu symbols."<sup>6</sup>

These celebrations, usually carried out within the household, now attained the dimensions of a public event. In the long run, this helped to generate a community

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conquerors in very lurid colours and praised as heroes those who had offered resistance to the medieval rulers, the 'Muslim' historians spiritedly described the inferiority of Rajput courage....They invoked, moreover, the exploits of Mahmud of Ghazni and Aurangzeb, and idealised the medieval Indian past."

<sup>6</sup> Walter K. Andersen and Shridhar Danle (1987) – *The Brotherhood in Saffron: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*, Vistaar Publications Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi., p.19

feeling among a growing number of Hindus. In the years to come the imagery generated from these organised festivities would serve as a meaningful catalyst for the formation of Hindu sectarian organizations. It should be kept in mind that during this period there was a growing tendency of confusing Indian nationalism with Hindu revivalist orientation. However it is also clear that many Hindu activists did not want to incorporate themselves into the Congress. They were in search of an alternative strategy that would bring to the forefront the cause of the Hindus.

The everyday functioning style and the secular, democratic principles of the Congress, especially under Gandhi's leadership were accused of altering relations between various religious communities. It is an allegation made for the Congress, even today. The point that is being made is, that the Congress was accused of appeasing the minorities as against a vast Hindu population. At this juncture one has to take note of some events of the Indian national movement that was supposedly being led by the Congress. These are important for they changed the political ethos of the country. It was not until Gandhi<sup>7</sup> came onto the forefront of Indian politics that a mass appeal was created. Gradually it had become a distinct and important force to reckon with for the British. The manner in which it took part and supposedly came to lead the freedom movement was unusual. Therefore it was considered as the only political body that was 'representative' of the Indian masses. It was within this period i.e. 1875 to 1920's that Hindu nationalism emerges as a strong response to a growing need to represent the Hindus specifically. In 1906, the Muslim League was established with a central demand for separate electorates for the Muslims. The demands that Hindu and Muslim organizations made to the British government in the years to come took on more communal overtones.

The Congress and the Muslim League tried to arrive at some consensus to reduce the rising tension between the two communities. In 1916 they signed the Lucknow Pact, which gave separate electorates to the Muslims. Several events took place after this, widening the rift between Hindus and Muslims. In the following years the Congress came under the leadership of Gandhi. Under his leadership after the death of Tilak,

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<sup>7</sup> "...in 1907, while serving the first of several jail sentences, Gandhiji chanced to read Thoreau's great essay on 'Civil Disobedience'. Thoreau was a renowned American Civil Rights' activist, ecologist and thinker of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Gandhiji was deeply inspired by Thoreau, he read him, and he quoted him... While the consensus is that Thoreau reinforced the path Gandhiji had arrived upon his own, what matters more is that two of the greatest moralists of our times thought so much alike. Both believed in the freedom of the individual, in the voice of the conscience..." A. Rangarajan (2004) – 'From Walden to Wardha: Thoreau and Green Thought.' *The Hindu* (Madras), May 30. p. 2

several new interpretations of religion, culture and nationalism were proposed. For Gandhi, satyagraha was the most effective manner of demanding justice from the British government. In 1921-22 he began the Non Co-operation movement. This movement gained mass following across the country. Gandhi received the support of the Khilafat leaders for this movement. After World War I the British took away all the powers of the Caliph (in Turkey) and dissolved the Turkish Empire. In order to demonstrate support to the Muslims in India Gandhi supported the Khilafat movement hoping to present a united front against the British. The demands of the Khilafat agitation were incorporated into the Non Co-operation movement. The Hindu nationalists saw this as an appeasement of the Muslims over the large Hindu majority.

In 1922, a number of Hindus on the Malabar coast converted to Islam. This created an uproar amongst the local Hindus. As a response to this, B. S Moonje a Hindu revivalist leader called upon the Hindus to organize themselves. Thus in 1922 the Hindu Mahasabha which was initially established in 1915, was revived from its dormant state. This decision was taken in order to establish a strong force within the Congress which would represent the cause of the Hindus. On Gandhi's insistence, on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1922 the Non Co-operation movement was called off. The reason given was that angry peasants in Chauri Chaura had burnt alive 22 policemen. This Gandhi argued was completely against the non-violent approach of the movement.

With the calling off of the Non Co-operation movement and the relative silence over the issue of conversions on the Malabar coast, many became distant from the Congress Party. The year 1923 saw the outbreak of mass communal rioting following the suspension of the Non- Cooperation movement. There were several figures like B S Moonje, who considered these riots as being a result of disunity among Hindus. The Lucknow Pact, the Khilafat movement, the conversions of Hindus in numerous places were all viewed as the appeasement of the Muslims' demands and sentiments. Hindu revivalists saw these events as challenges placed before them by Islam. Therefore, as a reaction to growing communal tension and rioting one saw the proliferation of Hindu *sabhas* and Hindu associations in several places.

The narrow base of the Congress's means of struggle made a section of the Indian masses search for alternatives. There was a rising need for greater political activism rather than mere attempts at 'reform.' All these intervening events provide a key to understanding the rise of a new wave of nationalism that emerged parallel to the Indian nationalist struggle led by the Congress. The upheaval and chaos created by

communal rioting in several places in the country led to bans and restrictions being imposed by the British administration. These bans targeted processions during festivities, thus several organizations marched in defiance. Compromises and promises were made in order to reduce communal tensions. Nevertheless, conflicts continued to occur.

It is considered that during this period of heightened Hindu Muslim tension and rioting the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) was established in 1925. Dr. K B Hedgewar founded the RSS as he felt that the need of the times demanded an organization that would cater specifically to the woes and worries of the Hindus. Prior to a detailed discussion on the RSS, there are some issues and questions that need to be considered. Organizations like the Arya Samaj, Hindu Mahasabha and many others did speak in favour of Hindu religion and traditions. However they could not unite the Hindu community as a whole. They were restricted to some pockets in the country. The Hindu consciousness that was gradually emerging needed an appropriate avenue to vent out its fears and anxieties with regards other religious communities.

The periodization of Indian history by Orientalists and cultural revivalists, a nationalistic consciousness put forth through literary works, and the wave of Hindu revivalism all changed the religious ethos within the country. It was through such events that a new consciousness was emerging amongst the Indian masses. However, for the upper caste Hindus it had a different meaning and interpretation. In the process of defending one's religion against criticisms the need of reviving and at times reforming Hindu religion and cultural tradition emerged.

In order to come to terms with this rise of a religious orientation like this some basic ideas have to be borne in mind. There was never a perfect state of harmony or of continuous conflict between Hindus and Muslims. Differences in socio-religious habits and practices of the two have always existed. Beef eating Muslims have always been criticized and detested by Hindus for whom the cow is sacred. Added to this state of affairs, the new awareness history and intense communal riotings tended to enhance the aspect of 'difference' between the two, thereby propagating a tendency to demonise the 'other.' It is the 'other', which is always considered strange, alien and different. Defending the Hindu religion against the challenge of Islam came as an obvious response. Thus in this set-up of 'Hinduism in danger' the RSS was established. In such peculiar socio-political circumstances establishing the RSS might have been considered

as logical and rational. But how legitimate it was to propose a dream of a Hindu *rashtra* (nation) is yet to be discussed and this issue will concern us soon.

### THE EMERGENCE OF THE RSS: THE TORCHBEARERS OF HINDUS

Prior to the establishment of the RSS, Hedgewar had read a document/pamphlet written by V D Savarkar titled *Hindutva* (written in 1923). It is believed that this book had provided Hedgewar with an ideological justification to his idea of a Hindu nation. Hedgewar had met Savarkar before the establishment of this new Hindu organization. The pamphlet mainly catered to a limited Hindu Brahmin audience and was distributed to a handful of Maharashtrians. The meeting with Savarkar, the author of *Hindutva*, was a major inspiration for Hedgewar. It encouraged him to organize the Hindu community across the country. Hedgewar believed that such a need had arisen because the Hindu community had become weak due to disunity within the Hindu fold. Thus, on the day of Vijaydashmi in 1925 Hedgewar established the RSS in Nagpur. However it was only in 1926 on Ram Navami day that this organization formally got its name. Hedgewar wanted to identify the term 'Rashtriya' with the Hindus alone. The intention behind this move was to declare the Hindus as the indigenous inhabitants of India, as proposed by Savarkar in *Hindutva*. A saffron flag was chosen that was considered to have belonged to Ram, the mythical Hindu god and also used by Shivaji, 17<sup>th</sup> century Maratha warrior. It was in this year itself that cadres were given uniforms. The Hindu mythological figure of Ram has been a central inspiration for the Sangh. Vijaydashmi (1925) the day chosen for the establishment of the RSS was the day Ram defeated Ravana. It was symbolic of the victory of good over the evil. Such symbolism is used even today by the RSS with the mythical figures replaced by religious communities.

Savarkar's central ideas in '*Hindutva*' were, that the Aryans who originated in northwestern India spread across the entire continent. He acknowledged the fact that there was intermixing of blood between Aryans and Non Aryans, which came to form the Hindu nation. He has laid down the essentials of defining a Hindu. A discussion at length on V D Savarkar and his writings will be done in the latter half of this chapter. The ideas as put forth by Savarkar were the building blocs of the ideology and the organizational structure of the RSS. Hedgewar had come to realise that weakness within the Hindu community was more psychological in nature. Thus he sought to organize the Hindu masses and work towards their character building. He and his associates thus

decided to concentrate on young boys and teenagers. They started recruitment from schools and colleges and were successful in their drive. "A suggestion first made by Sister Nivedita (an indebtedness which the RSS today is proud to acknowledge for it strengthens its nationalist credentials): Congregate and pray together for fifteen minutes, everyday and Hindu society will become an invincible society."<sup>8</sup> This gave structure to the RSS branches commonly referred to as *shakhas*. All the shakhas followed a particular format that is of physical training along with some spiritual lessons. These rituals had to be carried out at identical times in all the shakhas. Another feature of the RSS that needs mention here is its association with the *akharas* (gymnasiums). Hedgewar recruited several individuals from these gymnasiums.

Thus a strict disciplinary pattern and/or routine was followed. It included not just rigorous physical training but also aimed at intellectual exercise. The main intention was the "all round development" of the individual in the shakha. In the shakha, stories were narrated of Hindu heroes like Shivaji and Rana Pratap. They were important images specifically for the battles they fought against the Muslims. Along with this, lectures relating to several important issues like Hindu nationalism were given. From its inception symbols and rituals that have been used by the RSS have been exclusively Maharashtrian in nature. However in general it has catered to a Brahmin middle class ethos. Nevertheless, in the shakhas the participation of backward and the untouchable castes was also encouraged.

The year 1927 has to be given special consideration here. In September 1927 communal riots broke out in the city of Nagpur. The manner in which the RSS cadres were out in the streets to bring the situation under their control, caught the attention of all. Anna Sohani organized RSS members into squads in order to protect Hindu neighbourhood. Sympathetic accounts of these riots in Nagpur praised the RSS members. In this connection the account given by C P Bhishikar is interesting and needs to be quoted at length,

"...the Muslims hatched a conspiracy to bring out a massive procession on September 4, 1927. The Sangh workers got wind of the plan, and knew that the procession was going to be attended by riot. The processionists were equipped with lathis, javelins, knives, daggers. Those who wanted to indulge in violence and loot indulged in thunderous slogans of 'Allah ho akbar' and 'din din' and attacked a house situated in one of the narrow lanes. But at the entrance itself they got a thorough beating.

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<sup>8</sup> Tapan Basu, Sumit Sarkar et.al (1993) – *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right*, Orient Longman, New Delhi., p.16.

Thereafter they got (a) thrashing at every lane entrance...The atmosphere remained tense but not a single Hindu locality was attacked. The Hindu society showed a unity and militancy which inspired self confidence.”<sup>9</sup>

Such accounts are important in order to understand the justifications provided for any of the activities of the RSS. Another reason to look at this 1927 account is that, after this event the RSS had managed to change public opinion in its favour. People developed trust and confidence in its functioning. One important aspect that needs to be looked at is that the narrations of events like the 1927 Nagpur riot, change people’s understanding of ‘conflict’ between religious communities. The manner in which these events were recorded and narrated had a profound effect on a large number of Hindus. C P Bhishikar’s account continues to enhance the view propagated by the RSS that the Muslims were always the aggressors and the Hindus had to take to violent measures in ‘self defence.’ In other words, Hindus were always innocent of crimes committed during a Hindu-Muslim riot. Such accounts thereby inculcate and reinforce the idea of Muslims as the evil and disturbing elements of the society. These create stereotypes, like the aforementioned, and its inflated versions are imbibed especially by the younger generation today.

In the years that followed several new features were added to the RSS functioning. The RSS was thus established in order to organize Hindus on nationalistic lines. The cadres were involved in numerous activities like ‘defending’ the Hindu community, whenever and wherever the need arose. The Sangh’s close knit and disciplinary structure was gradually acquiring a more rigorous form. It propagated the idea that attending shakhas daily was like a ritual that had to be followed everyday. Thus for the RSS cadres shakha meetings were becoming an integral part of their daily routinized life. Their involvement in chores of the organization taught the cadres the ethic of self-confidence, improvement and independence. It was gradually evolving itself like a school, which aimed at the all round development of each pupil. It is important to highlight these aspects of the Sangh in order to understand some important facts about the RSS. It is not just physical training that makes up the cadres, but ideological training too is an integral part of their personality and this can be inculcated with the help of daily routinized activities.

As Christophe Jaffrelot notes, the basic idea of the RSS was:

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid p.19.



“ to consolidate the Hindu nation through psycho-social reform involving some assimilation of the others’ egalitarian values...[It] attempted to create an ethic of self individuation which could provide the basis for a more inclusive and cohesive form of Hindu Nationalism. Its syncretism (the import of egalitarian values typical of the European nationalism and the Muslim communal fraternity) was strategic because it aimed at building a Hindu nation strong enough to resist these ‘foreigners’..”<sup>10</sup>

Thus the training or upbringing within the RSS was in reality the reform of the mind and the body. B S Moonje, ideological mentor of Hedgewar, was also of the view that Hindus should emulate the strategies of the ‘other’ that is, the Muslims.<sup>11</sup> He believed that the Muslim community was close knit and when any harm was done to one of its members the entire community felt for it and came together to help. This feature was missing in the Hindu community, as it was divided from within. Thus one can say that some of the ideas propagated by the Sangh are in reality, borrowed from European models of nationalism and from the perception of the Muslim community.

Two practices were incorporated in the organization i.e. the Prayer (Prarthana) and the Pledge (Pratigya). The prayer was a salutation to the Hindu Rashtra. The pledge was one where the RSS volunteer/ activist took the oath to remain a member of the organization throughout his life and serve it in any and all possible ways. These practices reflect the ideological orientation of the Sangh towards establishing a Hindu rashtra and preserving Hindu culture and practices.

The RSS, which was founded in Nagpur was initially restricted to the state of Maharashtra. Hedgewar’s only concern after giving structure to the organization was its expansion beyond Maharashtra to other states and regions. In order to fulfil this aim, some *swayamsevaks*, as the RSS members are commonly referred to, were sent to the Benares Hindu University (BHU) to start a unit there. It was also in keeping with Hedgewar’s idea of recruiting cadres from schoolboys and teenagers. In order to enhance its image in society, the Sangh invited known personalities like Vallabhai Patel and M K Gandhi to visit RSS camps. However, in this process of expansion several

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<sup>10</sup> Partha. S Ghosh (1999) – *BJP and the Evolution of Hindu Nationalism: From Periphery to Centre*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi., p.72.

<sup>11</sup> In the next chapter a discussion on the Shiv Sena will be initiated. However, I would like to recall something that a Shiv Sena sympathiser I happened to speak to, said with regards emulation of values. He said, that we should learn certain things from the Muslims and the Christians. The Muslims every year make a donation for the poor. Irrespective of their own economic conditions, this donation is compulsory. The Christians, he said, carry out their festivals and protests in such calm and organized ways which is creditable and worth emulating. It was a very subtle way of propagating the view that these communities are highly organized unlike the Hindus. And it is time that the Hindus come together as a single, unified community. It is similar to what Jaffrelot says in the quote.

problems were encountered. The drawbacks of the democratic nature of the functioning within the RSS came to the fore. Thus in November 1929 a decision was made to introduce some changes. The principle of *ek chalak anuvartita* was adopted which meant that only one individual would lead the organization. Thus a centralized structure was established and Hedgewar became the first *sarsanghchalak* (head) of the RSS for life.

The expansion of the RSS between 1931-39 was phenomenal. The number of shakhas increased from 60 to 125. At this juncture i.e. between 1929-30, the Congress declared Purna Swaraj as the national goal. Following this in 1930, Gandhi started the Civil Disobedience movement. While the Indian National Congress was moving towards its aim to acquire total independence from the British, the RSS remained aloof from this national vision. Rather it accused the Congress of adopting the RSS's goal of independence. On the one hand, where the entire nation was consumed by the aim of independence, the RSS was working towards extending its organizational network. It largely remained away from the freedom movement. In reaction to the Congress's call for Purna Swaraj, on 26 January 1930 Hedgewar celebrated Independence Day and asked people to worship, not the tricolour, but the bhagwa dhvaj.<sup>12</sup> In 1931 Hedgewar was invited by Bhai Parmanand, an Arya Samaj leader in Punjab, to attend the All-India Young Men's Hindu association session. Hedgewar agreed and in so doing took this occasion to launch the RSS in Punjab and the United Provinces. Support and help was provided to the RSS by many local Hindu *sabhas* and also by Hindu Mahasabha leaders. Hedgewar and his swayamsevaks were invited to attend meetings, perform drills in order to introduce this new organization to the masses.

The rapid growth of RSS shakhas across the country had gradually become an issue of deep concern. Many organizations and state governments demanded a ban on membership to the RSS. In 1931, the Congress passed a resolution that forbade its members from joining organization like the RSS and Hindu Mahasabha. In 1932 the Central Provinces Government Gazette notification prohibited Government employees from becoming members of the RSS. Another interesting phenomena that needs mention here is, about the Rashtriya Sevika Samiti. Mrs. Lakshmibai Kelkar, the mother of a Swayamsevak wanted to start a women's organization in order to impart women with martial skills. She approached Hedgewar and requested for his assistance to start a

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<sup>12</sup> 26<sup>th</sup> January 1930 was the only year that the RSS celebrated Independence day.

women's wing affiliated to the RSS. Hedgewar was reluctant to establish a women's group within the Sangh. Even so, Hedgewar assisted Mrs. Kelkar to establish a separate organization called the Rashtriya Sevika Samiti in October 1936. It is believed that during that period the swayamsevaks had taken the oath of *Brahmacharya*, (celibacy) therefore Hedgewar was unwilling to let women be a part of the Sangh.

G D Savarkar, older brother of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, helped Hedgewar in expanding the outreach of the RSS in western Maharashtra. He also merged his own organization i.e. the Tarun Hindu Sabha along with the Mukteshwar Dal, with the RSS. Thus between 1930-39, this exclusivist Hindu organization which was established in Maharashtra, spread its network across the country. In December 1934, M K Gandhi was invited to visit an RSS camp in Wardha. The accounts and reports of his visit were detailed out in its weekly journal the *Organiser*, recalling it in very positive and favourable terms.

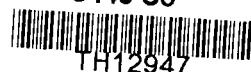
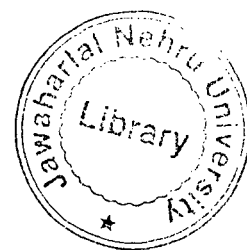
#### WRITINGS OF CHIEF RSS IDEOLOGUES: SAVARKAR AND GOLWALKAR

##### *Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and his Politics of Hindutva*

TH-12947

The history of right wing politics would perhaps be incomplete without the mention of V D Savarkar. It has to be borne in mind that Savarkar was never a member of the RSS. Nevertheless, he has been the ideological mentor of the politico-cultural ideology of the Sangh. In laying out the essentials of *Hindutva*, and the specific features of a Hindu national identity, he was successful in changing the very understanding of who is a 'Hindu.' His journey from a revolutionary dedicated to fight the British, to that of an individual demanding clemency from the same, has been an unusual one. Savarkar becomes the point of discussion here for more reasons than one. Being the author of the highly controversial book '*Hindutva*' is not our only concern here. The manner in which, he has been hailed by the Sangh as a national hero, raises several issues. Savarkar, who once upheld the Hindu-Muslim unity displayed during the revolt of 1857, eventually came to speak the language of hate against the Muslims. He added new connotations to the commonsensical understandings of nation and nationalism.

He has been considered as an unsung hero and the torchbearer of Hindu nationalism. Savarkar's revival from the past by the *Hindutva* fraternity has been done by consciously denying some aspects of his life. It is therefore essential to examine more closely certain events of V D Savarkar's life and his writings. Vinayak Damodar



Savarkar was born on May 28, 1883 in Bhagur, a small town in Nashik district of Maharashtra. He was a Chitpavan Brahmin. Dhananjay Keer, who was Savarkar's official biographer, has recorded the following incident:

“When he was ten, he heard of communal riots in the United Provinces and in Mumbai. The news of sufferings of the Hindus in the United Provinces and Bombay fired his blood and he resolved to avenge the woes and deaths of his co-religionists. The boy Savarkar led a batch of selected schoolmates in a march upon the village mosque. The battalion of these boys showered stones....This incident gives the first hint of the heroic mettle Vinayak was made of and the key to his future daring life and leadership.”<sup>13</sup>

After Savarkar's Marathi schooling in Bhagur, he was sent to Nashik for English education. It was during the year 1896, when plague broke out in Bombay and Pune, that Officer Rand and British officer Lt. Ayerst, were shot dead by the Chaphekar brothers. This event is considered important in Savarkar's life because it is said to have introduced him to the option of violent means to fight the British. When Savarkar received the news that Chaphekar and Ranade were convicted of the murder of the officers Rand and Ayerst and were sentenced to be hanged, he decided that he would carry forward the violent struggle of the Chaphekars.

