The nation does not mean number all the time. However, the assimilation of number with the Hindutva self has created a situation of the legitimacy of the Hindu nation. The current results of the 2019 election stamped the majoritarian mindset in India. The great victory of the rightwing protagonists’ party Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP)[1] challenged the minority mindset that India is just not Hindu but a tolerant, diverse culture. One may question this minority view from the democratic angle that this result is the open mandate by the majority of people of India. The real number increases the authenticity of the voters’ action to select the party to run the country. This action of the voter is mechanised as real psychology of the voters showing their choice for the party which can work perfectly for them. The duality between the personality of the party’s leader and policy, which was implemented by the leader transforms into the charisma of the leader.

The issues of development and poverty eradication get resolved through the single personality factors in Indian politics. It is the leader who matters and represents the self of the people which depends on the imagination of being from the nation which belongs to Hindus. It seems to be the priority together with the tools of systematic exclusions of minorities and migrants. The agenda of protecting the Hindutva which has a deep-seated belief in the Varna system with the substituents of language, rituals, caste and gender take two pathways of populist’s discourse, first, an anti-modern squad which denies the self as a changeable entity and talks about its pollution due to intruding foreign culture. They fix upon the cultural self which got hurt by the colonial inclusion. Any form of contact with the new or stereotyped culture seems to dilute the idea of nationality, which attach to the emotions and the cultural sentiments of people. The second pathway is more direct and regulatory in terms of in-voluntarism of caste status and impermeability of its boundaries. The second pathway nurtures the caste-based ideologies, which had created a stiff irreversible societal ascription on the individuals and social groups. The whole economy of survival, oppressions, regulations or dominations have given a comfortable space to the dominant groups, and any form of collective movements by the historically oppressed controlled violently. This deep-seated majoritarian self has got its legitimacy by winning the majority votes. Some of the instances like killing, arrest and threat to the scholars, journalists, students and social workers who questioned the Hindutva ideology created a dichotomy of right and wrong. These people who question the power and its oppressive philosophy were considered wrong and anti-national, and those who pay their obeisance labelled as right nationalists and citizens. It is the irony of the democracy where the majority of numbers and the majority way of thinking regulates the legitimacy of ideology and exclude other voices. The consequences of this kind of right-wing nationalism resulted in killings, confinements and
resentment of scholars, activists, journalists and students at the large scale snatching the freedom of expression and criticality which are essential markers of democracy. The current right-wing government vowed development as its agenda to lure the people in need of employment, housing, and basic amenities along with the sense of certainty of belonging to a dominant Hindu religion group[2]. The ideological narrative of new India confined to the exclusion of minorities and homogeneity of one religion values. Some of the speeches of the leaders from the BJP confirms their motives aligned with the people’s need.

The need theory applied to people cannot be taken for granted as need are not merely essential but it has a much powerful extension to the social need. Even the person who is striving for the basic needs may continue to opt for suffering unless he gains satisfaction from the desire of group enhancement, recognition and esteem. It is premature to generalise the nation on the basis of poor and non-poor as there is some common thread which gives identity to the people. Precisely this happened during the rise of the right-wing, which caught this common thread connecting the identities through the populist understanding of nature. For example, all Hindus were called to fight the common enemy who dislocated the idea of Hindu Rashtra. The call for revivalism, thus, added with the populist notions such as Khan Market Gang, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) anti-nationals who questioned the authority and influential industrialists and state, Congress Mukta Bharat[3]. Many of the bloody history of violence on minorities in the recent past in Gujrat and other parts of India[4] resulted in the electoral win of the right wings groups. As it aptly noticed that BJP fared better in areas where there had been riots in Gujrat (see Reichers Rath, 2017[5]). This rise of the right-wing shows how the Hindutva ideology has socialised people gradually with the hatred directed towards the people from the minority group.

The positioning of the Hindutva complemented with the discourse on nationalism (Rashtrawad) and at the same time positioning the oppositions with a discourse on family business (Parivarwad) and popular understanding of individuality and elitism. It is evident in the recent speech by the member of RSS that the Hindus were the indigenous people of the Bharat territory, who had their own culture and society. He canonically appropriated the idea of Hinduism with the nativity of the people who lived in this geographical region. This claim of authentic citizenship laden from the time primordial legitimise the meaning of being Hindu, though he did not acknowledge the identity complexities in terms of varieties of languages, castes, value systems. All the complexities and diversities were taken into one order of Hindutva as ‘we Hindu belong here and our cultural values will prevail’[6]. One of the methodology to fuel the movement of revivalism of Hindutva is to identify the threats to the indigenous culture. Since indigeneity claimed by the Hindutva protagonist and all the efforts for development propagated in the name of cultural enhancement is all encompassed by the dominant Hindu organisations. In one way this also nurtures a paradox, a claim for being indigenous is a dominant claim which is unquestionably accepted by the majority of Hindu society. It is also seen as an assertion, threat to those who question, and hegemonic, so the claim towards nativity and being formerly belonging to the concerned space is a matter of emotionally flared existence rather than objectivity. There are other identities within the pronounced Hindu Identity, as imposed by the claimants of being culturally superiors and upper castes to retain the humiliated and powerless identities within the system of Hindutva identity, who denounce the superiority of the dominant culture. Thus, the revivalism is a political stunt on the part of right-wing where threats are made explicit and visible in the minorities, academia, dissenters and students to reprieve the Hindutva false ego.

To talk about being indigenous does not change the objectivity of the present, which marks the increasing oppressiveness, intolerance, killing and arrest of people who offer critique. This hegemonic spread of Hindutva has a long history, and any claim of its authenticity based on its unquestionable history of dominance and to cut off the voices which only squealed. This religious network with firm caste boundaries is historically laden and spread in the general everyday conscience of people. They are the markers of socialisation in which a shared sense of self-constructed through different channels and parental practices. The rise of the right-wing explored more politically, but its essence as embedded in the everyday sensemaking. Any critical conjectures were taken as granted beliefs uncomfortably received by the right-wing sympathisers, media, and institutions, and many times ends up in the violence and aggression. The idea of India as a nation built upon the constitutional platform has a short history but has a differently understood long past. The entrenched consciousness of one’s cultural identity got its political meaning in the rising right-wing populism and hard work done in spreading the ideology of Hindutva or making people actively engage with their Hindu identity. This Hindu identity is unnoticed and banal in the daily practices, and one becomes aware of it when the person confronts divergent viewpoints criticising caste system, masculinity, or rituals committed. Even this Hindu identity emerges in the context of comparison and threats.

The comparison with different religion and practices and the feeling that the other religion dominantly occupies one’s space, has created new politicised meaning were the fancy of compositeness and blurring of boundaries, overpowered by the sense of nativity and claims of Hindu space. It was seen just not in terms of practising religion, marriages, education and languages, the hatred was also seen towards the products of everyday use, foods and medicines. The marketisation of the products in the name of the indigenous way of life which is politically supported had created a large market of indigenously made product marketed as pure and saviour of Indian economy which are taken away again by the foreign product market. In this lieu, the foreign products and eatables are blamed for their untrustworthiness, spoiling the
The struggle for freedom from the colonial rule was to establish the Hindu Rashtra and despite the variations in the Hindutva ideology, the struggle was against Brahmanism, untouchability and caste-based occupation by the Dalit, where the western influence to some extent proved to be emancipatory, liberating and a possibility to make the imposed and ascribed caste-based identity permeable. The struggle of the minority groups portrayed from the same monotheistic Hindu identity (Shani, 2007[8]; see also Reicher & Rath, 2017[10]) moulded as Hindu struggle. However, it was B R Ambedkar who earlier initiated the annihilation of caste and creating the boundary of caste permeable but later discarded the whole Hindu religion as oppressive because of its caste system and opted for Buddhism which was emancipatory, progressive and caste-less. The tool adopted by the Hindu revivalist groups applied in various domains where people were emotionally centered, like the protection of cow, which is a symbol of holiness and purity. The movement to protect the cow from getting slaughtered is not new, but people were engaged earlier also with active mobilisations of Hindus against the Muslims who labelled as cow killer.