Savarkar participated actively in a secret society called Mitra Mela, later known as the Abhinav Bharat society (Young India society) formed by him in 1899. His slogan was 'Freedom is the objective, Armed Revolution the means.' In 1906 he left for England on a scholarship to read for the Bar exams there. It is believed that this scholarship required Indian students to swear never to work in any way for the British. During his stay in London he worked rigorously at the India Office library in order to write his first book, *The Indian War of Independence: 1857*. Initially written in Marathi in 1907, it was later translated into English by his friends. However, the book was immediately proscribed in 1909, but was clandestinely distributed. The ban was lifted only in 1946. In this section a discussion on his writings will be initiated which traces the distinct transformation in his ideological orientation. First, however, it might be interesting to look at the term he served in the Andamans after being sentenced with imprisonment for life.

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<sup>13</sup> A.G. Noorani (2002) - *Savarkar and Hindutva*, Leftword Books. New Delhi. p.12. As quoted by Noorani from V D Savarkar's biography written by Dhananjay Keer.

By 1909 the British unearthed some branches of Abhinav Bharat in India. They also found a factory of bombs and secret stores after they arrested Savarkar's brother Babarao. In the same year, two British officials were killed. Colonel Sir William Curzon Wylie, Political A.D.C at the India office was shot dead by Madanlal Dhingra on July 1, 1909. In December 1909, Anant Kanhere killed A.M.T. Jackson, the Collector of Nashik district. Under the Fugitive Offender's Act of 1881, Savarkar was arrested on March 13, 1910 at the Victoria Station in London. There were several charges made against him. He was charged with waging or abetting to wage war against H.E. The Emperor of India, procuring or dispatching weapons and arms and was also charged with planning the murder of Jackson. When Savarkar was being brought to India, mid way he escaped through the porthole of S.S. Morea on July 8, 1910. However, he was arrested on French soil. On July 22, 1910 Savarkar was brought to Bombay and tried by a Special Tribunal. On December 24, 1910, he was sentenced to life imprisonment in the first case of allegedly sending twenty Browning pistols to his associates in India. After a week, he was sentenced to transportation for life, a second time, for planning the murder of Jackson. Thus Savarkar was sentenced to the Cellular Jail in the Andamans for a period of 50 years.

Writing during a period when there was a significant increase in revolutionary activities, Savarkar's book on the 1857 revolt was hailed by all. It has to be borne in mind that the social milieu at the turn of the century especially the early 1900s, was characterised by a unified struggle against the British. The temper and mood of that period did not yet speak either of Hindus solely capable of fighting British rule, or that of establishing a Hindu Rashtra. In the earlier part of this chapter a discussion on a Hindu revivalist orientation during this period has been initiated. However, it has to be carefully noted, that though such revivalist fervour did emerge, it did not display sectarian intentions.

A closer look at his writings would be insightful. At the outset it should be borne in mind that for Savarkar the 'past' has always been important. The reference to 'past' events and glories were significant not just for the present but also for the future. In the preface of his book: *The Indian War of Independence* he writes:

"The nation that has no consciousness of its past has no future. Equally true it is that a nation must develop its capacity not only of claiming a past but also of knowing how to use it for the furtherance of its future. The nation ought to be the master and not the slave of its own history. For, it is absolutely unwise to try to do certain things now irrespective of special

considerations, simply because they had been once acted in the past. The feeling of hatred against the Mahomedans was just and necessary in the times of Shivaji but, such a feeling would be unjust and foolish if nursed now simply because it was the dominant feeling of the Hindus then.”<sup>14</sup>

His preoccupation with the past has been a constant feature with him. The only difference is the purposes for which it was used. Hindu and Muslim rulers or kings were praised alike for their contribution to the revolt. But his language had altered in his later works, especially *Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History*, which was written after the Partition. In this work, rulers like Tipu Sultan and Akbar are regarded as ‘savage’, ‘foreigners’ and aliens. His understanding of Indian history came in many versions, and it is perhaps difficult to come up with a straightforward explanation for the sea change in his ideological orientation, manifest in an anti-Muslim perspective

When Savarkar arrived at the Cellular Jail in the Andamans, it was believed that his ‘spirit’ had crumbled. To serve a sentence of 50 years especially in the Cellular Jail was something that had become unimaginable for him. Unlike several revolutionaries serving their sentences in the Andamans, Savarkar decided to apologise for his deeds. Thus he pleaded for clemency with a request to shift him to an Indian jail. Very little information has been made available with regards the apologies Savarkar made and also the concessions made to him by the Jail authorities.

He wrote the book *The Story of My Transportation for Life*, a Marathi edition published in 1927. In the book Savarkar narrates about his life in the Cellular jail where he lived for 10 to 11 years as against his sentence of 50 years. It is a detailed account of the treatment meted out to him as well as his interaction with other inmates. Savarkar was promoted to the second class and also made a foreman in the jail. According to Noorani, “...he so managed to ingratiate himself with the authorities that he, a ‘dangerous’ inmate, was made foreman. Few revolutionaries would have accepted this ‘honour’ from their captives who were also rulers of their captive land.”<sup>15</sup> It cannot be said that the decade he spent in the Cellular jail was ridden with hardships. He himself narrates the concessions made to him in this book. Savarkar had started the Shuddhi movement from within the Cellular jail and continued it from the prison in Ratnagiri (Maharashtra, India). He was of the firm view that this movement would bridge all the differences between Hindus and Muslims. It would result in a long-lasting union between the Hindus and Muslims. He believed that the usage of Urdu should be

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<sup>14</sup> V.D. Savarkar (1970) - *The Indian War of Independence*, Rajdhani Granthagar, New Delhi., p.viii – ix.

<sup>15</sup> A.G. Noorani (2002) - *Savarkar and Hindutva*, Leftword Books, New Delhi., p.48.

restricted to the Muslims alone, and that “as mother tongue and national language it had no place in Hindu culture.”<sup>16</sup> Such a view seems unlikely to have been given by a revolutionary who once spoke of Hindu Muslim unity.

After Savarkar submitted several apologies to the British government and asked for clemency, his request to be shifted to an Indian jail was granted. He was moved to a jail in Ratnagiri where he wrote *Hindutva*.<sup>17</sup> *Hindutva* was a detailed account of the history of the subcontinent written entirely from the perspective of a proud Hindu. He was tracing here how ‘Hindu culture’ and civilization had survived after many conquests and battles. Through this selective narration of events from Indian history, he tried to portray a glorified ‘Hindu’ past, through a description of how in fact the Hindus rulers had attained victory over Muslim invaders.

A quick overview of the contents of the book would be important to consider here. More often *Hindutva* as a concept is confused with Hinduism. In view of this misunderstanding, Savarkar makes a detailed distinction between Hinduism and *Hindutva*. It is not religion that he is talking about but ethnic concerns that he displays. This implies that, considerations of race, culture and common heritage are central to his arguments in *Hindutva*. Simply put, *Hindutva* is a way of life. Through this statement he tries to convey that *Hindutva* is an inherent feature of the life of a Hindu. He writes,

“*Hindutva* is not a word but a history. Not only the spiritual or religious history of our people as at times it is mistaken to be by being confounded with the other cognate term ‘Hinduism’...Hinduism is only a derivative, a fraction, a part of *Hindutva*..”<sup>18</sup>

Savarkar demonstrates how the identity as a ‘Hindu’ emerged from its reference to the river Sindhu. Through detailed descriptions he explains the relation between the Sindhu and Hindu. Linguistic details of how words from Hindi and/or Sanskrit underwent changes when written in the Prakrit are also forwarded by him. For instance, “almost all nations of the then known world seemed to have known us by this very epithet Sindhus or Hindus, for the Sanskrit ‘Sa’ changes into ‘H’ as often in Indian Prakrits..”<sup>19</sup> It has to be taken note that for Savarkar *Hindutva* was not just a geographical concept but a national one as well. In other words it is not geography that

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid p.54.

<sup>17</sup> The first edition of this book was published in May, 1923 by V V Kelkar, an advocate in Nasik. During this period Savarkar was in jail thus it did not bare his name as the author. But it was under the pseudonym, ‘A Maratha.’

<sup>18</sup> V.D. Savarkar (1923) – *Hindutva*, Publisher VV Kelkar., Poona., p.3.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p.3-4.

merely defines *Hindutva* but it is a feeling, a way of life shared by people (especially the Hindus). In so doing he is refuting the clauses of territorial nationalism. For him *Hindutva* was a shared feeling restricted to the Hindus alone. In no way does he mean all the people residing in India, or Hindusthan, as he would to refer to it. In other words he is denying the clauses of territorial nationalism.

Speaking of the River Sindhu he conveys how, since time immemorial, people in India were referred to as Hindus. In this process he narrates about India's great tradition and history. It is a collection of incidents and events that took place in Hindusthan or Sindhusthan.<sup>20</sup> Savarkar weaves a very selective account of the history of the subcontinent. The rise and fall of Buddhist rule in India, the achievements of Shivaji and finally the reign of the Peshwas are the main eras that he chose to signify or represent Indian history. Selective historical information is deployed to present the decline of Buddhism in India in derogatory terms.

This selective narration of events from the Vedic Period – followed with instances from Shivaji's rule and finally the Peshwa period – is done with a singular purpose in mind. Savarkar, through such a recollection of events, is conveying two very distinct messages: one, he is providing strong evidence to the idea that since time immemorial the term *Hindus* has been used for people in India and two, that Hindusthan has been a witness to the battles between Hindus and Muslims. The Hindus have always fought to preserve and defend Hindu culture and civilization from the attack for 'foreigners' or 'mlechas.' He reiterates, "Sindhusthan was the land of the Aryans which was the best, as distinguished from the Mlechasthan i.e. the land of foreigners."<sup>21</sup> He gives the instances of Shivaji and the Peshwas to put forth the view that, during their rule the struggle to preserve and defend Hindu dharma was important. It demonstrates that 'Hindu' and 'Hindutva' were not just names but they signified a deep feeling that rulers and people at that time held.

In the end, after having recollected a distinct history for the readers he lays down the essentials of *Hindutva*. It was also through these that the clauses to define a Hindu were put forth. At the outset it should be maintained that Savarkar believed that the Aryans came from North Western India. However, he also argues that Sindhusthan or Hindusthan was the land of the Aryans as mentioned earlier. These confusions are not

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<sup>20</sup> It is important to take note of the fact that Savarkar uses the term Sindhusthan/Hindusthan and not Hindustan as is often used today. The reason for the specific choice of Sindhu or Hindu 'sthan' is that, it signifies that India is the 'sthan' i.e. the 'place' of the Hindus.



resolved, thus what is propagated is a confused understanding of facts. The essentials of *Hindutva* and/or the term Hindu are as follows. The first important qualification of a Hindu is that he/she should consider that land between the seas as their 'Fatherland, Motherland', the land of their patriarchs and forefathers, referred to by Savarkar as *Pitrubhu*. The second essential is "a Hindu is a descendant of Hindu parents, claims to have the blood of the ancient Sindhus and the race that sprang from their veins."<sup>22</sup> The most crucial criterion is that the land between the seas should also be their land of worship, termed by Savarkar as *Punyabhu*. The overall view that was being propagated thus spoke of a common culture, common blood and common nation. This third essential was the most significant. Through detailed descriptions, Savarkar targeted the Muslims and Christians, whose holy lands do not exist in India. He says that this is irrespective, of the aspect that they were forcibly converted to non-Hindu religions. Thus they could not be considered as Hindus again. This was only due to the clause of the holy lands.

This book quite clearly is about glorifying the past. In the process of chalking out the *Hindutva's* essentials, Savarkar systematically has upheld the struggle of the Hindus. He has portrayed them as defenders of the Hindu dharma. However he has also highlighted the 'incorporating' nature of the Hindus by giving instances of the Anuloma and Pratiloma forms of marriages.<sup>23</sup> The intermixing between Aryans and non-Aryans and several such groupings is considered as an undeniable feature of Hindusthan. However it is important to note here that Savarkar was of the opinion that the Hindus borrowed many ideas and cultural practices from others. Nevertheless, he says that the Hindu civilization is distinct and cannot be mistaken for that of any 'others'.

This sense of pride for the Hindus and Hindusthan is constantly upheld by Savarkar as also by his *hindutvavaadi* descendants. In this fashion, he comes to redefine the notion of patriotism. Irrespective of whether a Muslim or Christian loves their

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<sup>21</sup> V D Savarkar (1923)- *Hindutva*, Publisher V V Kelkar, Poona., p.2.

<sup>22</sup> V D Savarkar (1923)- *Hindutva*, Publisher V V Kelkar, Poona., p.98.

<sup>23</sup> "Even a cursory glance at any of our '*Smritis*' would conclusively prove that the Anuloma and Pratiloma marriage institutions were the order of the day and have given birth to the majority of the castes that obtain amongst us...From the vedic story of Satyakantha Jabali and Mahadji Shinde- every page of our history shows that the ancient Ganges of our blood has come down from the altitudes of the sublime vedic heights to the palins of our modern history fertilizing much, incorporating many a noble stream and purifying many a lost soul, increasing in volume and depth and richness.....All that the? caste system has done is to regulate its noble blood....to contribute most to fertilise and enrich all that was barren and poor, without famishing and debasing all that was flourishing and nobly endowed.", *ibid*, p.74-75. If one carefully reads these lines one would be able to decipher was exactly the terms, 'enrich the barren and poor' mean here when a reference to the caste system in India is being made.

country i.e. India, only because their holy lands lie outside India their loyalties are questioned! Nation (rashtra), nationalism, patriotism, Hindu and *Hindutva* are some of the concepts that are redefined by Savarkar. The commonly held view with regard to the aforementioned are altered by him in order to define the 'traitor' or the 'foe.'

"Everything that is common in us with our enemies weakens our power of opposing them. The foe that has nothing in common with us is the foe likely to be most bitterly resisted by us, just as a friend that has almost everything in him which we admire and prize in ourselves is likely to be the friend we love most."<sup>24</sup>

Thus we can see that Savarkar systematically laid down the strategies to define oneself against the enemy. The element of 'difference' is significant here. That is perhaps the reason Savarkar put forth the essentials, which in reality were devised to highlight the 'differences' between the Hindus and Muslims.

Joseph Mazzini was the chief inspiration for Savarkar. Analogies are drawn between Mazzini's revolutionary group 'Young Italy' and Savarkar's 'Abhinav Bharat.' Savarkar translated several writings of Mazzini into Marathi. It is believed that the preface to this book inspired many young people to take up the path of revolution. In this preface Savarkar highlights the close relation between politics and religion; a view that Mazzini himself held. For Mazzini this close link was important which should never be given up. When Savarkar became the President of the Hindu Mahasabha he was attempting to give it a political orientation. Nevertheless it was this firm faith in politics that drew the RSS away from Savarkar.

We have so far looked at Savarkar's writings and tried to familiarise ourselves with his ideology and politics. He moulded the concept of *Hindutva*, which is the inspiration behind the RSS ideology today. Savarkar's influence on the RSS was at the level of ideas. Besides Savarkar, here we will be focusing on Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar (Golwalkar Guruji, as he is still referred to in RSS circles) another important figure in the RSS. He introduced a new dimension to the ideology of the RSS and to its functioning. I shall briefly be looking at Golwalkar's views and ideas through a quick review of his writings.

### ***Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar and his Writings***

M S Golwalkar succeeded Dr. Hedgewar as the head of the RSS after 1940. For many in the RSS, Golwalkar was considered to be an unusual choice to lead the

organization. He was chosen over older members in the RSS who were more experienced and capable of taking up the responsibilities of the *sarsanghchalak*. Unlike other members in the Sangh, Golwalkar displayed a more ascetic orientation to life. Hedgewar himself feared this would lead Golwalkar to become a sanyasi. Irrespective of these doubts and anxieties, Hedgewar finally chose Golwalkar to succeed him.

Once Golwalkar took charge, there were several changes that he brought about in the RSS. He shut the military department of the RSS. Unlike Hedgewar, Golwalkar did not believe that the Hindus should enlist in the British army. He did not believe in politics and thus many RSS members thought that the Sangh's nationalist political ambitions and orientations would be done away with. When Hedgewar was the *sarsanghchalak* of the RSS, he maintained close relations with the Hindu Mahasabha. Under Golwalkar's leadership relations between the Hindu Mahasabha and the RSS were severed. Golwalkar did not want to maintain any links with a political body like the Mahasabha. His aversion to politics raised doubts amongst many with respect to the Sangh's functioning. During the Second World War, Golwalkar made sure that the RSS remained within the limits of law. In so doing some RSS activities were suspended while others were carried out on a limited scale. Many believe that for reasons of abiding by the law, the RSS never took part in anti-British struggles and movements. Nevertheless the project of expanding the network of the Sangh continued during the period of the 1940s and 1950s. The changes that he introduced tempered down the image of the RSS. It had become a law-abiding organization. Its role during '46-'47 riots was distinct. It carried out relief work with immense efficiency at Wagah, a major transit camp for Punjab refugees<sup>25</sup>. Golwalkar's ideas regarding several issues were very strong. He, like Savarkar, proposed the ideas of patriotism based upon certain clauses to gauge loyalties of individuals to the country. He also came to explicitly define the 'internal threats' within the country.

In order to familiarise ourselves with the ideas of Golwalkar it is necessary to take a brief look at the two central books he wrote namely, *We, or our Nationhood defined* and *Bunch of Thoughts*. On the whole both books portray Hindu culture and tradition in very favourable terms. In the process of constructing the image of a 'glorified past' Golwalkar has clearly defined the 'alien' and threatening elements of the

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<sup>24</sup> V.D. Savarkar (1923) – *Hindutva*, Publisher VV Kelkar, Poona., p.22.

<sup>25</sup> Tapan Basu, Sumit Sarkar et.al (1993)- *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right*, Orient Longman, New Delhi., p.22.

country. In *We, or our Nationhood defined* Golwalkar further develops the ideas of Savarkar in *Hindutva*. Though the book was published in his name in 1939, it was in reality a detailed version of an essay written by Babarao Savarkar, V D Savarkar's brother. His style of writing in this particular book is very crude and coarse. The book begins with an elaborate narration of the past. Golwalkar provides information about the many conquests that Hindu civilization is said to have fought. Nevertheless, he says, that the Hindu civilization has retained its structure. The achievements of several Hindu warriors – especially against Muslim invaders – are significant here.

The central argument of Golwalkar was that the idea behind the word '*nation*' is made up of 5 unities, a) country (geographical), b) racial (race), c) religious (religion), d) cultural (culture) and e) linguistic (language). His intention was to convey the idea that a nation can come into being only when all the 5 components exist. He says that the absence of any one leads to the extinction of that nation. In other words, one can say that he was propounding a homogenous understanding of a nation. Amidst the variety of views he puts forth and the examples he gives, the most crucial are with regards to minority rights. Golwalkar opined that when an emigrant community arrives in a particular country it has two options to choose from. They have to either assimilate themselves into the national race and the culture of the country, or face subordination. Here he gives the example of America following this policy strictly. He says that America does not recognize any distinctions among the communities that reside there. They profess the policy of assimilation.<sup>26</sup> Golwalkar puts forth his interpretations of this policy as applicable to India, as follows,

“From this standpoint, sanctioned by the experience of shrewd old nations, the foreign races in Hindusthan 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 the glorification of the Hindu race...and must stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu Nation.”<sup>27</sup>

Thus Golwalkar in a systematic manner recounts his reasons for believing that no rights and privileges should be given to the minorities. In other words, Golwalkar was in favour of the rule of majority whereby the minorities must give up their own identity. He gives the example of Germany, which according to him, is an important example to keep in mind. He says that they shocked the world with the manner in which they purged

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<sup>26</sup> The book is written at the height of nationalism of the West. The West had become a significant reference point and was seen by most men like Golwalkar as a homogenous nation. Thus accordingly meanings were read into their ideologies and policies like the one on assimilation.

<sup>27</sup> M.S. Golwalkar (1939)– *We or our Nationhood defined*, Bharat Publications, Nagpur., p.47.

the semitic races in order to bring about racial purity. However, he adds that this was an example from which we in Hindusthan should learn our lessons to deal with diversity and difference! In the book *Bunch of Thoughts* he uses a similar language to put forth his rather derogatory and demeaning comments on the Muslims and Christians. The central arguments in this book deal with the issue of identifying internal threats. He identifies the Muslims and Christians as the threats within the country. Building up on the idea put forth in 'We', he says that these communities that can never be loyal to the country that is India.

Several phases during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been focused upon in this chapter. My intention is not to recall all events during that period and initiate a discussion of India's Independence movement. Colonial rule in India, socio-religious movements, Hindu revivalism have been discussed in order to comprehend the gradual development of a Hindu consciousness. During these periods religion came to be used as a source of political mobilization. It was used to reinforce religious identities vis-à-vis the 'other.' This helps us understand how over time Muslims came to be regarded as 'aliens,' and were made to appear as the 'enemies' within the country. Thus from Savarkar to Golwalkar there is a constant need to define the 'other' in order for an accurate understanding of the 'self' to emerge. Here it would be important to recall some observations made by Sumit Sarkar with regards to the writing of social history.

“Constructions of histories or lineages as morale booster, for legitimacy, to link up present aspirations with more-or-less imagined pasts in efforts to move towards specific kinds of futures- have all been a standard feature of modern political movements.”<sup>28</sup>

The point to be made is that today too, there are repeated attempts to doctor history and historical information. The reconstruction of a glorified Hindu past is done with very specific intentions in mind. In order to justify the resurgence of a Hindu nationalist consciousness, a history is traced and constructed in rather favourable terms.<sup>7</sup>

It is interesting to note the comments that the followers and members of the Sangh provide, when asked about the reasons for the absence of the RSS in the freedom movement. They argue that many swayamsevaks including Dr. Hedgewar himself were part of the freedom struggle. The blame is put on the Sangh's opponents, who they believe, have never let the efforts of the Sangh be visible. According to these *Hindutva*

apologists the contribution of the RSS remains 'unsung, for it was not for fame or popularity that the RSS worked, but rather to contribute as much as it could for the masses.<sup>29</sup>

A casual reading of the books of Savarkar and Golwalkar or for that matter any of the Sangh literature, may not immediately reveal the deep prejudices in them. Thus for a lay man, let alone a Sangh sympathiser, most of the Sangh literature would read like a historical account of the past. Historical events are very skilfully remoulded to suit political motives. For instance, often Savarkar's book '*Hindutva*' is considered as a systematic or a scientific analysis and narration of history. But in this particular book his narration of history is about conquests between Hindus and Muslims. Two points that should be taken into consideration are: one, that our history is not only about battles between Hindus and Muslims and two, the image of endless fighting between Hindus and Muslims is a myth. Thus the type of nationalism that these ideologues speak about propagates the idea of one race, one language etc., which hints at the homogenising intentions of the Sangh Parivar. In so doing it consciously keeps away the issues of minorities, which are important to be looked at in a secular, democratic and plural country like India.

Savarkar's preoccupation with the past is evident in most of his writings. Many of his books are detailed accounts of Indian history. But one feature that many have wondered about is that how Indian history can be complete without the mention of British rule. *Hindutva*, a book he wrote after spending a decade in the Cellular jail, the most severe sentences during colonial rule, does not speak a word about the oppressive rule of the British. Perhaps due to the clemency granted to him he was obliged to the British. Thus he could not have ever mentioned the British in any of his books, let alone speaking about them in very negative terms. Thus it becomes evident that for specific political motives historical information is tampered with.

If one were to locate the issue of gender within the Sangh's claims to nationalism, it is realised that they perceive that women are to only play a minimal supportive role in

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<sup>28</sup> Sumit Sarkar (2002)– *Beyond Nationalist Frames: Postmodernism, Hindutva, History*, Permanent Black, New Delhi. p.246.

<sup>29</sup> I had carried out some informal discussions with some Sangh activists (*karyakarta*). I had also asked them to fill a questionnaire [in Marathi]. It is interesting to find similarities in the views held by the Sangh activists and their chief ideologues, like Savarkar, Golwalkar etc. This highlights one fact that the training within the RSS is complete. That is to say, the indoctrination of particular views is systematically carried through the training of the mind and body. Thus usually there is no scope for an alternative view to emerge.

this project. By the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century awareness with respect to the upliftment of women from the bondage of tradition had evolved. On the one hand where reforms in terms of education for women, abolishing oppressive cultural practices were being fought for, Hedgewar showed much reluctance in establishing a women's wing within the RSS. Clearly then, for the RSS, defending Hindu dharma and rashtra were men's jobs. This then works to reinforce the nature-culture debate, where nature is associated with women for reasons of their reproductive functions in society, and culture is linked with men as they protect and defend the culture of the society. Concepts like nationalism and the struggle towards establishing the Hindu rashtra then seem to be extremely gendered. By gendered I mean, the delegation of a highly differential role to men and women in the larger tasks of nation building, in which the bulk of agentive action is reserved for the men. In *Bunch of Thoughts* one sees Golwalkar strongly condemn the attempts made by a political organization of conducting a mela for physical training of men and women.<sup>30</sup> His firm view was that such tasks are meant only for men.

Hedgewar, Savarkar and Golwalkar, are upheld by the Sangh for their ideas, sacrifices and struggles. The brand of nationalism they put forth is exclusivist in nature. It condemns the exclusively territorial interpretations of nationalism. For the Hindu nationalists, religion and culture are central concerns. By narrating incidents of Hindus defending their *dharma* and *sanskriti* against Muslim invaders, they reinforce the antagonism between religious communities. It might seem that Hindus and Muslims have always lived in a state of conflict. As I have already mentioned in this chapter, the two have coexisted but their interactions have sometimes been ridden with tension. However, it is also true that they have shared cultural, literary, and religious traditions. The Sangh has systematically worked only on the aspect of antagonism between Hindus and Muslims. They have reinforced stereotypes and myths about each other. In so doing, they have managed to raise a sense of doubt about Muslims giving credence to the belief that they are 'outsiders' or 'aliens.'

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<sup>30</sup> In *Bunch of Thoughts* Golwalkar narrates instances of riots where the mobs are (supposedly) polite with women. He puts forth the principle of '*matruvat paradareshu.*' That is, women are looked upon as mothers, as 'holy' images. In other words he is trying to say that during riots women, Muslim or Hindu, are respected. How true this ideal may have been, is only left to our imaginations. Perhaps then, this ideal is lost in time. As detailed reporting and documentation of riots in modern India have shown, women are used increasingly as tools to assert masculinity, and superiority over the other community. The manner in which minorities — and especially women from those-communities — are targeted is a phenomenon all are aware of.

## CHAPTER II

### TRYST WITH POLITICS: WIDENING NETWORK OF THE SANGH PARIVAR



In the previous chapter, a discussion on the evolution of a Hindu consciousness, traced through socio-political events and writings was developed. The course that the Hindu identity takes especially during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries is touched upon. Thus we find that with the emergence of the Sangh, Hindu identity has taken on an aggressive articulation. Carrying forward the presentation in the previous chapter, a discussion on the growth of the RSS in the decades after the Partition is initiated in this chapter. The role of the RSS around Partition is looked at in terms of its attempts to alter public opinion in its favour. An overview of the political orientation of the Sangh during the decades following the 1950s is developed. After Gandhi's murder the RSS was banned for a period of eighteen months. It proved to be a major setback for the Sangh as it was accused of conspiring in, or assisting with the murder. After the ban, the survival of the RSS was difficult. To regain lost space within the masses was the chief concern of the organization in those years.

It is important to bear in mind that the political career of the Sangh cannot be seen without a reference to the Congress. The Congress continued to be a strong force to reckon with for several decades after the Partition. The central issue here is to chart the career of the RSS in the context of the political pressures it faced all around. At the end of this chapter, a separate section on the Shiv Sena is included. Though the Sena too falls under the gamut of the Hindu right, its political career differs from that of the Sangh.

#### **THE SANGH IN INDEPENDENT INDIA: A STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL**

As has already been mentioned in the previous chapter, under Golwalkar's leadership the RSS orientation changed significantly. During the decades of the 40s, the RSS adopted a more 'toned down' mode of functioning. It was Golwalkar's strong belief that the organization was to function within the limits of the law. This would avoid the possibility of any bans being imposed on them. During the war period Golwalkar opposed the demand to recruit Hindus in the army, and condemned such efforts as being unpatriotic. In spite of the fact of avoiding activism, the RSS continued to expand during the war years. According to Andersen and Damle, "British sources indicate that in 1944 some 76,000 men regularly attended Shakra in British India alone, of whom about one half were in the Central Provinces and the rest mainly in Bombay

and Punjab.”<sup>1</sup> In the post war years, communal tensions rose after the Muslim League began its campaign for a separate state. Communal riots took place in several places in Bengal and Northern India. Eventually, Partition of the country on communal lines was declared. On 15<sup>th</sup> of August 1947 India got her Independence.<sup>2</sup>

Partition came as a shock to all, and in particular for most swayamsevaks. The masses in general seemed prepared for such a dramatic change in the political scenario. Many a people like the RSS blamed M K Gandhi for the Partition of India. They felt that he could have prevented such a momentous decision on the fate of the people of the subcontinent. That period was characterised by an outbreak of massive communal rioting between Hindus and Muslims. Chaos reigned as Muslims and Hindus crossed the borders to migrate either to India or Pakistan. The circumstances during this period heightened the appeal of Hindu nationalist propaganda. It was repeatedly claimed that the Muslims were responsible for dividing the motherland (Bharat Mata). Against the violence that dominated the background this argument gained a lot of credibility. The Partition of India was considered by the RSS as the most glaring example of the appeasement of the Muslims by the Congress. It was an accusation that was systematically reinforced time and again by the Sangh Parivar.

Many upheld the efficiency and discipline of the RSS, in terms of the work they carried out for the Punjab refugees. They carried out large-scale relief work, which was praised by many people including Gandhi. Although Gandhi’s attitude towards the RSS was ambiguous, he strongly criticised its authoritarian principles. It is important to take note of his comment with regard to RSS activities. He said, “...But don’t forget even so had Hitler’s Nazis and the Fascists under Mussolini.”<sup>3</sup> In other words Gandhi was trying to bring to notice the fact that such altruistic measures of the Sangh stood by totalitarian principles. In spite of some disagreements over the RSS’s functioning; the work they carried out prior to, and after the Partition, was upheld. Hindu nationalists were cast and portrayed as the ‘protectors’ of the Hindu community. During this tense phase a large number of swayamsevaks were recruited in order to provide help for relief work. This period was nonetheless marred by communal rioting. Many held the Sangh responsible

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<sup>1</sup> Walter K.Andersen and Shridhar Damle (1987)- *The Brotherhood in Saffron: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*, Vistaar Publications., New Delhi. p.45.

<sup>2</sup> 14<sup>th</sup> August, the independence day of Pakistan, is designated by the Sangh as the ‘Akhand Bharat Sankalp Din.’

<sup>3</sup> Tapan Basu, Sumit Sarkar (1993)-*Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right*, Orient Longman, New Delhi. p.22.

for creating such tensions and chaos. However, in keeping with the help provided by the Sangh, the Government could not restrict the activities of the RSS.

On January 30, 1948 Gandhi was assassinated by Nathuram Vinayak Godse.<sup>4</sup> Initially a part of the RSS, Godse later left it to become a member of the Hindu Mahasabha. At the time of the assassination he was the editor of the daily, *Agrany*. Immediately a ban was imposed on the RSS in February 1948 and Golwalkar was arrested. Godse's association with the Sangh was highlighted. He was once a member of the RSS. The Congress government thus dealt with the RSS in very strict terms. Golwalkar repeatedly corresponded with Nehru and Sardar Patel (then the Home Minister of India) from prison, requesting him to lift the ban. Sardar Patel insisted that the only clause to lift the ban was that the Sangh should have a written constitution. After much disagreement at the end of January 1949, three RSS leaders: Eknath Ranade, P B Dani and Balasaheb Deoras took up the task of wrote the constitution. In the Constitution the RSS promised to continue to function as a cultural organization. It was demanded that the RSS abstain from all political activities. After its revision Sardar Patel accepted it in June 1949 and the ban was lifted on 11 July 1949. Sardar Patel had invited the RSS members several times to join the Congress. It was an offer that was always turned down by the Sangh.

After the ban was lifted, the only concern then was to revive the organization. A certain 'softness' was thus displayed by the RSS in its functioning in the post ban years. Within this close knit grouping disagreements over its future orientation surfaced. Some felt the RSS should continue with its character building approach, while the younger generation of the Sangh demanded a turn towards activism. In this process Golwalkar sent many swayamsevaks to work with Vinoba Bhave, a disciple of Gandhi in his *Bhoodan Movement*. In the early 1950s the RSS was a part of the relief work among East Bengal (or Pakistan) refugees, provided help during the Assam earthquake (1950) and Golwalkar himself participated in the movement against cow slaughter (1952). Golwalkar thus had managed to address the concern towards participation of the RSS in social welfare programmes.

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<sup>4</sup> One event to recall here is from the much controversial Marathi play *Mee Nathuram Godse Boltay* Here Nathuram continues to use the term Gandhi *vadh* and not *hatya* He considers the former as done with more positive intentions in mind as against the latter which is a cruel act. This play was banned for several months. The lack of remorse on the part of the Godse brothers and their mentor i.e. the RSS, with respect to the assassination of Gandhi, is very evident even today.

To fulfil the demand for political participation and/or activism by the younger cadres, Golwalkar encouraged some to help Shyama Prasad Mookherjee in establishing the Jana Sangh in 1951. The Jana Sangh participated in the first general elections of 1951-52. However, it experienced a massive setback in the elections which demoralized the political activists. In 1954, the RSS volunteers joined the movement of the liberation of Goa and Dadra Nagar Haveli. The RSS pamphlets also distinctly mention its participation in this satyagraha.<sup>5</sup> The RSS attained renewed respectability when Nehru invited it to participate in the Republic Day parade. Thus on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1963 the RSS participated in the parade as a separate contingent. All these instances of RSS's participation in agitations and social welfare programmes boosted its morale. In so doing the RSS had managed to recover respect and support from the masses. This was a brief overview of the Sangh's struggle to survive after the 18 month ban imposed on it. To reconstruct a strong public image it had diligently worked towards it through the successful manipulation of the tensions that marred this newly developing country.

In 1948, the Sangh established a student organization referred to as the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP). It was started with a view to counter the growing network of Left-led organizations. The Left parties already had a student's wing, which was actively working post Partition. The Sangh also floated a labour affiliate called the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) in 1955. The Sangh in their quest for political activism set up several such front organizations. In 1964 Golwalkar established the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (VHP) in order to counter the work of Christian missionaries in the country. With the establishment of the VHP, Hinduism and RSS's Hindutva achieved a new avatar. The VHP took up the role of the 'protector' of all Hindus and their religion, like its mother organization i.e. the RSS. It was an organization of *sadhus*, *sants* and many such religiously oriented individuals. By bringing together a cluster of religious figures, the RSS had managed to tone down the 'communal connotations' of the saffron brotherhood. It gave the RSS and VHP a new legitimacy.

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<sup>5</sup> Though RSS's participation in a repertoire of movements and agitations after the Independence is mentioned in some books and articles, nevertheless its role comes under serious doubt. Its relative absence in the movements against British rule is condemned by some swayamsevaks themselves. I read an article in *The Indian Express* (Mumbai) dated Nov4, 2003 which demands a 'liberation from lies.' The author, Prabhakar Sinari was a part of the liberation of Goa. He considers the role of the RSS in the liberation as merely marginal. "As a direct participant, I can say that Goans and Damanians under the banner of the United Front of Goans, Azad Gomantak Dal (AGD) and Goan People's Party accomplished the mission. There was not a single RSS volunteer with the United Front of Goans.... It's only the AGD that used their services. The number of RSS volunteers would have been 40-45." The RSS's attempts to rewrite history

The VHP gradually began expanding its support base. It multiplied with new followers, fronts and organizations coming under its sway. It targeted the *sadhus*, the youth and women for support. The VHP then began its work among tribals and harijans in remote areas. It is important to remember the fact that the VHP essentially was established to counter missionary work. Christian missionaries were accused of conversions of Hindus to Christianity. Therefore when it is said that the VHP was expanding its outreach to tribals and harijans there is a clear motive behind it. Such a systematic move to help these sections holds the intention of reconverting all Hindus back to the faith. The underlying aim is to maintain the size of the Hindu support base. Thus the Sangh has been diligently working to expand its network through the many front organizations it floats. They may not be directly associated with politics but have nevertheless helped the Sangh's political project.

#### THE RSS AND THE CONGRESS: WRESTLING FOR SPACE IN INDIAN POLITICS

The Indian political front was largely headed by the Congress (Indian National Congress) during the freedom struggle. Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the alternative forms of ideologies and protest that did emerge during that period. More often the Congress is credited with winning Independence for India. The Congress had a distinct secular, class profile to it. In Independent India, those who came to comprise the ruling force were from an upper caste, twice born, English educated grouping (Frankel, 1990). However, over the years, the Congress has been able to maintain its 'all accommodating' feature. This implies that, the Congress party has included individuals from different social groups including the minorities. It is important to keep in mind the fact that ... "whatever social configurations the Congress party confronted at the various states, its leader like the British before them did not attempt to change the social order but to adapt to it."<sup>6</sup> One has to take note that the ruling political force in Indian politics i.e. the Congress, displayed an unusual social composition. In other words, this 'representativeness' of the Congress — though at times doubtful — has never been

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has projected itself and its cadres as the 'liberators' and 'protectors.' But the true freedom fighters, activists and 'liberators' are consciously ignored or silenced in so doing!!

<sup>6</sup> Francine.R Frankel - 'Decline of a Social Order' in Francine R. Frankel and M.S.A.Rao eds. (1990)- *Dominance and State Power in Modern India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi. p.375.

questioned. Accommodation of various groups was probably done for political intentions alone.

Before moving further in the debate, it is important to mention that this is not intended merely as an analysis purely of party politics. As it has already been mentioned, the Sangh parivar's political experience has to be seen along with that of the Congress. A discussion over the Indian political scenario here is essentially a socio-economic analysis of the milieu since independence. This analysis helps us comprehend the workings of the Sangh in a more accurate manner. The close link between economy, politics and society has to be taken into consideration. The Sangh parivar has managed to make use of economic crises as reasons to implement their socio-political ideology.

After the Partition it was the Congress and Jawaharlal Nehru that came to dominate the Indian political scenario. The main aim during that period was the socio-economic development of India, so as to resurrect it from its decayed state it had come to. Nehru embarked upon a socialist, secular idea of development and change. Economic planning was carried forth by administering five-year plans, each with a particular orientation and target. Thus Indian economic development after 1947 was impressive, but there were some problems that surfaced. At the end of the first three five-year plans, it was realised that the targets set were not achieved. A period of crisis followed. The targets were too idealistic in nature. In spite of the technologically oriented development plans, poverty and unemployment persisted. During this period itself India also experienced two wars, in 1962 the India-China war and in 1965 the India-Pakistan war. In 1964 Nehru passed away, and this created a political vacuum. This chain of events during the 1960s generated anxiety, doubt, and frustration among the masses. Consequently the one party dominance of the Congress broke down, and the regionally based political parties gradually grew in prominence.

Meanwhile the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) was changing its orientation and working towards establishing itself politically. There was a shift of focus from the urban educated middle class to the lower middle classes primarily in small cities in Northern India. This was an attempt to alter its public image as an upper-middle class (Brahmin) oriented grouping. Its close association with the RSS was bound to create such an image about the BJS. To stabilize itself as a significant political force, this change was needed. The Jana Sangh gave up its political isolation and willingly explored possible political alliances. This tactic proved fruitful for in 1967 the BJS secured thirty-five seats in the Lok Sabha elections.

In 1966 Indira Gandhi was elected Prime Minister of India. She carried forward the legacy of Nehruvian socialism. She had soon come to define her ideology as 'leftist.' In so doing, Indira Gandhi took the crucial step to nationalise banks.<sup>7</sup> Nationalization of banks was very overtly rationalized as a socialist step. During this period, Indira Gandhi was also credited for liberating Bangladesh in the 1971 war with Pakistan. The slogan of 'garibi hatao' and the image of 'Durga' that Indira Gandhi attained in the Bangladesh war, led to her sweeping victory in the 1971 elections. The Congress had managed to read the popular mood and thus garner mass support in the elections. The victory of Mrs. Gandhi, for a second time after 1966 encountered certain unusual responses. The 'garibi hatao' plank had won the elections for her. However there was discontent among the masses. Poverty in India had not declined significantly as the five-year plan proposed it would. The protests against her regime were gradually mounting. Jayaprakash Narayan, a disciple of Gandhi, took advantage of the anxiety and frustration that characterised this period. His call for 'Total Revolution' gained immense response (1973-74) from the people. It was a call to protest against the oppressive regime of the Congress.

The RSS and the Jana Sangh had become part of the JP movement, through its student wing (ABVP), which had provided manpower to it in Bihar. JP (Jayaprakash) had to collaborate with socialists and Hindu nationalists in his anti-Congress movement. It is believed that JP and the *swayamsevaks* teamed up, as they supposedly shared the idea of social reform. This alliance proved very profitable for the Sangh. JP praised the efforts of the Sangh in Bihar and UP. Hansen notes that the,

"The RSS issued a public statement supporting JP Narayan, who was hailed as a sanyasi comparable to Gandhi, Bhave and Golwalkar (!), JP Narayan in turn endowed the RSS with a new public legitimacy by calling members of the organization 'true patriots', 'revolutionaries', and so on."<sup>8</sup>

The pressure that was created on Mrs. Gandhi led her to impose an Emergency in 1975. The freedom of the press was curbed and a ban was imposed on all parties in opposition as well as on all communal organizations. Several RSS leaders were arrested during this time. Interestingly, the Shiv Sena was left unharmed.

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<sup>7</sup> The nationalization of banks meant a reliance on the public sector for concentrated capital. The reason being that the money required for further advancement could not possibly be secured from the private sector banks. These private sector banks did not have concentrated capital. So the public sector banks were sought after and nationalised.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Blom Hansen (1999)- *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India.*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi. p.130.

In spite of the ban, the Sangh's political experiments did not end. Just before the 1977 Lok Sabha elections the Janata Party was formed. It was a conglomeration of disparate ideologies. It consisted of defectors from the Congress, the Congress (O) headed by Morarji Desai, the Socialist Party, the Bharatiya Lok Dal headed by Charan Singh and the Jana Sangh. In the elections Indira Gandhi lost and the Janata Party came into power. The Jana Sangh had the largest contingent of MPs in the Lok Sabha. Its long-standing appeal for the rewriting of history textbooks from a Hindu nationalist perspective was taken up by its MPs. Nevertheless, this shaky coalition was bound to face tensions. The central issue was the 'dual membership' of Jana Sangh members. This eventually led to a second cabinet being set up in 1979 led by Charan Singh. It too collapsed and this cleared the way for the Congress, once again.

The failure of the political experiment of the Janata Party brought about several changes in the political arena. The political strategies to be used hereafter thus underwent significant alterations. The Janata government fell due to scores of disagreements and tensions within this coalition of disparate ideologies. The main bone of contention was the 'dual membership' of the Jana Sangh leaders who were also members of the RSS. With the collapse of the Janata government, the BJS was revived in a new form in April 1980 as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Though the relations of the Jana Sangh with the RSS were condemned by most in the Janata Party, this did not affect RSS functioning in any way. Rather, the membership of the RSS and its affiliates continued to soar high. It was perhaps the Jana Sangh's and indirectly the RSS's tryst with politics that was gradually changing people's opinion about it. That could have been one of the plausible reasons for the surge in the membership of the RSS.

“... Its general secretary reported in early 1978 that the number of shakhas had increased from 8500 in 1975 to 11,000 in 1977. One year later, the RSS announced the addition of another 2000 shakhas... reported that the number of shakhas has increased to 17,000 by 1981. The RSS affiliates also expanded rapidly. For example, the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, the RSS's labour affiliate, claimed that it had grown from about 1.2 million members in 1977 to about 1.8 million in 1980.”<sup>9</sup>

The Janata Party suffered a major electoral setback in the 1980 elections. Indira Gandhi once again came back as Prime Minister. Her re-election at the centre was not just a result of the fall of the Janata Party, it was also the alterations in her political strategies that won her this victory. Indira Gandhi had come to realise that the 'Garibi



hatao' plank adopted in the Fourth five-year plan and continued during the Fifth, was ineffective. The reason being that, inspite of such idealistic promises, poverty had continued to increase in magnitude. Measures like distribution of small amounts of money to the poor was no remedy. In reality the 'poor' and 'poverty' did not appear on the planning blueprints. Changes in the planning strategies were essential. Nevertheless such pointers of deprivation have often gone unnoticed during political strife. Indira Gandhi thus chose to experiment with the 'communal' alternative. She was making use of the wave created by the VHP during this period. In February 1981, a large number of Harijans were converted to Islam at Meenakshipuram in Tamil Nadu. In spite of the local origins of this key event, the nationwide effect it created was unimaginable. The obvious consequence was that riots took place in several parts of the country. Many consider the outbreak of riots to be a result of Mrs. Gandhi's swing towards the 'communal' plank. It was a complete change in her style of politics, from a 'secular' to a 'communally' oriented political strategising. The revival of the BJS as the Bharatiya Janata Party did not do too well politically. The BJP continued to play a very negligible role in state politics like in Assam and Punjab. It maintained silence over some crucial socio-political issues. In its initial years the BJP did not display an anti-Muslim stand. Its party documents spoke rather of land reforms, better fiscal and monetary planning and other such secular issues. The primary need was to carry forward the aim of uniting all Hindu sects and organizations and this is when the RSS began to rely more on the VHP. The RSS was of the view that in its project to unite the Hindus, political participation through the BJP was not sufficient.

The Meenakshipuram conversions' event had created a nationwide uproar. The RSS took advantage of this incident to further highlight the supposed 'threat' that Islam (Muslims) posed for the Hindus. It decided to stand by the VHP during this event and thus thought of supporting VHP's fundraising activities along with the various other activities organized by them. The VHP sponsored the *Hindu Ekamata Yagna* in 1983. Its main aim was to highlight the idea that national integration essentially means unity among Hindus. On the one hand where the BJP was trying hard to mobilize support for its party, the Congress continued to garner support from the masses. Indira Gandhi had

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<sup>9</sup> Walter K. Andersen and Shridhar Damle (1987)- *The Brotherhood in Saffron: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*, Vistaar Publications Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi. p.215.

managed to transform her image since the liberation of Bangladesh.<sup>10</sup> However, during this phase she portrayed herself as a true protector of the Hindus. She attended the *Ekatmata Yagna* as the chief guest where she declared that the Hindu and his/her spirit was being threatened. Thus what followed was a bid for the Hindu vote, between the BJP and the Congress. In so doing the BJP performed poorly in the elections that followed. In 1983, out of sheer desperation it formed the National Democratic Alliance with Charan Singh's Lok Dal.

The political wrestling between the Congress and the BJP continued. Her experimentation with the communal option had not ended as yet. In order to counter the stronghold of the Akali Dal in Punjab, the Congress led Sant Bhindranwale, a Sikh militant, to prominence. He was urged by Sanjay Gandhi (the younger son of Indira Gandhi) to join mainstream politics. Bhindranwale was arrested in 1981 for the assassination of the editor-in-chief of *Hind Samachar*, a newspaper that was highly critical of Sikh nationalism. However, he was released in two months after which he took refuge in the Golden Temple in Amritsar. In the name of Operation Blue Star the Congress authorised a military attack on the Golden Temple to flush out Bhindranwale.

On 31<sup>st</sup> October 1984 Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her two Sikh bodyguards. As a reaction to this there were widespread anti Sikh riots especially in Delhi.<sup>11</sup> In the elections that followed, Rajiv Gandhi won a sweeping victory by capturing 401 of 508 contested parliamentary seats and 49.16% of the electorate. It was a sympathy wave that won the elections for the Congress with a large majority. Thus one sees that the 'secular' feature of the Congress was never challenged. The Congress continued to be the upholder of secularism. However Indira Gandhi's shift in political strategising had in actuality begun the process of the erosion of secularism in India.

Rajiv Gandhi who came to succeed Indira Gandhi, carried forward the legacy of using controversies for electoral purposes. Thus it was evident that the Congress had not

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<sup>10</sup> During the decades of the 80s, the Green revolution took place in India especially in Punjab. In order to deal with the food crisis during this phase, Indira Gandhi chose to focus on technology to solve the problem. This path was chosen over the option of land development or equal distribution of land or encouraging small farmers to help. She introduced high yielding variety (HYVs) seeds. The obvious result was that productivity increased but this was profitable for the big farmers alone who could afford to use this expensive technology. The small farmers suffered significantly. Many committed suicide owing to the mounting debts that their surviving families are unable to repay even today. Mrs. Gandhi had won the elections at the cost of the poor whom she promised to help through her 'garibi hatao' plank. The consequences of her political strategies are borne by the farmers even today.

<sup>11</sup> Many believe that the Anti- Sikh riots in Delhi were systematically orchestrated as a response to Mrs. Gandhi's assassination. Sikhs were targeted, ruthless killings followed. Sikhs were picked up from their houses, from trains and brutally beaten and killed.

abandoned the race to woo the Hindus and stabilise its control over the masses. The tussle continued between the Congress and the BJP, which created tension for the Sangh. The Congress was also a contender in the communal mobilization of the masses. In the mid 1980s, a debate over the future path that the BJP should adopt emerged. After prolonged discussions, it chose in the end, to follow the Jana Sangh leader Deen Dayal Upadhyay's concept of *Integral Humanism*.

Meanwhile, the VHP continued expanding its support base. It organized two *dharm sansads* in 1984 and 1985, where numerous *shankacharyas*, *sanyasis* and *sadhus* assembled from all over the country. The aim was to organize a programme for temple construction at Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura. It was during this phase that the demand for worshipping the idols of Lord Ram inside the premises was made.<sup>12</sup> Simultaneously, several events occurred which were systematically manipulated by religious organizations and political parties. The Shah Bano case, as it is popularly known, came to the forefront during this time. It challenged the parameters of the Indian constitution and judiciary system. The case concerned a highly contested verdict in which the Supreme Court granted alimony to a divorced Muslim woman, Shah Bano. This violated the clauses of the Muslim Personal Law. After vehement protests, the Rajiv Gandhi government reversed the verdict by introducing the Muslim Women's Bill.<sup>13</sup> This was done in order to please the conservative Muslim leadership and to reconsolidate the Muslims' declining support of the Congress Party. This bill evidently placed the destitute divorced Muslim women under the protection of their Personal Laws. The secular provisions like the Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which provide for all divorced women, irrespective of their religion, are essential in a plural society like India. The Shah Bano case was a glaring example of the manipulation of crucial issues by politically motivated people.

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<sup>12</sup> Back in 1949, 28 December there occurred the over night installation of the idol of Ram Lalla. Most tales speak of the miraculous appearance of Lord Ram in the temple/masjid. Following this so-called 'miracle' riots broke out. Thus to evade further trouble Nehru ordered the locking up of the premises avoiding either Hindus or Muslims from entering the premises.

<sup>13</sup> "On the 25<sup>th</sup> of February, the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill was introduced which excluded divorced Muslim women from the purview of Section 125, stating that the obligation of their husbands to maintain them ended with a 3 months iddat period, after which their families would have to support them or, failing this, their local Waqf Board." Radha Kumar (2001)- *The History of Doing: An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women's Rights and Feminism in India 1800-1900*, Kali for Women, New Delhi, p.166. The Sec 125 Cr P.C is a provision for all destitute divorced women. To give it religious or communal connotations is in a way diverting from the cause of women. The Judiciary is controlled by the governing system of India. Each government has manipulated with the law to serve their own petty political motives.

This created a massive uproar in the country. It was read as another of Congress's tactics to appease the Muslims. However, it was the Hindus who took offence to such communally oriented decisions of the Congress. To maintain its balance on the political tightrope, the Congress ordered the reopening of the gates of the Babri Masjid. This event embittered the relationship between the Hindus and the Muslims. Rajiv Gandhi had calculatedly manipulated these events to his advantage but that cost the country a great deal.

With the opening of the gates of the Babri Masjid a new episode of a militant Hindu nationalistic fervour began. The Ayodhya issue was a stroke of luck for the right wing, which they exploited to the full. In the meanwhile, the VHP organized the manufacture of Ramshilas, i.e. bricks with the name of Ram inscribed on them. These were to be used in the construction of the Ram Temple. Rajiv Gandhi further supported the Ramshila programme, which laid down the foundation stones of the temple adjoining the masjid. He also promised Ram Rajya. In other words, Rajiv Gandhi assured the establishment of the kingdom of Ram. In the past Gandhi had also spoken of Ram Rajya but the connotations behind these claims differed significantly. L K Advani, then the president of the BJP, attacked the pseudo-secularism of the Congress. He condemned the Congress for using religious issues and appeasing the minorities particularly the Muslims. The Ayodhya issue had now assumed nationwide proportions and this brought the Sangh Parivar along with regional parties like the Shiv Sena. In the elections that followed, the Congress was defeated (1989). The Congress could not completely dissolve its secular credentials nor could it deny its communal experimenting. The inability of the Congress to curb the rise of the temple controversy, voted it out. The National Front Government was established with the support of the left and the BJP. V P Singh became the next Prime minister. In 1990 he implemented the Mandal Commission Report to provide educational seats and job reservations to the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Such a plan was sure to divide the Hindu community and the Hindu vote. Thus it was the perfect time for the BJP to flag off the *Rath Yatra* in order to bring together the Hindus.

In September 1990, L K Advani began his *Rath Yatra* from Somnath<sup>14</sup> to Ayodhya. Both places were carefully chosen, as they were religiously extremely

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<sup>14</sup> Somnath has been a place, which has been in constant debate. For the right wing, Somnath was important, as it was a site that had supposedly struggled to survive the numerous invasions of Muslims especially referring to Mahmud of Ghazni. The temple of Somnath has been plundered by Mahmud of

symbolic. This *Rath Yatra* assumed a form that was unimaginable, as it passed through several states in the country. Riots and killings occurred in its wake, and they eventually reached appalling numbers.<sup>15</sup> The Rath Yatra was followed by the Sangh Parivar's mass mobilization for the demolition of the Babri Masjid. 'Ram' had now become the central concern within this Hindu nationalist struggle. Mobilization for this temple movement had been carried out on a very large scale. Videos and cassettes of speeches of women like Sadhavi Rithambara and Uma Bharati were made easily available. Pamphlets, calendar art, stickers, hoardings – all read of the Sangh parivar's dream to construct the Ram temple at Ayodhya.

Mobilization among women and the youth was carefully planned. It was from this section that maximum support was received. All these measures were part of a long drawn out strategy. Finally, all supporters from across the country assembled in Ayodhya. On 6<sup>th</sup> December 1992, the *kar seva* was carried out and the Babri Masjid was razed to the ground. The police present at the location did not take any action to stop the *karsevaks*. Also the reluctance of the Narsimha Rao government towards such a planned act added to the tense circumstances. India witnessed widespread riots in several states in December '92 and January '93. It is common knowledge that these riots took the form of well-orchestrated pogroms, which targeted the Muslims. The support that this movement was receiving was evident in the electoral gains that the BJP achieved. The BJP's gains in the elections were considerable, from winning 2 parliamentary seats in 1984 to 120 in 1991.

Besides these obvious indicators of the expansion of the Sangh's network, there are many others that need to be taken into consideration. A repertoire of issues, anxieties and emotions of the masses were tapped. It has not been the characteristic only of the Sangh to use such a mode of appeal. Using religion and/or religious orientations has been a habit of the Congress as well. It is a fact that some of the political mistakes the Congress made proved advantageous for the Sangh Parivar. It gave more legitimacy to their strong appeal in favour of Hindutva. At the end it becomes imperative to closely

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Ghazni several times. It was in 1026 that he first raided the temple, took away all its wealth and broke the idol. The reference to Mahmud of Ghazni is made in almost all right wing literature beginning with Savarkar to the present day. For the right it is not merely a historical event. His invasion is presented as the day the struggle of the Hindus with the Muslims had begun. The invasion is symbolic for it signifies the rivalry between the two communities.

<sup>15</sup> In Gujarat 258 were killed whereas in Maharashtra the numbers reached 434. Partha S. Ghosh (1999)- *BJP and the Evolution of Hindu Nationalism: From Periphery to the Centre*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi. p.96.

reflect on the political journey of the RSS overtime. The close-knit and widely expanding 'Parivar' that it created was a consequence of the efforts of several decades. The RSS had developed significantly from a purely upper caste Brahmin oriented grouping to an organization with a wide network.

The Sangh's network has spread extensively across the country as well as abroad. As we found even secular political figures like Nehru, Gandhi, JP, Indira Gandhi gave legitimacy to the RSS from time to time. Its disciplinary system of functioning had impressed everyone across the political spectrum. Many, like JP, commented that the swayamsevaks were 'true patriots.' Nehru called upon the RSS to participate in the Republic day parade as a separate contingent. All these events legitimised the Sangh as a mainstream organization. This allowed the RSS to spawn other front organizations. Links of the Parivar with sadhus and sanyasis with the help of the VHP brought about greater regard for the Sangh. These were the so-called legitimate authority of the Hindu faith. Relations with them now gave legitimacy to almost every task of the Sangh Parivar. In Hindu society especially the respect for such religious figures is immense. So by including them into their politico-cultural project, the Sangh had managed to bring about greater support and thus significantly rule out any dissent. Besides these, numerous other organizations were floated which aspired to address the everyday issues of the masses. During the 1970s the RSS established the Grahak Panchayat, which looked into consumer grievances. The Vidya Bharati was founded in the late 1970s, which was an all-coordinating body. The Saraswati Shishu Mandir was set up in Gorakhpur, U.P. The Vidya Bharati<sup>16</sup> claims to have given special attention to the sensitive *vanavasi* areas. According to the Sangh, the *vanavasis* have maintained their Hindu traditions in the face of missionary work. The Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA) takes up this initiative of the RSS. However it is important to note that the composition of students in RSS schools is predominantly lower middle class Hindu families.

The Sangh's political journey initially suffered some setbacks. However, it has diligently worked towards stabilizing itself as a strong political force. Its agenda of establishing a *Hindu Rashtra* has been used selectively. During its inception the RSS vociferously demanded the creation of a Hindu nation. But during its attempts at political activism, this demand was only mildly suggested. Gradually an open association of its cultural agenda with the Hindu religion was made. In 'rallying for

Ram' the Congress and the Sangh Parivar have contributed equally. Both appropriated the imagery of Ram in order to appeal to the Hindu vote. However, the basic difference between the two is that the former was focussing on immediate electoral gains, whereas the latter was constructing a long-term political project of Hindu rashtravaad. Even the imagery of Ram was changed from the *udar, maryada purshottam*, who has come to display an *ugra* (angry) mood.<sup>17</sup> The BJP, the political front of the RSS and the VHP thrived on the work of the RSS of the past several decades. Thus it mobilized support for the RJB-Babri masjid movement, from all sections of the society. Women, youth, backward classes, elites, educated, illiterate all seemed most willing to participate. Each of them had a unique interpretation of their role in the movement.

### SHIV SENA: THE CRUSADERS FOR MUMBAIKARS

The 'Sangh parivar' often is a reference to the cluster of the RSS-VHP-BJP alone. However, the Shiv Sena, a regional party established in Maharashtra, can be included in this family too. Ideologically they display remarkable similarities, which is why it becomes imperative for our purpose to look into the Shiv Sena's political progress as well. The Shiv Sena is an organization of very recent origin. This 38 year-old organization has successfully emerged by efficiently manipulating local issues and anxieties. It has managed to grow from a political party/organisation? I am not sure of the difference between the two limited to Mumbai and Thane, and rallying for the cause of the Marathi speaking locals, to a strong political force within state politics. The Shiv Sena has skilfully altered its stand, when required, from a nativistic attitude to that of militant nationalism.

In this section a brief history of the Shiv Sena would be essential. Its initial struggle to establish itself in a newly formed State is briefly looked at. In the beginning, it allied with several parties but eventually it severed its relations with them. This was done in order to rise as an individual political force in the State. There are many features that it shares with the RSS. After the 1980s, the Shiv Sena made a swing towards a more militant form of *Hindutva* and/or Hindu nationalism.

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<sup>16</sup> The educational mission of the Vidya Bharati is to train children to see themselves as the protectors of a Hindu nation. The funding for it comes from supporters and sympathisers, including NRI's.

The decline of the Congress in the 1960s facilitated the rise of parties at state levels often with a limited regional appeal. Gradually, there were many who mobilized several ethnic groups as well in order to gain greater access to the state. With the decline of the 'Congress system' politics became an 'open' arena where many competitors made a bid to share power. In this power struggle that continues till date, the one feature that has emerged is that no political party can survive at the centre without the help of regional or state level parties. The ideology that these respective parties hold is only a secondary concern. Adjustments and accommodations are managed in this bid to share power at the centre.

In the year 1960, the unilingual state of Maharashtra was born. After much debate, struggle, and protest, the state was formed. Initially, Bombay Province consisted of parts of present day Gujarat, Karnataka, and Maharashtra excluding the belts of Marathwada and Vidarbha. The demand was to form the unilingual states of Maharashtra and Gujarat. The demand to include Bombay in the state of Maharashtra was significant, though only 43% of its population was Marathi speaking. The national Congress leadership, however, was reluctant to accede to this demand. The Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti (SMS) was formed in 1955. It fought for the creation of the state of Maharashtra. The Samiti's demands also consisted of the inclusion of the areas of Belgaum and Karwar. The SMS consisted of various parties however, the Praja Socialist Party (PSP) and the Communist Party of India (CPI) were prominent. Eventually it had become a strong anti-Congress force within the state<sup>18</sup>. However, with the formation of Maharashtra, this movement gradually faded out.

Maharashtra had successfully grabbed Bombay as its capital, much to the discontent of Gujarat. It was a phase that was characteristic of a heightened sense of enthusiasm and hope among Marathi speaking people. However, this wave did not persist for too long. The formation of Maharashtra did not, in any way, mean easy

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<sup>17</sup> Anuradha Kapur- 'Deity to Crusader: The Changing Iconography of Ram,' in Gyanendra Pandey ed. (1993)- *Hindus and Others*, Viking Penguin India, p.74

<sup>18</sup> It is considered by many that 'Maharashtra, and along with it, Mumbai had been won after the supreme sacrifice of 105 people. This was somewhere deeply embedded in the Marathi mind, as were Congress leader Yeshwantrao Chavan's proclamations opposing the cause of Samyukta Maharashtra. Chavan had caused considerable consternation among young Maharashtrians by saying "Nehru is greater than Maharashtra" and by terming the Samyukta Maharashtra movement as "home grown colonialism." Vaibhav Purandare (1999)- *The Sena Story*, Business Publications, Mumbai, p.52. The Congress, which was the strongest political force in Bombay Province, did not in actuality support the movement to form the independent state of Maharashtra in the early stages.



availability of opportunities for Maharashtrians. The hope of 'Maharashtra for Maharashtrians' was gradually crumbling. During the early 1960s, Bal Thackeray<sup>19</sup> took up this line of dissatisfaction and discontent among Marathi people, in his magazine *Marmik* (satire). *Marmik* was a cartoon weekly, which was started by Bal Thackeray in 1960. In its first few issues he stressed the shrinking space of job opportunities for the natives, the locals i.e. Marathi speakers. He very efficiently constructed here the image of the 'outsiders.' The hardships in finding jobs were conveniently blamed on these 'outsiders' i.e. the South Indians. In the pages of *Marmik*, lists of names of executives in top ranking firms were published in order to highlight the lack of Maharashtrians in prominent positions in Mumbai and the dominance of South Indians in the job market.

“Between 1960, when the state of Maharashtra came into existence and 1966, major changes in the structure of Bombay’s economy occurred. The underside of state-sponsored private capitalist development, an ‘underworld’ of extortion, smuggling, drug trafficking and contraband peddling, had begun.”<sup>20</sup>

Around this time when the Shiv Sena emerged, Mumbai also witnessed large-scale retrenchment and job insecurity. Though this problem was nation-wide it affected Mumbai severely as it was the industrial capital of India. These events did affect the Maharashtrians especially in the white-collar neighbourhood. These instances thus created phenomenal fear and anxiety among the locals. Added to these was another event, which created a sense of doubt among the younger generation. As already mentioned, the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti had been a strong anti-Congress force within the Bombay Province. However, after the formation of Maharashtra it had faded away. The anger against the Congress had been widespread during the struggle to establish Maharashtra. It had been against the creation of the State. It was also considered to be responsible for the death of those who fought against the national Congress’s decision to declare Bombay as a union territory. After the state of Maharashtra was formed the SMS faded away. It thus created a void with no political force to articulate the discontent and anger of the young Marathi lot. Bal Thackeray thus came forward and filled up this void. He was promptly welcomed. The support given to him was obviously by the youth who stood by the Samyukta Maharashtra movement and gave it momentum.

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<sup>19</sup> Bal Thackeray is the son of K S Thackeray an eminent journalist and writer.

<sup>20</sup> Jayant Lele- ‘Saffronisation of the Shiv Sena: The Political Economy of City, State and Nation’ in Sujata Patel and Alice Thorner ed. (1995)- *Bombay: A Metaphor for Modern India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, p.186.

On 19<sup>th</sup> June 1966 thus the Shiv Sena was established in Mumbai. It made a promise to fight for the cause of the Marathi people. “Its platform was the straightforward demand of 80% job reservation for Maharashtrians, then- as now- defined not by residence but by linguistic descent.”<sup>21</sup> The other claim they made was to wipe out extortion, drug trafficking from Mumbai. The Shiv Sena thus managed to strike the right chord. In other words, it was able to grasp the anxious mood of the masses. The Shiv Sena efficiently tackled the underworld. In this nexus, both parties benefited providing each other ‘cover’ to sustain in the city. As Jayant Lele states, ‘When the Sena also promised to wipe out gangsterdom, it struck a sympathetic chord. By the end of the sixties, while publicly attacking the underworld, it managed to create within itself a strong and dedicated following that gave the organization its muscle power and in return gave those in the underworld the benefit of its organization and discipline.’<sup>22</sup>

The Sena emerged as an answer to the call of the distressed *marathi manoos*. Proud of Maharashtra’s rich cultural heritage, the Shiv Sena drew significantly from the 17<sup>th</sup> century warrior king, Shivaji. The appropriation of Shivaji was skillful as he is regarded a symbol of Maratha pride and power. It is believed that he supposedly had brought together the lower castes and the Brahmans in his court. Shivaji had recruited men in his army from the *kunbi peasantry*. These are some features that are commonly associated with Shivaji. The most important point of reference for the Sena is Shivaji’s fight against the Mughals. His martial exploits, his oath to establish *Hindvi Swaraj* or the *Hindu padpadshahi* (Hindu empire) were important ideals to be emulated.

It was probably Shivaji’s regionalism (i.e. the struggle to expand the Maratha empire) that inspired the Sena to put forth its ‘sons-of-the-soil’ movement (*bhoomiputra andolan*). The Shiv Sena’s fight was for the sons of the soil (that is the Marathi speaking people) it was also a struggle to re-establish Marathi culture and language in Mumbai, which it was perceived was threatened by outsiders.

“The definition of Maharashtrian according to Shiv Sena not only includes Marathi speaking Maharashtrians, but extends to all those of all castes, creeds and religion, who look upon Maharashtra as their homeland, who have been living here for generations together carrying on trade and

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<sup>21</sup> Julia M.Eckert (2003) – *The Charisma of Direct Action: Power, Politics and the Shiv Sena*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, p.184.

<sup>22</sup> Jayant Lele- ‘Saffronization of the Shiv Sena: The Political Economy of City, State and Nation’, in Sujata Patel and Alice Thorner ed.s (1996)- *Bombay: Metaphor for Modern India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, p.186.

business, contributing to the welfare and prosperity of Maharashtra and above all commingling their weals and woes with those of the sons-of-soil.”<sup>23</sup>

It was a definition, which underwent several changes in the process of the Sena's expansion of its support base.

Bal Thackeray, the founder of the Shiv Sena, had pledged that the organization would always function as a social forum.<sup>24</sup> In other words, it held a non-political stand but within one year the stand changed. It participated in the city's municipal elections in 1967. The Sena allied with a number of independent candidates, and thus came to control the municipal government in Thane. In the 1968 and the 1973 municipal elections the Sena achieved major successes. The Shiv Sena had managed to do exceedingly well in these elections due to two main reasons. One was the significant appeal of its sons-of-the-soil stand. This had managed to gain the sympathy of the vastly discontented middle and lower middle class. These sections of the society in Mumbai had perhaps never thought on these lines about their own plight. The South Indians 'stealing' the jobs from the locals had never been given political expression previously. Secondly, it was the establishment of neighbourhood *shakhas* that made people aware of the Shiv Sena. These *shakhas* brought together unemployed and underemployed youth into an informal network of social service activities [Palshikar, 2004]. However it is important to note here that the youth here were mobilized for other purposes as well. They took part in riots against South Indians, which included breaking down shops and damaging property owned by them. These events gave immense publicity to the Shiv Sena.

Over time the Sena developed a highly efficient network of local units. It floated a women's wing (*Mahila Aghadi*), a labour union (*Bharatiya Kamgar Sena*) and a consumer front. Besides these, the *shakhas*, the cartoon weekly i.e. the *Marmik* (1960) and the daily newspaper *Saamana* (started in 1989, published in Marathi and Hindi) all contributed towards enhancing the public image of the Sena. Gradually it had come to realise that the anti-South Indian stance had to be done away with. The Shiv Sena needed a larger support (electoral) base to survive as a political force. Linguistic descent could no longer be held as the only criterion for the definition of a Maharashtrian. South

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<sup>23</sup> R. S. Morkhandikar (1967)- 'Shiv Sena: An eruption of subnationalism', *Economic & Political Weekly*, Oct,21, p.1905.

<sup>24</sup> Vaibhav Purandare (1999)- *The Sena Story*, Business Publications, Mumbai., p.41.

Indians and many others thus would have to be regarded as legitimate citizens of the State.<sup>25</sup>

A brief look at the political career of the Sena is necessary. The Sena's politics has often been carried out from under the shadow of the Congress. This implies that a number of times the Sena participated in the elections in alliance with the Congress. On other occasions it has supported Congress candidates. In all these numerous instances of electioneering the Sena and the Congress have maintained close relations. In the 1971 Lok Sabha elections, the Sena allied with the Congress (O), and fielded 3 candidates and all lost. Again in 1978 it courted alliance with the Congress (I), however it lost in all constituencies. The Congress too, efficiently made use of the Shiv Sena. By using Sena's strong-arm tactics, the Congress wiped out all left led trade unions. It was in 1970, that the anti-Communist stance of the Shiv Sena touched extreme levels. The Sena allegedly murdered CPI MLA Krishna Desai. The seat vacated by his murder was eventually won by a Sena candidate. By the end of the 1970s the Sena's political progress had come to a standstill. It did not have any representation in the state legislature or the Parliament, and, "its strength in the Bombay Municipal Corporation declined from 42 in 1968 to 21 in 1978."<sup>26</sup> During the 70s, the Sena realised that the Congress too was targeting the same section in the society as itself. This was a threat to its political initiatives. In 1972, Shiv Sena fielded 26 candidates for assembly elections and won only one seat. It was during this phase of the 1970s the Sena had clashed with the Muslims and the Dalit Panthers. Along with this the Sena was accused of involvement in extortion and drug trafficking. These events affected Shiv Sena's public image. Thus in order to regain credibility the Sena had to take certain important steps. It would have to establish itself as a viable, independent political force in Maharashtra. The Sena had condemned the Indira Government, for its move towards the left. Bal Thackeray especially, was very critical of Indira's Congress because it consisted of a large number of communists. However, Thackeray eventually came to support the Congress during the Emergency. Thus the Sena had to support the Congress once again

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<sup>25</sup>"Furthermore, the South Indians 'were not behaving like good enemies. They willingly learnt Marathi and spoke it fluently, put up busts or portraits of Shivaji in their Udipi restaurants, some even joined the Shiv Sena." Dipankar Gupta, *Times of India*, 12 August 1995. As quoted in Julia M. Eckert (2003)- *The Charisma of Direct Action: Power, Politics and the Shiv Sena*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi. p.89.

<sup>26</sup>Jayant Lele- 'Saffronisation of the Shiv Sena: The Political Economy of City, State and Nation' in Patel, Sujata and Alice Thorner (ed.s)- (1996) *Bombay: A Metaphor for Modern India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, p.196. Lele, has quoted these statistics from Mary Katzenstein's book, *Ethnicity and Equality: The Shiv Sena Party and Preferential Policies in Bombay*.

in the Lok Sabha elections in 1977. Shiv Sena also made an unsuccessful attempt to ally the Janata Party in 1978.

During the 1980s it allied with the BJP but lost the elections. In 1985 it participated in the front that was led by Sharad Pawar (that is the Progressive Democratic Front, PDF, consisting of Pawar's Congress (S), Janata Party, BJP and the Left). After 1989 the Shiv Sena's alliance with the BJP came to the forefront. And finally in 1995, the alliance was voted to form the government at the state. The Sena in order to gain a firm ground in the minds of the people and within the state politics, it had made numerous alliances. The ideology of the ally obviously did not matter as much as the political leverage it hoped to gain. Criticisms of a particular ideology were perhaps only requirements of political strategising.

### *Mix of Appeals: The Attempt to Target Diverse Social Groups*

The Sena had attempted to establish itself as a strong political force in the state of Maharashtra by mixing a diversity of appeals in order to woo a diverse population. The Congress had skilfully destroyed the left led labour union with the help of the Sena. In so doing, the Shiv Sena formed its labour union called *Bharatiya Kamgar Sena* (BKS) in 1968.<sup>27</sup> However besides these, the Sena operates several unions like Shramik Sena, Cotton Worker's Union, S T Worker's Union, BEST Employees' Union, Cine Workers' Union and so on.<sup>28</sup> This helped the Sena to set up a base among the vast section of workers in industrial and other services. With the left led trade unions all dismantled, Shiv Sena became the only 'other' alternative to the Congress's labour union. The Sena's social welfare activities in the neighbourhood *shakhas* opened in the slums, 'brought the Sena into the homes of the people.'

The Shiv Sena was largely confined to the Mumbai-Thane belt. It had never ventured beyond this stretch of the city and the suburb. However by the 1970s the popular appeal of the Sena had stalled. The only way to tackle this problem was to

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<sup>27</sup> On August 11, 1968 the BKS was established to look after the workers demands and to keep them out of the communists' clutches. A guideline was published when the BKS was established. Amongst several such guidelines, one reads... "ii) the workers will be taught to produce more and only then ask more. The hue and cry about class struggle has fooled the illiterate worker. The poverty of the worker is because he has held up production with strikes." In other words it was a way of curtailing the worker's right to strike. This could be read as a consequence of the antagonism towards communism, which does realise worker's right to strike. It is a way of inculcating a sense of faith in the Sena. Thus silence all dissenting voices. Dipankar Gupta (1982)- *Nativism in a Metropolis: Shiv Sena in Bombay*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi., p.136.

<sup>28</sup> Suhas Palshikar (2004)- 'Shiv Sena: A Tiger with Many Faces?' *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 3-10, p.1499.

gradually move beyond the boundaries of Mumbai and Thane. By the 1980s after much wrangling and debates the Shiv Sena severed its links with the Congress. It was during this period itself that the Sena brought about several changes in its ideology. It quit its non-party stance and thus set out on a project of expanding its political network in all of Maharashtra. It primarily targeted the Marathwada and Vidarbha regions of Maharashtra. The Sena made use of national level issues like Babri Masjid and the Shah Bano case to enter the rural scene. In so doing it gave a new interpretation to local issues. It highlighted the issues of encroachments by local Muslims, and thus confirmed and justified its anti Muslim position.

During the 1970s the Shiv Sena developed an anti Dalit stand. It clashed with the Dalits several times. This hatred for the Dalits drew the Marathas and the OBCs close to their ideology. This antagonistic feeling towards the Dalits was profitable for the Sena. It used a very clever strategy of inciting one community against another. Initially it spoke against the Marathas, accusing them of capturing all important positions of power in state politics. This made the OBCs believe that the Sena represented them. The consequence thus being, the OBCs supported the political initiative of the Sena. On the other hand, its anti-Mandal (Mandal Commission which recommended reservations for the OBCs) stand had persuaded the Marathas. It was a well-calculated move that the Sena carried out. Meanwhile with its anti Dalit plank, the Shiv Sena also protested against the 'Namantar' i.e. the movement to change the name of the Marathwada University to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University. No party till then had opposed this proposal. The opposition by the Sena won the sympathy of the non-Dalits.

Marathwada is a region, which faces large-scale unemployment and economic backwardness. Though by the 1970s investments by entrepreneurs did begin in Marathwada, however this could not change its distressed state entirely. The industrial units demanded skilled labour that was brought in from urban areas. Thus the local educated, unemployed manpower was rendered jobless. When the Sena posed itself as an alternative it brought hope to these people. The reason was simple, it was believed like the Sena had fought for and provided jobs to the locals in Mumbai and a similar effort would be made in Marathwada [Purandare, 1999].

Another feature associated here is the rise of the young Maratha and OBC men. Politics in rural Maharashtra was dominated by the 'Congress system' [Kothari, 1964]. It had a strong control over the sugar cooperatives. A large number of the younger generation were giving up agriculture for the service sector.

“The Cooperatives have been the base for most Congress ministers from the state. The party’s largely agricultural institutional system of patronage did not correspond to the growing weight of the expanding service and small industry sector in rural Maharashtra, the new sources of wealth and prospect had excluded recently economically and socially mobilized young Maratha and OBC men.”<sup>29</sup>

Thus this lack of political representation of these newly emerging groups of young, educated men was taken advantage of by the Sena. This group came to rebel against the ‘Congress system’, which did not incorporate them. When the Congress split in India, in Maharashtra, Sharad Pawar’s Congress (S) and People’s Democratic Front (PDF) were the only plausible options. However in 1986 Sharad Pawar rejoined the Congress (I). What followed was a massive youth rebellion. The youth who saw hope in the Congress (S) felt that they were ‘abandoned in mid sea.’ Shiv Sena took full advantage of this political vacuum and provided ‘shelter’ to these men.

In 1984, at an *adhiveshan* in Mahad, the Sena made the swing towards *Hindutva*.<sup>30</sup> This step was a way to give a national stature to the Sena. *Hindutva* was emerging as a powerful alternative ideology during the 1980s. However the Shiv Sena projected its brand of *Hindutva* as different from that of the RSS. This pro-*Hindutva* attitude further reinforced the anti-Muslim rhetoric of the Sena. It strengthened the image of the Shiv Sena, by giving it a new identity as a protector of Hindus. This decisive turn firmed up the Sena alliance with the BJP<sup>31</sup>

The appropriation of Shivaji, as mentioned earlier was done with a specific intention in mind. The symbolism associated with him was skilfully manipulated. Shivaji, the 17<sup>th</sup> century warrior has been constructed in a number of ways. For instance, for Jotiba Phule (1827-90) he was a *kulwadibhushan* i.e. a people’s king in whom the peasant masses could take pride. A ‘*Hindutvavaadi*’, for protesting against Muslim tyranny. In S A Dange’s (a communist leader) writings he was a ‘communist.’ The reason being, Dange describes Shivaji as bringing changes in the property relations in land [Kulkarni, 1997]. Improbable as they may seem, nevertheless they cater to a

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<sup>29</sup> Julia M. Eckert (2003)- *The Charisma of Direct Action: Power, Politics and the Shiv Sena*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, p.212.

<sup>30</sup> The Shiv Sena strongly states that they did not turn to *Hindutva*. *Hindutva* was in their blood. Uddhav Thackeray, the Sena Karyadhyaksha (2003) says that *Hindutva* is Sena’s life and breath. It shares the Sangh’s dream of constructing a Ram temple at Ayodhya.

<sup>31</sup> In the 1989 election campaign, the BJP and Sena shared a commitment to *Hindutva*. In Sena’s nine-point program, one of the main proposals was to change the name of India, from Bharat to Hindusthan. The Sena was indirectly in agreement with Savarkar’s ideas about Hindusthan. Gradually this shift to *Hindutva* also saw the Sena’s sloganeering undergo a change. The Sena too, now chants the slogans ‘*garv se kaho hum hindu hain.*’

diverse population. Perhaps the Sena stands by only a few peculiar symbolic constructions of Shivaji. To demonstrate their loyalty and respect for Shivaji, the Sena organizes the annual celebration of Shivaji's birth anniversary (Shiv Jayanti).<sup>32</sup>

Thus we see that the Sena managed to cater to a large audience through its 'mix of appeals.' It deployed the tactic of using one class against another. In so doing, it received massive support. However Sena's political calculations do not end here. Its anti dalit stand is gradually being altered as well. Like the Congress, the Sena too is trying to display an accommodative approach [Palshikar, 2004]. Uddhav Thackeray<sup>33</sup> in 2003 called for an alliance of Shiv Shakti (forces represented by the Sena) and Bhim Shakti (dalit forces owing allegiance to Ambedkar and to the various factions of the Republican Party, RPI). The Sena is adopting new adjustments and alterations in its views. Initially the Sena was antagonistic of non-Mumbaikars<sup>34</sup> residing in Mumbai. However in the year 2003 Uddhav Thackeray, set up the '*Mee Mumbaikar*' (i.e. one belonging to Mumbai) project, which made the definition of the Mumbaikar more flexible. It came to include all non Marathis who settled in Mumbai long ago. This change had to be made because of the swelling numbers of non Maharashtrians in Mumbai. Thus the Shiv Sena could not retain its plank of Maratha pride for too long.

### *Violence, Force, and 'Direct Action': A Sense of Male Assertiveness*

The Shiv Sena overtime had developed an image of itself as a source of power, an organization that is based on 'direct action.' Most political parties do claim power as well, but the Sena's power is based on 'direct action.' [Eckert, 2003] It has assumed a

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<sup>32</sup> For the Sena, the Shiv Jayanti is close to a ritual that all Maharashtrians especially in Mumbai need to follow, or else face serious consequences. This is evident when one reads the following account. 'In an ironic sequel, the Maharashtra Times was criticized in the legislature for not commemorating the birth anniversary of Shivaji in an adequate fashion, which threw its editor into a fit of anger.' Mangesh Kulkarni (1997)- "Politics of Historiography: 'The Illustrated Weekly Case' in Retrospect", *Secularist*, Indian Secular Society, Pune. p.129.

<sup>33</sup> Uddhav Thackeray is the son of the Sena Supremo, Bal Thackeray. Currently he is the Sena Karyadhyaksha.

<sup>34</sup> In November 2003, several job aspirants in the railways came to Mumbai to give the railway exams. The Sena along with several sympathisers of its pro Marathi stand, took to the streets protesting against this influx of migrants. They ended up in violent fights, where the Sainiks physically beat up Biharis for entering their city in search of jobs and blocking all opportunities of the locals (especially the Marathi people). It is shocking the way the Sena tackles all situations that relate to Mumbai and the Mumbaikars. No matter the 'soft' attitude it time and again resorts to, the Sena's basic antagonism against the non-Mumbaikar remains unchanged. After this event, the local newspapers were full of articles by several intellectuals, writers, activists, artists and industrialists responding to this event. These people who made it big in Mumbai, ask the Sena that inspite of the fact that they contribute to the ethos of Mumbai in their own ways, would the Sena one day drive them away too. Definitions of who constitutes the



larger-than-life image with the blessings of the Congress. It strongly believes in the ideas of action, and 'getting things done.' For the Sena the use of threat, fear and force are important for the greater good of the masses. The Sena's values, symbolism and imagery primarily have distinct masculine underpinnings or intonations to them. That is to say, they appeal largely to the male mindset.

The Sena came to the forefront during the 1960s by making a promise to end gangsterism in Mumbai. In due course its close ties with the underworld proved profitable to the Sena. These links yielded confidence and strength to the Sena's movement. The Sena gradually worked to improve its image in society. Besides its efforts at political participation, it shifted its orientation to a more active role in social activities. It provided support to all popular initiatives especially in the city of Mumbai. The Shiv Sena like the Sangh has been successful in targeting the youth. The manner in which they have been encouraged into participating in Sena's activities is phenomenal. Through a variety of associations and activities, the Sena provided an outlet for the anxiety of the youth. The competition faced by the youth of the lower middle and middle classes, generates a sense of frustration among them. *Mitra Mandals*, *akhadas* (gymnasiums) and neighbourhood *shakhas* all provided a new sense of identity for them. By youth the reference here is largely to the young men in the street, unemployed or underemployed.

The Shiv sainiks in the neighbourhood *shakhas* provide help for civic, social or political problems that ordinary people face everyday. These shakhas generated a sense of 'taking control' of the situation at hand. The immediacy and urgency, with which the sainiks began to take charge and solve problematic situations, brought them into the limelight. This obviously provided confidence to the sainiks. They saw themselves in a position of power to tackle any situation. City life creates doubt and hopelessness in the life of the lower sections of the society and especially the youth. The competitive spirit and the 'networks' of patronage and 'influence' that function in Mumbai, have sapped all capacity of the common man to solve problems. Thus in order to get quick solutions to brawls, feuds and municipality problems the locals have turned to the sainiks for help.

The 'Dada culture' in Mumbai, refers to the underworld of the city. 'Dada' essentially means an older brother, a figure that one looks up to, in times of distress not unlike a mafia don, the fact that such a person wields enormous power and influence is

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Maharashtrian, the Mumbaikar or the Marathi mannos are constantly being debated over, with no concrete

because of the violence he can unleash. 'Dadaism is a style of exercising political and social power and protection that invokes images of masculine, assertive, often violent local strongman, whose clout lies in self-made networks of loyalty rather than in institutionalised action and discourse.'<sup>35</sup> It is believed that the Shiv Sena did not bring about the 'dada culture' however they have reinforced its ethos of power and strength. With the systematic use of force and threat, it has supposedly brought into the public the plebeian 'discourse of masculine assertion.' [Hansen, 2001] For most in the Shiv Sena being a part of an organization that holds respect is a matter of pride. The very word 'Shiv Sainiks' generates a sense of power for the cadres of the Sena. The excuse provided for their use of coercion, threat and open violence is the need for prompt justice. Without any sense of guilt or remorse, the Sena narrates instances of how they have managed to solve many problems and thus bring back order. Gajanan Kirtikar's statement is revealing in this connection,

"The percentage of our Bombay boys who passed the written exam last year for flight purser jobs was very low compared with other centres....so we walked into AI's in-flight Director Bhargava's office and made sure each and every one of these boys would make it to the job."<sup>36</sup>

In the name of helping the poor and fighting for justice, the Sena has legitimised force and violence. Over several years the Shiv sainiks have efficiently spread their network. They have silenced all voices of dissent and thus their rule is never challenged. Compliance has in turn strengthened the need to use violent means to get things done.

There are several associations like the *mitra mandals* and *shakhas* that are associated with the Sena. Each political party also has its own branches and a network of informal organizations affiliated with them. *Mitra mandals* are friends' club or associations, which unlike the shakhas have a friendly familiar environment. On an average most *mitra mandals* are for men where women generally do not set their foot in. *Mandals* for women also exist but their numbers are few. There yet does not exist a trend among middle class and lower middle class women to go to mandals. Generally *mitra mandals* are meant for leisure time activities, where men come together either to play or to read the daily newspapers.<sup>37</sup> The young men in the locality are encouraged to

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solutions being reached!!

<sup>35</sup> Thomas Blom Hansen (2001)- *Urban Violence in India: Identity Politics, 'Mumbai' and the Post Colonial city*, Permanent Black., New Delhi., p.72.

<sup>36</sup> Gajanan Kirtikar, is the General Secretary of the Sthaniya Lokadhikar Samiti (SLS). The incident as narrated in the India Today, Feb.28, 1995. p.59.

<sup>37</sup> Several such mitra mandals are opened in each neighbourhood especially in middle class Maharashtrian localities. However the Sena's attempts to encroach any space they desire in order to set up these

become part of these clubs. This does not in any way isolate them from their own circle of friends and affiliates. These clubs play an active role especially during Hindu festivals like Ganapati, Durga Puja and Gokulasthami.<sup>38</sup> This is a common feature especially during the Ganapati festivals in Mumbai. The young men in the clubs take up the responsibility of collecting funds and donations ('*vargani*' in Marathi) and arrange for the stage to set up the idol of Ganapati and other such tasks.<sup>39</sup> The women are only a distant feature of such technical arrangements of the festival. Thus one can say that the *mitra mandals* delimit themselves to a masculine sphere of activities.

Added to this is the trend among the youth especially the men towards enrolling in gymnasiums. It is a continuation of a tradition of *akhadas* that has traditionally existed in India since several decades. In recent times, to go to gyms has become an obsession with men. It is a trend that has successfully nurtured the culture of martial skills and dexterity. These clubs (*mandals*), and *shakhas* are almost like small communities of men where they interact on daily basis and also share their grievances. The small groups of men, which are a common feature in every *mohalla*, *chawl* or lane, are a part of these associations. Today as in the past today too, the *mitra mandals*, the *akhadas* or *gymnasiums* and *shakhas* are sites for the political mobilization of the youth. Like Hedgewar who recruited the RSS's first cadres from the *akhadas* and from schools and colleges, the Sena also recruits its cadres from these very communities of men. For these groups of men to be supported by a political party is a matter of pride and power. It generates a sense of strength and authority for them. Thus one can say that during festivities, to sport a saffron bandana with the letters '*garv se kaho hum hindu hain*' written on it, is a means of proudly displaying one's political affiliations with the Shiv Sena like a badge of honour.

The Shiv Sena and its *sainiks* were accused of inciting the riots of 1992-93. It is very interesting to note a peculiar similarity between the Sena and the Sangh, with

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newspaper-reading clubs, or similar such activities is never met with any opposition. Their 'control mechanisms' persist.

<sup>38</sup> Many festivals and social activities are sponsored or 'supported' by the Sena. The banners in the pandals and in the processions during these celebrations get the name from the *mitra mandal* in the locality. For instance 'Khetwadi Sarvajanic Ganesh Utsav Mitra Mandal.' During the Gokulasthami celebrations too it is mostly the men who are in charge. Professional small teams of men are formed who are at times invited to places to break the handis. However one can also see that in Mumbai, there are women's teams as well who have started participating in these activities.

<sup>39</sup> In such festivities, especially during the Ganapati festival, the common feature is that men take charge of all the technical arrangements. The women in the locality are never encouraged to take up such responsibilities. They are assigned the responsibility of the social functions and gatherings that are part of this festival. The gender equations thus stand lopsided.

regards the justifications and excuses forwarded for such accusations. Just like the RSS cadres, the *sainiks* explain that they took to violent means only as a way of retaliation. It was, in other words, an act of 'self defence' against the violent actions of the Muslims. The main intention of Sena violence is to infuse a sense of fear in the minds of individuals in positions of power and also to win the admiration of the masses whom they claim to represent. By instilling this sense of fear, the threats of the Sena are loyally complied with.<sup>40</sup> The *bandhs* called by the Sena are supported by most individuals and establishments in Mumbai. The word of the Sena is the ultimate in Mumbai. There is no alternative way but to conform.<sup>41</sup>

However there is another aspect to this male centric rough attitude of the Sena. The women's wing of the Sena, the *Mahila Aghadi* has also been a part of several of Sena's activities. The women in this organization have consistently stood by the Sena's ideology and politico-cultural agenda. For the women in the *Mahila Aghadi*, being a part of the Sena is a matter of the pride and power. More importantly for them participating in the Sena's activities is an emancipatory project. They come to hold positions of power though for a very temporary period and for a particular cause. However, even this limited exposure is acceptable to them. For these women it is a chance to come out of their domestic spheres and be a part of public activism. More often they take up issues like marital disputes, where they conveniently punish men, who beat up their wives, or who drink and demand money from them.

During the riots of 1992-93 in Mumbai, the women *Shiv Sainiks* stopped the police from arresting their leaders, prevented fire brigades from entering Muslim localities that were ablaze [Banerjee, 1995]. One important feature that needs to be noted here is that women's participation in such tasks does not in any way challenge the patriarchal values embedded in the Hindu society. The truth is that through the involvement of women such organizations are trying to spread the message of communal hatred.

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<sup>40</sup> 'I want my government to inspire fear.' *ibid*, p.113. These are the very words of the Sena supremo, Bal Thackeray. He believes in the ethos of terror, fear and violence. For him in order to bring justice to the '*Marathi manoos*' and to the working class, all means are justified.

<sup>41</sup> I would like to narrate a related incident from my own experience. In the second or third year of my graduation in Mumbai, I was returning from college during noontime in a bus. I heard some announcements, as my bus was approaching the bus stop I saw that all the shops were gradually being shut down. As I enquired I learnt that the *Shiv Sena* had called for a *bandh*. No one wanted to 'mess' with the *Sainiks* and therefore immediately complied. The next day in the local newspaper one gets to read the news of the *bandh*, where a brief mention is made of the consequences faced by those shopkeepers who

The political message of the Sena may demand women's political participation. However this political message has several subtexts and connotations to it. Political activism might generate a sense of emancipation for women but it is merely an illusion that is created. Irrespective of the active roles women take on here, the power equations in the house remain unchanged. The Sena continues to hold to convention. It critiques and opposes any display of assertiveness on the part of women. It condemns roles in real as much as in reel life that are incompatible with the conventional norms for the women. It has convinced women to follow conventions and opposes all that disturbs or is contrary to the daily routinized life of the Hindus. The most glaring example is the protests demanding a ban to be imposed on the film 'Fire' where women are portrayed in extremely assertive roles. It is a story of the alternative sexual preferences that women could hold but are hesitant to acknowledge due to the stigma attached to it. Dissent, opposition to conventional norms or the taking up of alternative decisions are always silenced by the patriarchal set up of the society. Public activism should not always be read as empowerment and/or liberation of women.

Thus one can say in the end that today with the resurgence of a Hindu nationalist ideology a new sense of masculinity is emerging. In other words a cult of strong masculine assertiveness has surfaced. Here the RSS and the Sena display a distinct similarity. Both see activism, unity and discipline as essential qualities to regain Hindu masculinity [Hansen, 2001]; and thus affirming the nature-culture distinction once again.

Another instance of the Sena forcing its will and agenda on the masses is the change in the name of Bombay to Mumbai. When the Sena was in power in alliance with the BJP, it embarked upon the project of recreating the ethos of Maharashtrian culture and heritage. In the name of 'decolonising the mind' the alliance set out to bring back the glory of the Chhatrapati Shivaji. In so doing it has changed the name of the city, which was once referred to as 'Bombay.' It has also changed the names of the local railway stations, the international airport and more importantly the museum in Mumbai.<sup>42</sup> It was a decision forced down upon the Bombayites, now referred to as the Mumbaikars.

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refused to support the bandh called by the Sena. The fear of the Sena is most evident during such incidents.

<sup>42</sup> Victoria Terminus is now called the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, the Prince of Wales as the Chhatrapati Shivaji Vastu Sangrahalaya, and the Sahar Airport as the Chhatrapati Shivaji airport. The obsession with Shivaji seems evident here. There are many who contributed to the rich culture and heritage of Maharashtra, but nevertheless they are never mentioned or thought about.

The right wing continues to harp on the preservation of the past, in so doing it has even doctored history. However this would mean escapism from the realities of one's past.

Thus in the end it can be said that the Shiv Sena and the Sangh parivar work to actualise the same dream of creating the Hindu rashtra. However their means to achieve them significantly differ. The Sena on the one hand worships the aspects of direct action, immediacy and accessibility but on the other hand strictly believes in the ethos of discipline to one man Bal Thackeray.

## CHAPTER III

### CONSTRUCTED APPEALS OF '*HINDUTVA*': ESTABLISHING THE IDEOLOGY OF HINDU RASHTRAVAAD

The demolition of the Babri Masjid was a significant event in the Sangh Parivar's bid for power at the centre. There was no sense of remorse for this act. Rather by this time (1992) a large section of people in India had come to look upon the Parivar as a viable political alternative. After the systematic demolition of this particular historical monument many had come to question the very essence of their alternative politics. This chapter concentrates on the several aspects and debates that emerge with regard to the cultural nationalist project of the Saffron fraternity. The various transformations it has brought about in our commonsensical understanding of nationalism are worth considering. With the BJP's attainment of power at the centre in 1996, the Parivar had achieved a new legitimacy in society. After the Babri Masjid incident, it was compelled to change its political strategies. This was done in order to maintain the appeal it had created amongst a multitude of people. It supposedly put the *Hindutva* agenda on the backburner. In reality however, it had not abandoned or departed from it. Rather, it set out to implement its politico-cultural programme through the use of its newly attained legitimate powers.

In this chapter, there are two significant arguments that I would like to put forth. First, that the politics of *Hindurashtraवाद* and/or *Hindutva* as propagated by the Sangh Parivar is essentially 'anti-pluralist' in nature. There are specific instances which bear witness to this stance of the Parivar. The central concern behind this analysis is to ask how such anti-pluralist movements come to gain such popular appeal. The attempt here is to look at whether such appeals are deliberately constructed or are merely circumstantial. The Parivar is trying to manufacture greater support for their anti-pluralistic ideas. And in this process it also tries to restrict the rise of any form of dissent. This is done by curbing the freedom of expression of powerful media like theatre, films, historical documentation etc. In this process the surveillance of the routinized lives of commoners is also carried out. This is a way of disciplining the psyche of the masses. I would also like to argue that in several ways then one could term the functioning of the Parivar as a form of neo-fascism. There can be no exact parallels between the fascism in Italy and Germany and neo fascism of the Parivar; nevertheless some particular similarities are manifest.



## COMMONSENSICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF NATIONALISM

“Nationalism is about the love of the nation, and this is often a self-sacrificing love. However, the dark side of patriotic love is rooted in fear and hatred of the other.”<sup>1</sup> Today the manner in which the *Hindutva* brigade chooses to define nationalism is similar. It is a reflection particularly of two clauses. First is the regard and respect for one’s nation and secondly, the hatred towards the ‘other’. The definitions of nationalism are largely premised on such peculiar interpretations of the ‘other’. The Sangh Parivar has carefully constructed an understanding of nationalism through the manipulation of cultural parameters. In other words, it has created the view that nationalism is about a cultural consciousness that all Hindus share. Thereby it refutes the prevalent understanding of nationalism, which is premised on territorial considerations.

Nationalism as a concept has undergone several transformations over time in history. However, there are some central defining features that need to be considered here. The concept of nationalism combines a variety of features like a sense of identification with a people, an ideology of common history and destiny, and a social movement addressed to shared objectives. The most commonsensical understanding of nation and/or nationalism is that those classes or social groups that exist in a majority should be distinctly represented in power. In other words, the goal of political self-determination is central to one’s understanding of nationalism. Thus it is a “demand of the people for a government of the same ethnic complexion as the majority.”<sup>2</sup> However, political self-determination is only one of the several demands within all forms of nationalism. Such imaginings of nationalism also include more significant demands of cultural representation or cultural self-determination.

Often such forms of cultural nationalism can assume extreme articulations. Such extreme cases of cultural nationalism then demand absolute political sovereignty and self-sufficiency. Nationalism, especially in culturally diverse nations, is characterised by a heightened sense of aspiration, emotion and more importantly anxiety. There are two important aspects that need to be taken into consideration here. There are two strains of nationalism, open nationalism and closed nationalism.

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<sup>1</sup> Peter van der Veer- ‘Writing Violence’, in David Ludden ed. (1996)- *Making India Hindu: Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, p.250.

<sup>2</sup> Hans Kohn (1968)- ‘International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences’, Vol. 11, The Macmillan Company and The Free Press, United States of America, p.65.

“Open nationalism represents the more ‘modern’ form. The ‘closed’ nationalism, on the other hand, stresses the nation’s autochthonous character, the common origins (race, blood) and rootedness in the ancestral soil. These determine the ‘purity’ of national character and preserve it from ‘alien’ influences.”<sup>3</sup>

Thus one can see that the concept of nationalism has numerous essential features. In the process of nation building then there are a variety of issues with regard to nation and nationalism that need to be taken into consideration. Identities within a particular geographical space are thus contested over such questions of nation, nation-state, region and ethnicity. Though there might be numerous ways of defining the concept of nation and/or nationalism, there are only some that are particularly chosen.

It is common knowledge that with colonialism (the economic expansion of Europe) the very understanding of nation and nationalism spread to its colonies in Asia.<sup>4</sup> The history of European struggles, the rise and fall of empires, and populist revolutions created the idea of defining a territory that one could call one’s own. For most today the initial understanding of such notions of territory, space was developed through their encounter with colonial education and administration. Many of those who led the Indian National movement were inspired by these Western ideas. Indian nationalism emerged as a response to British colonial rule. It tried to bring about a united struggle against oppressive rule of the British in India. However there is some amount of disagreement over the ‘unified and integrated’ Congress-led freedom movement. Nevertheless, it is regarded as a fine example of a mass movement. The idea of cultural and/or Hindu nationalism that developed during this struggle for independence, though, is characterised by very different features. At the very outset one has to take note that the cultural nationalism of the Sangh Parivar did not emerge as a response to British rule. In reality it was not in favour of fighting the British. It was a completely different agenda that was being planned.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.65.

<sup>4</sup> Partha Chatterjee makes a significant comment on this feature of colonies developing their prior interpretation of nationalism through colonialism. He is of the opinion that if the understanding of nationalism is a borrowed feature from the West then it must be asked whose and which imagined community is the reference being made to. And more importantly he asks then what else is left to be imagined! Essentially Chatterjee developed this argument in response to Benedict Andersen’s work *Imagined Communities* (1983). In light of this argument one can then say that the Sangh’s cultural nationalism then can also be seen in a similar light. Some of its defining features are drawn from the examples of Germany and Italy. However the claims by the Sangh of considering cultural nationalism as a genuine and original idea persist.

## REFINED NOTIONS OF NATIONALISM: SANGH PARIVAR'S CONCEPT OF CULTURAL NATIONALISM

The cultural nationalism of the Parivar is premised on Savarkar's politics of *Hindutva*. Savarkar's idea of *Hindutva* has already been discussed in the previous chapters. Here it would be sufficient to state the central clauses of this idea of *Hindutva* in reference to the concept of nationalism. In his view, 'territory' could not define the nationality of individuals in India. The common interpretation of nationalism is that all those who fall within the boundary of a nation are considered its rightful citizens and/or nationals. The Sangh Parivar on the other hand laid stress upon the cultural aspects of the Hindu society as the sole defining features. It had an extremely different way of defining nation and nationalism. The concept of Hindu rashtra that the Parivar proposed, essentially meant a nation (rashtra) that belonged to and was made up only of the Hindus. Thus it was a reference specifically to all Hindus and their culture. In the process, the Sangh had come to redefine the concepts of nation, nationality and citizenship.<sup>7</sup>

The rise of *Hindutva* was not a chance or accidental occurrence. K N Pannikar makes a very intriguing observation here. He says that *Hindutva* has emerged with a gradual transformation in the consciousness of people. He also very rightly states, "Apparently no society can be forced to own an externally induced identity. It has to emerge from within as a part of social dynamics."<sup>5</sup> It is a fact then, that a new identity can only be consciously accepted. Perhaps some peculiar circumstances and reasons convince people. Nevertheless it has to be realised that here it is a case of 'manufactured consent'. This implies that, a systematic effort was made by the Parivar to bring about the acceptance of its ideology. This was possible with the help of the so-called welfare activities that it continues to carry out even today.

The Hindu nationalist agenda of the Sangh parivar primarily avoids the issue of caste. Essentially caste narratives are a critique of the homogenous understanding of nation that a particular section of society constructs. Thus one observes that often there is a preference for a secular ideology among caste-based groupings. However paradoxically, it can be said that *Hindutva* and/or Hindu nationalism has largely spread in caste centric North India itself. The stronghold of the caste system in North India is prevalent even today. It has propagated and strengthened the ideas of hierarchy,

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<sup>5</sup> K N Pannikar (2004)- 'In the Name of Nationalism', *Frontline*, March 26. p.4.

dominance and hegemony. Therefore there is greater approval for the exclusivist, upper caste oriented ethos of *Hindutva*. This sense of hegemony and dominance is embedded in the cultural nationalism of the Sangh Parivar.

The Parivar's aversion for caste was essentially to avoid any criticism over its homogenous nationalist project. In addition, if 'caste' was to be included, then it meant that all castes had to be considered regardless of concerns of purity and pollution. This would mean a threat to their upper caste orientations. However, the Sangh (RSS) has always been in favour of reviving the age-old Varna vyavastha. The Sangh Parivar's nationalist model is based on the model of social organicism. The Varna vyavastha is based on a system where society was divided into various castes each with a particular social function to perform. Occupations were determined accordingly. M S Golwalkar, the chief ideologue of the RSS, was in favour of reviving the varna vyavastha<sup>6</sup>. He opined that it was a highly skilled and efficient system, which assisted, in the smooth functioning of the society. The Varna vyavastha basically endorses structural inequality. Untouchability, oppression and hierarchy are common features of this system. However Golwalkar firmly believed that these were only recent additions. For him, the vyavastha remarkably demonstrated features of harmonious coexistence between the varnas. Social organicism meant that Hindu society was divided into neat categories. Each had significant features to it and had a special role to play in society. The central principle however was that all social groups worked for the betterment of the whole, that is the Hindu society. For the Sangh Parivar the Varna vyavastha held special significance. Behind this so-called need to revive the vyavastha, there essentially was the motive to bring back a tradition that would reinstate Brahminical, upper caste superiority in society. The Parivar's politics of *Hindutva* and nationalism is thus premised on these features. Many scholars consider that the decline in the stronghold of the caste system in Indian society has led to the rise of religious orientations in India. The urge to find newer ways of identifying oneself has thus proved profitable for the spread of Hindu nationalism in India.

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<sup>6</sup> " ...it is our caste system alone that has saved for us our Hindu or Indian identity. India would have never been so well preserved but for our this system. Where are the other great civilizations of the ancient world to-day? All of them perished without a trace. But we the anachronisms of history are still there with our racial memory and social institutions largely intact." P K Nijhawan (1990)- 'Why the caste system endures?', *Organiser.*, p.5.

The Sangh Parivar's concept of cultural nationalism undermines the holistic character of nationalism. By raising the demand of a Hindu Rashtra<sup>7</sup> it acknowledges the exclusively Hindu vision of its nationalist project. Over time the Saffron combine has added new features to its policy of cultural nationalism. Like the Sangh especially, introduced the debate of 'Aryan' origin into nationalism. The Sangh made claims of Hindus being originally Aryans. The term 'Aryan' here has a racial connotation. Aryans were supposedly considered to be the original inhabitants of India or Hindusthan. And it was from here on in India, that they travelled to several other distant places. Thus the Sangh drew parallels between the Aryans and Hindus. They consequently began to synonymously use the two terms Hindu and Aryan. Reference was made, subtly though, to the idea of Aryan racial superiority. It was an idea propounded by Hitler during the Nazi regime. Embedded within this reference to the Aryan race, were the ideas of racial purity, hegemony and dominance. One can draw a parallel between these ideas and the central features of the Varna vyavastha. This vyavastha spoke of the dominance and superiority of Brahmins and upper castes, thus pushing the lower castes to a subordinate position in society.

Ideas of domination, homogeneity and purity were introduced by the Sangh for a specific purpose. This was a systematic way of excluding other religions and cultures from the purview of nationalism. The Sangh has tried to gather significant evidence supporting the numerous claims about Aryans. The thesis that the Aryans were the original residents of India was frantically being sought after. There were many like Tilak and others who spoke about the origins of Aryans. Tilak himself propounded the theory of Arctic origin of Aryans. He however never spoke of Aryans being the original inhabitants of India. But Golwalkar made absurd claims that the Arctic zone was essentially located in present day Bihar and Orissa! He justified his claim by narrating the following incident,

“We may agree with him (i.e. Lokmanya Tilak) that originally the Aryans i.e. the Hindus lived in the ancient times, the North Pole and with it the Arctic zone was not where it is today. We have heard in a lecture on

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<sup>7</sup> In conversation with a RSS karyakarta I asked 'Is there any similarity between Jinnah's demand for a Muslim nation and the Sangh's demand for a Hindu Rashtra?' He said that irrespective of the fact that in the world there are 45 Muslim nations Jinnah demanded for Pakistan, especially a part of the Bharat bhoomi. He said that, this demand for a separate nation displays their true intentions. But he added that the Sangh on the other hand was not demanding any land from some other nation. It was simply to come to terms with the age-old Hindu culture of India. He commented that today every nation in the world is identified by their respective cultures and religions as Christian, Muslim. It was a way of putting forth the question that if all nations recognized by their religion then why should India avoid such an endeavour.

Paleontological Botany, delivered during the convocation of the Benaras Hindu University (Feb. 1932) by Dr. Birbal Sahni, Professor of Botany, Lucknow University, the reputed professor give (sic) the results arrived at by a certain European Paleontologist and confirmed by Dr. Sahni himself. The result, in a nutshell, is that part of the world, which we find is called Bihar and Orissa at the present; that then it moved northeast and then by sometimes westerly.....it came to its present position. We do not hesitate in affirming that had this fact been discovered during the time of Lok. Tilak, he would unhesitatingly have propounded the proposition that the 'Arctic Home in the Vedas' was verily in Hindusthan itself and that it was not the Hindus who migrated to that land but the Arctic zone which emigrated and left the Hindus in Hindusthan."<sup>8</sup>

Thus by this logic he was trying to prove correct the thesis of Aryan origin in India.

The anti-pluralism of the Parivar is premised on the views and utterances of Savarkar and equally those of Golwalkar. He reiterates,

"...only Hindus are true Indians and that Muslims, Christians, Jews and Parsis are all foreigners who should be allowed to stay in India only on terms set by the Hindus." Thus all "the foreign races in Hindusthan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion...and must lose their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race, or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment not even citizen's rights"<sup>9</sup>

These were Golwalkar's words as put forth in his book *We*. Propagating a policy of assimilation, every non-Hindu is thus expected to assimilate into Hindu culture. In other words they are to shed their individual socio-cultural identity. Over the past two decades, the Parivar has been successful in inculcating these ideas in the mindset of most Hindus in India. It has increased the wrath against the Muslims and other non-Hindus. >

The Parivar has made anti-pluralism a central plank of its ideology. The most shocking effect of this anti-minority stance is the Gujarat carnage 2002. This genocide changed social equations in the society. Numerous tribals, adivasis and dalits also took part in these riots. Not as the victims but as the rioters. Their participation whether voluntary or forced, was the most disturbing feature about the incident.

It is important to recall the shocking incident of genocide of Muslims in Gujarat. On 27<sup>th</sup> February 2002 in Godhra (Gujarat) one of the bogies of the Sabarmati Express was burnt. 59 people were killed aboard, mostly women and children. Several VHP activists were on the train returning from Ayodhya. The VHP had called upon all Hindus across the country to set in motion the Ram temple construction. The Sangh

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<sup>8</sup> M S Golwalkar (1939)- *We or our Nationhood Defined*, Bharat Publications, Nagpur., p.8.

Parivar held the Muslims especially of the nearby locality responsible for the act. They said that the Muslims intended to obstruct the VHP's march to Ayodhya. Thus what followed was a well-orchestrated, pre-planned violence against the Muslims. The riots were justified in the name of revenge taken by the 'Hindus.' A large number of tribals, adivasis and dalits had been mobilized to target the Muslims. An estimated 2000 Muslims were killed and 150,000 driven from their homes. Several women of the Muslim community were brutally beaten up, raped and killed.

The nature of events that took place in Godhra was masterminded unusually well. It was a way of demonstrating that all sections of the Hindu society despised the Muslims. It was a 'shared' feeling that the minorities are to accept the might of the majority. Every misdeed committed by the minority (Muslim) had to be punished. These were some of the most prevalent feelings especially in Gujarat. It is baffling to note that the riots did not spread to any other adjoining states. Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh are communally very sensitive states. But the Gujarat carnage did not disrupt the state of affairs in these places. This makes it evident that these riots were so carefully planned from the beginning to the end. Every event was carefully planned for.

The reference here is no more to religious faith alone. The concerns here are largely political. However, it is important to move beyond these obvious arguments. If one reads any of the pamphlets or books published by the RSS one would be unable to judge their intentions. They are published as mere 'information' booklets. Nevertheless, in very subtle terms their chauvinistic views are propagated. For instance the booklet titled '*RSS ani Dharm Jagaran*' written in Marathi, speaks at length over the issue of conversions. The Sangh portrays Hindu dharma as an open and tolerant religion. It conveys the idea that 'religion' cannot be changed. Ways of worshipping may alter but not religion. It is a way of highlighting the aspect of freedom and tolerance within the Hindu religion. Hindu dharma is compared with Islam and Christianity. They are constructed essentially as proselytising religions. Accusations of forcible conversions of innocent Hindus like adivasis and dalits in rural areas either to Islam or Christianity are made. The incorrect logic of numbers is used. The number of churches, masjids, missionary educational institutes and madrasas are shown to be increasing rapidly over

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p.47-48.

time. These are ways to inculcate the view that the numbers of Muslims are growing and that the Hindu community is 'shrinking' in power.

Thus the point I am trying to make is that all possible means are used to communicate the 'innocence' of Hindus as against the marauding Muslims. The previous chapter dealt with the aspect of mass hysteria that the Parivar created during the 1980s and in 1992. The point that was made was that this phenomenon was restricted to the Hindus alone. But here the problem at hand is grimmer. Dalits have been deliberately brought under the 'Hindu' umbrella.

### **MYTHS, FABRICATIONS, AND ILLUSIONS: HINDUTVA'S CONSTRUCTED APPEALS**

The crucial questions then that confront us are "how do such anti-pluralist movements gain support? How is that they appeal to a multitude of people? Which aspect of the Sangh's exclusivist, upper caste dominated idea, appeals to the dalits, tribals, lower castes and subalterns?" Acceptance of an ideology is determined by the mass support it garners. But not always is this approval a natural occurrence. It is possible with the use of deep-rooted political propaganda. The Sangh Parivar has successfully engaged itself in a similar exercise. It has participated in several socio-cultural activities that characterise people's daily life. If one looks carefully at their journey into politics this feature becomes evident. It has systematically created illusions or myths for each class/section in society. It engages in the celebrations, rituals and religious festivities of people. The socio-economic problems and concerns of the middle class and the elites are especially closely monitored. One cannot conclude that economic disturbances alone lead people to more 'fundamental' ways of thinking. There are a variety of issues that bother each strata of society.

The brutal killings of Muslims in Godhra by Adivasis, tribals and dalits have raised an alarm in society. Numerous questions and confusions have surfaced. Once regarded as opponents of upper caste oriented Hinduism, they are now upholding the very cause of the Hindus. It is shocking because they have very little in common with Hindus or Hinduism. There has been no instance of conflict between these sections and Muslims. Nonetheless they have plundered, and killed Muslims during the Godhra riots. In defence they speak of 'avenging the attacks on the Hindus'. If one delves deep into the issue then the causes underlying this revengeful attitude become apparent.



### *The Adivasis, Tribals and the Dalits: The Appeal of a Hindutva Identity*

Attempts at Hinduisation and Sanskritization of the tribals and the dalits have been a long standing feature in India. Prior to the rise of the *Hindutva* forces such efforts have been carried out. The Sangh claims that 'vanavasis' or tribals are essentially Hindus who have been forcefully converted to Christianity or Islam. Therefore they carry elaborate Shuddhi ceremonies. These ceremonies are to reconvert these vanavasis to the Hindu faith. The vanavasis are considered to be the true bearers of the Hindu culture. On the contrary, sociologist Amita Baviskar points out in her book *In the Belly of the River* that the Adivasis and Hindus do not share a common cultural ethos. The socio-religious life of the former is closely associated with nature. Animism and ancestor worship are central features of their religious life. These have not evolved from the Hindu tradition.<sup>10</sup> Yet the Sangh and its affiliates continue to impose a Hindu identity on the adivasis and tribals.

The Sangh, the VHP and its affiliates organizations have infiltrated into rural-tribal belts. Various means of reaching out to the tribals and adivasis have been utilised. The intention is to establish *Hindutva* in these pockets. The success of *Hindutva* was possible by implanting it in the consciousness of people. Repeated interventions in the socio-cultural life of these people have been carried out. The Sangh is thus trying to build up support for its political projects. The RSS and the VHP functions through the various NGOs, educational institutes and cultural organisations set by them. Small units of these have mushroomed in almost all small villages and adivasi areas. The *pracharaks* of the Sangh and cadres of the VHP have been diligently working in these areas.

Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA) is one such organisation of the Sangh. In 1952, with the active support of the Maharaja of Jashpur, it was founded with its headquarters at Jashpur, Madhya Pradesh. The Sangh established this organization with the aim of providing service to the neglected and weaker sections of society, especially the Vanavasis. Essentially the VKA was started in order to counter proselytisation by the Christian missionaries. It thus started primary and secondary schools in many remote areas. Hostels have also been built for the vanavasis and students who study in Saraswati Shishu Mandir, the RSS schools.

The VKA and similar such organizations carry out renovations of village temples. They have constructed several Ram and Hanuman temples in many rural areas and villages. Through large number of such socio-cultural undertakings the Sangh Parivar has managed to bring about greater support from the poor, adivasis and tribals. Many swayamsevaks and VHP activists help out during melas (fairs), and religious festivities like Holi and Ramanavami. Due to their phenomenal efforts, today these festivals are considered by the adivasis as incomplete without the efforts of the Sangh and VHP efforts. Villages, towns and tribal areas are replete with Hindu symbols, shrines and banners. One of the central activities of the RSS in the villages is the dharma jagaran functions. Here specific stories from Hindu scriptures and epics like Ramayana are narrated. The locals believe that these narrations remind them of their Hindu status.

Mahesh G. Sharma, the RSS organiser, narrates the course taken by its campaign in Jhabua.

“Door-to-door, man-to-man, heart-to-heart...is how Milind Dandekar, who coordinates the Indore base of the RSS, sums up the organisation’s approach. We had 4,000 activists who lived with every tribal family for about seven days. We arranged for a picture of a Hindu god in every home and got Hanuman lockets for every individual,”<sup>11</sup> explains Sharma.

Jhabua has seen the worst form of a religious fervour. Anti-conversion efforts have been carried out by the *Hindutva* forces. The Christian missionaries are looked upon with contempt. Recently the RSS has been accused of the rape of nuns in Jhabua, an allegation which they dismiss. The intention of these forces is to continue to spread the ideology of *Hindutva*. The attempt is also the stop all conversions to Christianity and Islam.

The VHP in coordination with the Hindu Munnani has taken steps to encourage non-Brahmin poojaris in village temples. This was to draw loyalty from the local villagers. The joint secretary general of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Shyam Gupta, recently stated,

“that a project is on the anvil to reach out to 100,000 tribal villages through a four point programme of education, health, economic progress and self-respect. As a part of this agenda, about 1.5 lakh single-teacher schools are being set up in tribal villages, with RSS cadres employed as teachers.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Amulya Gopalakrishnan (2004)- ‘Saffronising the tribal heartland’, *Frontline.*, March 26, p.19. The author has quoted from Amita Baviskar’s book titled, *In the Belly of the River*.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p.20.

<sup>12</sup> K N Pannikar (2004)- ‘Education: beyond review’, *The Hindu*, June 29, New Delhi., p.10.

Pedagogical endeavours have been a significant part of RSS functioning in rural-tribal belts. These are ways of politico-religious indoctrination used by the Parivar.

The Dalits have also been targeted in a similar systematic way. Like in Godhra, in many places there have been attempts to bring the Dalits under the Hindu fold. The lack of a strong Dalit movement in India is to be blamed for this. That is the dalits have been unable to organise themselves into a unified strength against the *Hindutva* forces. The dalits have been lured into Sanskritization by mobilizing them to participate in the Parivar's activities. The fight for the cause of the Hindus grants them a new Hindutva-ised identity. For the dalits then these are empowering options. These give them a chance to share power with the upper caste Hindu forces. However the reality is truly discomfoting. The mobilizations of dalits, adivasis or tribals are merely ways of gaining political mileage. They are conveniently included into or excluded from the Hindu fold, according to the whims of the Sangh Parivar. On the one hand they were mobilised by the VHP to participate in the Godhra genocide. While on the other hand, in October 2002 in Jhajjar five dalits were lynched for presumably skinning a cow. In Maharashtra the BJP tried to woo the dalits by distantly supporting the incident of renaming the Marathwada University as Dr. B R Ambedkar University. This decision was taken much to the disagreement of its ally, the Shiv Sena. The Sena too has tried similar tactics. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Shiv Sena in 2003 called for an alliance of Sena forces and those supporting the RPI.

The RSS and VHP have diligently worked in areas where such efforts have not been carried out before. They have managed to gain access to many remote tribal pockets like in Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Maharashtra. The exertions of the Sangh Parivar cannot be denied. It is sad to note that the lack of government interventions has compelled the tribals to look up for other sources for help. As the government has not been able to reach out to such remote places the participation of the tribals and dalits in *Hindutva* sponsored riots should not surprise anyone.

### ***The Indian Upper/Middle Classes: The Myth of 'Development and Progress'***

The Indian middle class and the elite sections however have very different concerns and considerations. Unlike the lower strata, they do not face serious problems of economic distress. Nor do they encounter discrimination at the hands of an authoritarian, high caste grouping. These differential circumstances largely of the upper caste middle class had to be kept in mind. Thus the Parivar took special care to

encourage greater support from these sections of society. By using the anti-Muslim card it had managed to garner sympathy and support from the vast middle and upper classes. However after the demolition of the Babri Masjid there was some amount of resentment among these sections of people. In few parts of India the support for the Parivar declined. In order to maintain and improve its hold over these sections it was essential to change its political tactics. Thus it chose to create a 'development agenda' for mostly these strata of society.

During the 1990s in India, some typical conditions created the groundwork for the rapid growth of the Saffron ethos. Erosion in the credibility of institutions of parliamentary democracy, the degeneration of the Congress and the weakening of the Left movement generated an air of chaos and confusion. On the economic front, there was rising fiscal deficit, unemployment, inflation and the burden of IMF loans was increasing. The newly introduced framework of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation were also issues of concern. The gradual shift to the right made for some amount of uncertainty over the acceptance of these politico-economic decisions. Instability caused due to price rise and/or withdrawing of subsidies had to be urgently tackled. The conservative and disciplined approach of the Parivar acted as the only stabilising, viable political option. Amidst this climate of doubt and anxiety, it was thought that the conservatism of the Parivar would benefit the country in the face of rapid globalization. Added to these rather conducive circumstances, was a crumbled social justice system, migrations of rural people into urban areas. These brought about a sense of anxiety and instability for the lower and middle classes.

This favourable politico-economic climate had to be carefully dealt with. The introduction of the new logic of development in such circumstances was the wisest decision of the Parivar. In 1990 the V P Singh government enforced the Mandal recommendations demanding reservations for Other Backward Classes (OBCs). This angered the upper caste middle classes and especially the middle class youth. It was another issue that was manipulated by the Sangh Parivar to its advantage.

As social scientists one would argue against the need to implement or adopt such measures that are beneficial for some and oppressive for others. The attempt of every country's government has to be balanced development for all. However not all seem to stand in agreement on these issues. A considerable percentage of the upper caste middle class and the middle class in general, think otherwise. For these sections in society, privatisation, and liberalisation are positive signs of growth. They stand in favour of

economic ties with countries like the UK and the US. The threat that foreign capital provides for is unknown to them. These in reality are new forms of imperialism in India with more restrictions and clauses in economic deals with the West. These underlying intonations of global tie-ups are never realised.

In addition, one sees that a great majority of the Indian middle class often the upper caste, vehemently opposes the reservation system adopted by the Indian constitution. Special privileges are granted to some on the basis of their economic conditions, or to the religious minorities as defined in the Constitution. However provision of these constitutional rights as social justice measures, are disapproved by the Indian upper caste middle class. They are a social category that stands by a system of values where merit is gained only through hard work. They consider that such 'special treatments' have blocked their progress, economic or otherwise, in society. In other words, privatisation and/or liberalization is believed to be an asset which has helped genuine, hardworking and talented middle class youth to explore options in the country. Thus they are not compelled to migrate to other countries.

The need to mention these points is to come to terms with the psyche of the middle class. This helps in deciphering the reasons for the success of the 'development myth' that was constructed by the Sangh Parivar. *Hindutva* in such circumstances would not prove to be extremely profitable. Thus the big leap from *Hindutva* to development. It is a known fact that there can be no single, universalistic definition of development. There are a variety of ways of defining it thus it is impossible to reach a consensus. However for the Parivar, like any other political party, it meant provision of basic amenities such as electricity, roads and water. This is evident in the Prime Minister's dream project i.e. the Golden Quadrilateral that would connect the four metros in India, and thereby also link several other cities leading to the metropolitan cities. In this sense then the Parivar was regarded as 'modern' and extremely 'progressive' in its vision. This project was adopted during their tenure as the ruling government at the centre. India saw the rise in the number of highways, and new roadways being built in several metros like Mumbai. Nonetheless there was another side to this positive and promising effort. These steps were taken up largely in big cities alone. The small towns, villages and rural areas continued to be out of the purview of such endeavours. }

The Narmada Bachao Andolan is one of the most visible examples of the lack of concern on the part of the Sangh Parivar. There are some crucial points that need to be considered here. The Sangh speaks of 'development for all' including the poor. But it

has not taken up any steps to help the poor, tribal population in the Narmada valley. It continues to implement measures that ruin the lives of these displaced tribals in several parts of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Provision of basic services, which most politically motivated people promise, is not provided for even today. A small survey of some towns through which L K Advani's Rath Yatra (1990) passed was conducted. Today these towns face severe problems in receiving even basic amenities like safe drinking water or electricity. For instance, in Samastipur (Bihar) where Advani was arrested during the Rath Yatra, faces serious crisis. Electricity is rare for most of Samastipur. The local government hospital too encounters similar power shortages. However the government official's colony here has uninterrupted supply of it. The commoners on the other hand, live in darkness for 20 hours a day. A similar instance of lopsided development is Mumbai. The large number of flyovers built during the Sena-BJP tenure in Maharashtra, did make travel to distant places easy. Hence the question is do these large-scale investments benefit all?

Hard facts as these might seem do not affect the upper caste and the middle class. This social category can find little fault with the Sangh Parivar's ideology. The anti-reservation stance of the Parivar has been the most effective aspect of their appeal. The Sangh Parivar's anti-Mandal stand continues to be supported by many in the Indian middle class. However, this anti-reservation position is moderated when the need arises, in order not to alienate the OBC, dalit voters.

Besides these class specific fabrications that are made by the Hindutva forces there are other forms of constructed appeal. Some decisions that the BJP took during its tenure as the ruling party in the alliance have repeatedly been praised. Amongst them the Indo-Pak talks it encouraged and the way the Kargil war was waged added to BJP's political profile. For most of the upper and middle classes these were sure signs of the Saffron combine softening its fundamentalist stand. The Indo-Pak talks are seen as the first successful attempt ever made by any Indian government to bring about peace between the two countries. However here it is important to note that, inspite of these peace talks with Pakistan, anti-Pak chauvinism persists. Pakistan is continually referred to as a terrorist state by the *Hindutva* forces. Muslim and Pakistan bashing continues unabated. On the other hand the Kargil war against Pakistan symbolized India's military strength and the courage and patriotism of Indian soldiers.

On the whole, the image that the BJP and its allies generated was a favourable one. Its initial concern for hard-core issues was seen as gradually diminishing. In other

words it was believed that the Saffron combine had made a big leap from fundamentalism to secular, progressive initiatives. However, the loopholes in its development agenda were becoming apparent. Instances of heightened displacements of the poor, tribals and farmers have continued. Suicides of farmers due to lack of provision of basic amenities have taken place in several states like Andhra Pradesh. The picture in India continues to be bleak during and after the tenure of the BJP and its allies. In the end of its tenure the *Hindutva* fraternity had come to realise that its illusion of development was steadily deteriorating. Thus they chose to create another myth to depict a picture of India as having progressed under the regime of the Hindu parties. It was a campaign referred to as 'India Shining'<sup>13</sup>, which was started in the year 2004. It continued to advertise that India had achieved high levels of development that had not been reached in the years prior to the rule of the BJP and allies. A developed, progressive and nuclear<sup>14</sup> power was the new picture of India.

#### SEASON OF BANS, SIGNS OF FASCISM: CONTROLLING DISSENT

Disciplinary ways of conduct might not be seen as problematic by many especially the urban middle class. They probably consider discipline as an imperative for economic progress. In the past several years since the Saffron combine was elected to power, there have been instances when alternative voices have been silenced. It has been administered in various ways. Bans have been imposed on any medium of communication, books, plays etc., that questions the way the RSS-VHP-BJP or the Shiv Sena function.

M F Hussain's painting of Hindu goddesses like Saraswati was also banned. The exhibition arranged by him in a private gallery was vandalised by several Shiv Sena and other Hindu activists. Many of his paintings were stolen as well. Beginning with the

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<sup>13</sup> The 'India Shining' project that was floated was the largest of its kind. It is considered to be equivalent to the 'Polio Eradication' campaign in terms of its outreach and also with regards the advertising done. The motive of the Polio eradication project is to provide all people in India especially the poor with this basic medical facility. The investment done in such projects is essential in a country like India where provision of minimum services like access to drugs and medical treatments for the poor has not taken place. But the amount of economic resources that have been utilised for political campaigns like 'India Shining' is truly a drain of the country's wealth.

<sup>14</sup> The BJP conducted nuclear testings in Pokhran (Rajasthan). They used a very peculiar symbol to indicate the successful completion of the tests. The code was 'and the Buddha smiled.' It was an unnecessary choice of the code. Buddha, the symbol of peace and calmness was used in this unusual far from peaceful nuclear experiment. It is in reality a test that if administered can kill, destroy, large sections of humanity.

objection that Hussain had painted the Hindu goddess in the nude they also portrayed Hussain as a Muslim who is bringing disrepute on to the Hindu faith and culture. Progressive Hindi magazines like *Samantar* and *Udbhavana* were banned in Madhya Pradesh. They are known for their secular and anti-communal stance. However they were also branded as 'threats to communal harmony.' In addition to these series of bans, is the one imposed on a play titled '*Suno Nadi Kya Kehti Hai*' in Ahmedabad. The censor board here held the view that the script of this play made critical references to big dams, displacement of tribals, and communal riots. They believed that its viewing was unsuitable as it would incite violence.

Another such instance of vandalism is the ransacking of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute in Pune. Members of the 'Sambhaji Brigade' attacked this institute and destroyed invaluable and rare documents/records. It is one of the leading centres of Indological studies. The reason for this was that James W Laine, a reputed historian had consulted the archival materials in this institute for his currently banned book on Shivaji (titled as *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India*). This book portrayed Shivaji in a not too favourable light as far as his parentage was concerned. The people who assisted Laine in writing and publishing the book were also victims of the wrath of the Sambhaji Brigade. Noted Marathi poet Dilip Chitre who helped the author in the research for this book was also threatened. A case had been registered against Laine, asking for his apologies and demanded that the derogatory passages be removed.

The book has been banned ostensible to avoid the eruption of communal tension in the city. Yet the damage has been great and cannot be compensated for. Rare historical records have been lost because of the violent acts of some chauvinistic people. Their concern for history is very limited. In actuality they intend to prevent all unpleasant aspects with regards to the past. If historical figures especially like Shivaji, Savarkar, or any other *Hindu* king or intellectual, are depicted in ways that they do not approve of then they unleash violent reprisals. Books and other literary works face this fate when they choose to be critical of the functioning of the Sangh Parivar. Interestingly, even those who contributed to the books written by RSS ideologues were also not spared. M S Aney who wrote a forward to M S Golwalkar's book *We or our nationhood defined* met with the same fate. He disagreed with a view with regards to minorities that Golwalkar had strongly put forth in the book. The end result was that the following editions of the book were published without the forward written by M S Aney.



The controversy over NCERT textbooks<sup>15</sup> is well known. The RSS/BJP combine set out to delete all those critical aspects about Hindus and their past, which they thought were derogatory. As some history textbooks highlighted the point that Hindus essentially were beefeaters, they had to be changed as this obviously did not fit into the way the Hindus have repeatedly been portrayed by the Brahminical upper caste oriented Parivar.

Popular cinema has also faced censorship from the Saffron combine. Films like 'Fire' and 'Water' which portray women in assertive roles is unacceptable to the Hindutvavaadis. The reason they put forth is that 'NRI/foreign' directors depict Indian culture in incorrect ways. But the truth behind their disapproval was that these movies challenged the conventional roles that women in real as well as reel life are expected to perform. 'Fire' was a film based on lesbian relationships. This was clearly objectionable especially for the orthodox *Hindutva* partisans. Their strong opposition comes from their patriarchal, biased and conservative mindsets. The Shiv Sena stopped the screening of these films in theatres. The posters put up in various cities were pulled down by them. The Shiv Sena has been involved in several such endeavours. It repeatedly attacks Valentine's day celebrations in Mumbai. Gift and card shops, which advertise the celebration of Valentine day, face the same consequences. These shops are vandalised. The justification that the Sena puts forth is that these celebrations are foreign influences and thus do not fit in with the Indian cultural ethos.

Thus it is obvious that the Parivar has very distinct notions of right and wrong, or correct and inappropriate. The series of bans imposed are carried out to muzzle democratic voices. They prevent any alternative views and ideas from being expressed. The Sangh Parivar in this manner is compelling all classes to follow the life pattern they propose. These bans are signs of fascism as they suppress all dissenting voices and views. These are indications of the growing hegemony of the fascist culture of the Parivar.

There is also the crucial argument about patriotism, which is central to the Sangh Parivar's concept of cultural nationalism. It has developed a very limited or bounded definition of nationalism. In other words, it has premised the argument of nationalism on the debate between patriots and traitors. Dissent is seen as anti-national or unpatriotic.

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<sup>15</sup> The deleted portions in the NCERT history textbooks were essentially written by noted historians and scholars. They make reference to people of western and northwestern parts like Maharashtra, Rajasthan to have domesticated animals and practised agriculture. Also that *all* categories in the varna system had a ritualistic function besides a social one. Thus it is evident that the objection over these and many such passages is that they picture the Hindu and Brahmins in a completely different way.

Every such act or voice that they deem to be anti-nationalist faces severe consequences. The Sangh ideologues had long back determined the unpatriotic elements in the country. Recall that Savarkar had already termed the Muslims and Christians as unpatriotic. There is yet another side to the anti-national stand. Often the Sangh Parivar characterises such acts as *terrorist* in nature. The definition of *terrorism* and *terrorist* is also based on the discussion over patriots and traitors. This implies that, the Sangh Parivar has branded Muslims and Christians as traitors. They are thus a short step away from being terrorists because their loyalties lie abroad i.e. in Arabia, and Palestine respectively. This was a view as put forth by Savarkar in his book, *Hindutva*.

The BJP led government promulgated some laws to tackle these dissenting and anti-national voices. These laws, the BJP claimed, were strictly to tackle terrorism in India. It introduced a refined version of the Terrorism and Disruptive Tendencies Act (TADA). The new act was the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA). POTA, has been issued in 10 states since March 2002. Its clauses are extremely repressive. POTA often has been misused rather than seriously used to deal with terrorism. The people arrested under this act face severe, harrowing consequences in the police stations they are put into. As POTA courts are not open to the public what happens in the name of curbing terrorism is unknown to the people. Under POTA the accused cannot get bail until he/she can prove they had not committed the act. Often those booked under this Act are innocent of the crime that they are held for. Arundhati Roy states the hard facts about POTA:

“ In Jharkhand 3,200 people, mostly poor Adivasis accused of being Maoists, have been named in FIRs under POTA. In eastern Uttar Pradesh the Act is used to clamp down on those who dare to protest about the alienation of their land and livelihood. In Gujarat and Mumbai it is almost exclusively against Muslims. In Gujarat after the 2002 state-assisted pogrom .....287 people have been accused under POTA. Of these, 286 are *Muslims* and one is Sikh.”<sup>16</sup>

Thus it is evident that time and again innocent, people are the target of the *Hindutva*'s nationalist concerns. Children of the accused are put behind bars if the concerned person could not be arrested. In the name of democracy, nationalism and fighting terrorism it has silenced all democratic voices. In this process, by the use of draconian laws like the POTA, it has created terror in the minds of people. It has put

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<sup>16</sup> Arundhati Roy (2004)- 'How deep shall we dig?' , *The Hindu*, April 25., p.14. New Delhi.

forth extreme notions of patriotism and thus has continually labelled Muslims and other minorities as terrorist.

In the end one can say, that the Sangh combine puts forth a very restricted and limited notion of culture and nationalism. The use of the word fascism is not done only to put forth the view that bans are fascist acts. The word '*fascism*' and/or '*fascist*' have several other meanings that need to be carefully looked at. One has to be very cautious when using either of the words. Arundhati Roy very rightly states the reason for such precaution is that often the use of this word fascism causes offence. In academia rarely do people choose to use this term with regards to any issue, political party or cultural organization. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2000), *fascism* means 'an extreme right-wing political system or attitude which is in favour of strong central government and which does not allow any opposition.' The Sangh Parivar can be seen in the same manner. *Fascism* is often considered as a very harsh word to be used. It brings to memory the brutal events of the ethnic cleansing of the Jews in Germany by Hitler. However there are other meanings and connotations that are also being referred to through it.

Dr. B S Moonje, a revivalist leader of the Congress in the Central Provinces and later the vice-President of a local Hindu Sabha was a close associate of the RSS. He is regarded as the one who introduced the ethos of fascism to the RSS. He was the first to make a trip to Italy to meet Mussolini, the fascist dictator. Moonje on his journeys took extensive notes of the meetings with Mussolini himself and the military schools he visited. It would be suffice to mention here the definition of 'fascist' that he puts forth in his diary. Moonje says,

“the name Fascist is derived from the Latin proverb which means that all small sticks, so long as they are separate from each other, can be easily broken. But when they are tied together into a bundle they become unbreakable.”<sup>17</sup>

One can consider this definition of fascist as applicable to the RSS and now to its allies as well. Perhaps Moonje and his close associate, disciple Hedgewar, drew inspiration from this basic defining feature. That is to say a careful look at the description, speaks about discipline, togetherness and unity. In addition to these, one finds the feature of power embedded in it. These are in reality the central characteristics of the Sangh especially.

The views and ideas put forth by RSS ideologues like Golwalkar, Savarkar have already been discussed. Golwalkar himself spoke the language that once Hitler spoke that is of eliminating impure and dissenting races that is the Jews. The only difference is that the category of the Jews is replaced by all defiant voices. To make claims of racial purity, and demand assimilation of various religious communities into the Hindu cultural ethos is to disown the rights of minorities in India. "To suggest today that the religious minorities are guests in a Hindu India is nothing but a subtle form of ethnic cleansing."<sup>18</sup> Partha Chatterjee makes an important point with regards this struggle to establish the idea of racial purity. He says that besides some tribes in North East India and Andaman Nicobar Islands there are no pure racial types. However Savarkar was of the view that the Hindu blood had traces everywhere, including these islands. The Parivar's stand on the minorities is very unstable and constantly changing. More often, one should note that these are deliberate tactics. RSS *sarsanghchalak*, K S Sudershan recently redefined the concept of 'minorities.' He says, "Muslims and Christians in India should not be labelled as minorities as they have their genetic roots here."<sup>19</sup> Savarkar and Golwalkar the ideological mentors of the RSS, they very strongly expressed a completely opposite view. Sudershan's new claim perhaps intends to portray the Muslims and Christians as Indians. But the underlying motive is to ask them to assimilate themselves into the Indian ethos and thus give up their special status as minorities. In addition the demand is probably to surrender all the privileges that government grants to them.

In the end, one can say that Fascism does not only mean an exploitation of communal divides and tensions. It also refers to deliberate manipulations of cultural, socio-political and economic issues in order to forcibly establish an ideology. Fascism/neo-fascism and all other such totalitarian approaches portray themselves as different forms of nationalisms.

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<sup>17</sup> 19<sup>th</sup> March 1931 from the diary of B S Moonje as seen on Microfilm no:1., Nehru Memorial Museum and Library.

<sup>18</sup> Malini Parthasarathy (2003)- 'Identity Crisis', *The Hindu*, February 17, Madras.

<sup>19</sup> Sandeep Mishra (2004)- 'RSS chief redefines 'minorities'', *Sunday Times of India*, January 25, p.9. New Delhi.

CONCLUSION

As social science researchers we are trained to keep away from value judgements. Nonetheless it cannot be denied that the RSS, the head of the Parivar, is an organization one would hold in awe. It displays enviable skill and organizational stability. Its popularity thrives on people's need to bring in order into their lives. In addition is the constant need to be in touch with one's cultural ethos. In other words, the cultural orientations of the Sangh have persistently appealed to people especially the Hindus in India. It is perhaps unimaginable to decipher the magnitude of work the RSS has been doing over the past several years. They continue to employ a very basic, simple idea of spreading their message through the word of mouth. It continues to shun publicity yet manages to efficiently reach out to the public.

Maharashtra has witnessed strong anti-Brahmin protests. The Bhakti movement, the struggles of Jotiba Phule and many other such subaltern voices, have put up strong opposition to Brahmin hegemony. During the 1970s, Maharashtra witnessed the rise of the Dalit Panther movement. It was another instance that displayed the tension that continues to exist among various castes within the Hindu fold. The Sangh even today continues to appeal to many of the dominant (upper caste) social group in Maharashtra. The Sena, on the other hand does not display any casteist orientations. However, its swing to the Hindutva lobby is a sure sign of its faith in a fundamentalist discourse.

The present ideological constructions of the Sangh Parivar have to be seen in light of the fear that modernization poses for many people. These are largely premised on conservative and fundamental religio-cultural orientations. In addition there is a constant apprehension that is widely shared that one's culture is eroding in the face of rapid influences from the West. The discomfort over such real and imagined threats that Western values and ideas pose for people has led many to more traditional ways of thinking. Such views tend to reinforce the aversion to the 'foreign', the alien and the unfamiliar. The Sangh Parivar systematically made use of this prevalent apprehensive mood with regards to culture. It fabricated a myth that the indigenous culture of India was under attack from aliens like the Muslims and Christians.

Hindu nationalism was an ideology that emerged parallel to the freedom movement. It brought about a renewed sense of respect and regard for the cultural ethos of the country. The alleged assault on culture by non-Hindus was bound to generate a sense of anxiety and anger among the masses in general. The consequences were well anticipated by the Hindu nationalists. The reference here however was no more to

'Indian' cultural orientations, but strictly to '*Hindu Sanskriti*'. The Hindu nationalists during this phase strengthened the antagonism against the Muslims by harping upon the fact that the state was keen on the appeasement of Muslims.

The strong influence of the writings of Savarkar and Golwalkar were evident in this new understanding of nation and/or nationalism. It was proposing a homogenous idea of the nation. The suggestion was to establish a *rashtra* (nation) that was inhabited by people of one race, one blood and one culture. The possibility of other races or cultures migrating into this newly carved out territory, was completely ruled out. Golwalkar had strongly criticised and refused to accept the Constitution of India. The reasons behind this denial are many among them the fact that the idea of Constitution was borrowed from the West, and therefore considered not suitable for India. He was of the opinion that if India continues to borrow ideas from the West, then it would never be able to ever develop its own ideas and views. Golwalkar said that, the Constitution of a country could not be imposed 'from above' on its citizens. What he implied was that since several decades various ideas have been forced upon<sup>1</sup> Indians. But the real motive behind this disagreement was perhaps, that it provided for special privileges to the minorities in India. It was an idea that was unacceptable to the Sangh and especially to Golwalkar. He strongly stood by the policy of assimilation. The basic tenet of this policy was that every minority in the country has to assimilate into mainstream Hindu's culture. In this process, he/she was expected to give up all consciousness of one's separate identity and existence. One needs to ponder on this thought that is so strongly stressed upon by Golwalkar in particular. If this were the general law that all nations should follow, then what would happen to the vast number of Indians who migrate to other countries? What about those, who in the hope of seeking a better livelihood leave India never to return, yet who hold onto their Indian identity? And what about those young engineers who migrate to the Silicon Valley every year in search of jobs? They all might hold citizenship of the respective countries they reside in; nevertheless they continue to cling to their Indian or Hindu cultural ethos. The celebration of festivals and wedding ceremonies are carried out in their traditional Indian ways. The BJP, the political wing of the RSS, had invited NRIs to celebrate the *Pravasi Bharatiya Divas*. Why should they sponsor such events when they do not allow for other cultural identities in India? These Pravasi Bharatiya, should shed these identifications and respect their new citizenships.

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<sup>1</sup> *Sri Guruji : Samagra Darshan*, Vol. 1, Bharatiya Vichar Sadhana, Nagpur., p.102.

This should be the logic of RSS and the *Hindutva* combine. Why should the Sangh, or its affiliates, which espouses their Guruji's (Golwalkar) ideas demand such loyalty from NRIs? In that case what is the need for the dual citizenship, an idea proposed by the then Prime Minister, Mr. Atal B Vajpayee??

The Sangh Parivar has introduced into the discourse of nation/nationalism a renewed cultural connotation. To put forth a homogenous conception of a Hindu Rashtra, is untenable in a country like India. T K Oommen has made very interesting observations related to this idea. He is of the view that co-terminality between religion and territory is only possible among non-proselytising religions like Hinduism and Judaism. However he points to the fact that the project of establishing a Hindu rashtra cannot be sustained in India. The reason is that there does not exist one ideal type of 'Hindu.' There are a range of Hindu identities, which are determined by disparate variables, like territory, religion and caste. So the reference to a 'Hindu' nation<sup>2</sup> is to consider the category of Hindu as absolutely homogenous. One can then say that, this is precisely the reason why the Sangh Parivar avoids the considerations of caste. Each determinant or variable poses different problems in defining the category of Hindus either as a nation or a nationality. These determinants display the heterogeneous composition of India. The claim of a Hindu rashtra itself then consciously attempts to avoid the important aspect of religio-cultural diversity.

Thomas Blom Hansen notes a parable narrated to him by a group of old RSS workers at the headquarters in Pune,

"If you draw two lines on a piece of paper, one short and the other a little longer you have a difference in length. How can you diminish the differences between these two lines, without altering or interfering with any of them? The answer is: by drawing a much larger line above them. In comparison with the difference between the small lines and the big line, the internal difference between the small lines has been diminished. Thus, the small lines are castes and the big line is the Hindu nation. Instead of focusing on the small lines and their internal differences, one should look

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<sup>2</sup> "To begin with, it may be noted that the claim that India is the Hindu homeland was made with reference to undivided India, in which the proportion of Hindus was much smaller than, it is in divided India. Even after Partition, India remains as the second biggest Muslim country and 80% of the world's Zoroastrians live in India. Hindu nationalists counter this point by suggesting that these people are outsiders, which in turn brings in the question as to the time-span required for the 'nativization' of a people in a country." T K Oommen (1997)- *Citizenship, Nationality and Ethnicity*, Polity Press., Cambridge, U.K., p.84. These are some facts that are never taken into consideration. The assumptions that India is a homogenous country would blind us to realities of cultural diversity in India.



at the big line, the Nation, and forget about internal differences. This is how we in the Sangha look at caste in our society.”<sup>3</sup>

By employing the overarching theme of the Hindu nation the Parivar is trying to put forth a goal common for all classes and castes. Thus it is evident that the Sangh and its affiliates avoided the crisis over caste.

The success of the politics of *Hindutva* was possible firstly because it reinforced the dominant status of the upper castes. Sanskritization has always been efficient in creating this illusion of mobility for the lower castes in India. Nevertheless the lure of sharing power with the dominant classes of Indian society has always been an attractive proposition for the weaker sections. The participation of these communities in pogroms is not surprising. However behind this cultural drama of the Parivar and their facade of development their basic stance is reactionary.

The Parivar has collapsed the concepts of culture, religion and nation to profess anti-minority and anti-Muslim discourses. To continually employ the rhetoric of fear from alien invasion or attack, in the name of terrorism has reinforced antagonism against the Muslims. It is sad to note that there is a constant conspiracy going on against the Muslims in India. Why should Muslims in India be looked at merely as a minority or a vote bank? Why should Indian Muslims be seen as Muslims first and then Indians? Why is there this commonly prevalent argument that for the Muslims in India there has to be a separate leadership? Why can't there be an 'Indian' leadership for all Indians, including them? By using the idiom of patriotism and loyalty with regards to the terrorism, all acts of the Muslims then are closely monitored. The madrasas and mosques of the Muslims are thus accused of mobilization of Muslims against India. Here I would like to recall what the noted film and stage actor Farooque Sheikh said in an interview. Reacting to the commonly held view that condemnation of terrorist acts has come to be expected of Muslims, he says, “but how many times should we do so? Every time something happens, must we undergo this trial by fire? I think the fact that we do condemn terrorism has been shown enough. After all, aren't we equally affected?”<sup>4</sup>

The Sangh has steered all along the project of establishing a Hindu rashtra. The Sangh and its affiliates have diligently worked for several years to actualise this dream. One should ponder for a while on this term of 'Hindu' that has become common parlance

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Blom Hansen (1999)- *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey., p.122.

in recent years. G P Despande makes a very meaningful observation. He rightly states that it is doubtful if people referred to themselves as Hindus prior to the colonial phase of Indian history. Initially it was a mere territorial term used by Europeans to refer to those living beyond the river Indus. The colonials called them 'Gentoo.' However it seems difficult for the members and sympathisers of the right wing to come to terms with such facts.

The BJP and its allies lost in the General Elections (2004). The reasons have been extensively debated in the media and the academia. The real concern here is not to find the reasons, or the miscalculations of the Parivar that eventually voted them out. The question here is whether the Indian polity has been able to look beyond the several façades and illusions created by the saffron forces. Or should this be considered as an anti-incumbency vote for the Congress? One has to try and see whether the Indian people, who gave a mandate against the Parivar, are actually engaging with more crucial issues. Some analyses of the change of hands at the center have stressed that the weaker sections have in fact voted against economic policies they had witnessed during BJP's shot at power. At the same time, the question whether this is a rejection of the Parivar's formulation of cultural nationalism is also worth serious consideration. In spite of the fact that the BJP and its allies have lost in the elections, they still sit in the parliament as parties in opposition. They still do hold a space to mould the views, ideas and opinions of Indians.

Today, to satisfy the cultural prejudices, new histories and viewpoints are being constructed. In the process of writing this dissertation, the effort has been to recognise the various ideological tools used by the Sangh Parivar, to understand the functions of its various fronts, and the ends that these organisations have tried to achieve. This had been an exercise in 'reading between the lines'. Hindu nationalism might be an overworked or overexploited theme. However, the attempt here has been to clearly see the façade that the saffron fraternity has created, and to engage with questions of fascism that are often avoided. The endeavour here is not just to produce objective positive knowledge but also to pose the right questions.

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<sup>4</sup> Jyoti Punwani (2003) in interview with Farooque Sheikh, *The Times of India*, September 2, New Delhi.

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