In the current times, the number of incidents and reports showed the mass lynching of Muslims and Dalit in the name of cow vigilantism. Even the naturally dead cow whose transportation outside the locality was considered as intentionally driven for these minorities communities by the vigilante groups. Though cow vigilantism (GauRakshak) is at the peak in the current right-wing times in the name of protection of cow considered as a mother who sustains life and bring economic prosperity, the cows as a mother are only holy or as a token, only till the time, it is giving milk. When it is life-sustaining properties are exhausted, or when the cow is dead, there are no reports about the offering of respect. It is, however, discarded as dead animal carcass, and poor Dalit are called to remove its body, no one comes forward, even people from those vigilante group, to offer her respect. The politics of cow is only an empty idea and shallow movement to target the poor minorities for the political purpose and for gaining the political ends. The whole idea of purity of cow symbolises the politics of purity and impurity in the society where the upper caste gets full control over the society. So, in a way revivalism of Hindutva is not about something which has objectively vanished, since it is always there and in the current times its practice has become more intense and directed. So there is no question of something traditional and cultural which got replaced by something which is called modernity. The publicity of astrological predictions through media and other online sources, the rise of people practising rituals and travelling across India for different religious purposes, increase in the number of websites offering solutions to the daily life problems, TV channels containing different religious programs frame the discourses and identities of people.

Now the question is “who is right-wing and what they do?” This question often creates a puzzle whether a person who believes in the right-wing ideology is someone whose belief is permanent or not. In many instances, people were seen changing their political stance, ideologies and political parties, which shows that this mindset, way of thought, or collective thinking changes with the time. In the Indian context itself, we can see that despite holding a similar cultural identity and religious identity, people may have differed ideologically and vice versa. The revivalist group of the Hindutva mobilisation group gets the season of operation at different times and in a different way. For example, when Mayawati government was there in Uttar Pradesh (e.g. 2007–2012), the Hindutva mobilisation was sporadic[11] and it had controlled the Hindutva forces to some extent if not completely[12]. Though the rise of atrocities was high on Dalits and minorities[13] during that time, confirming the fact that the spread of the Hindutva ideology based on the violence and aggression towards the group seeking empowerment. The win of BJP in Uttar Pradesh gave unhindered confidence among the Hindutva forces to deal with the matter contrary to the idea of Hindutva, like, and the, interreligious marriage, posting comments on social media against the famous leaders of BJP etc.

The right-wing members are those who identify strongly with the Hindutva ideology as circulated by the nationalist’s group from Rashtriya Swayam Sevak (RSS) Sangh and Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP). These organisations mobilise people at the local level with the strong emotions affiliated with the past of Hindus, which was destroyed or on the verge to be destroyed by the outside forces. They create a support base by engaging at the institutional and cultural level. Since people identify with their religion and caste and take active participation in various religious festivals and rituals, these organisations provide an aura of memories of previous generations who cultured the coming generations and provided them with the sense of self-respect. Anything outside this constructed Hindutva boundary is mocked, taken not seriously or dealt aggressively with violence. The unspoken assurance that they will not be convicted for any atrocities on the minorities[14] had given some of the Hindutva group a sense of cultural superiority and sense of moral righteousness. Some of the main accused in the lynching of Akhlaq was seen in the mass meeting of current UP CM, showing how the right-wing government has given the green signal to them to carry on with this Hindutva agenda of revivalism with any method they opt. The biggest threat to democracy is the complacency of Hindutva as morally upright, which gave them
immense power to feel beyond the constitution. Although the Hindutva organisations such as RSS and VHP as NGO, operate from behind, creating the army of revivalists and moral police spread in almost all the major institutions, there are reports that they are heavily funded and promoted by the external agencies. The problem with the systematic approach to elevate the authenticity of these organisations is its unquestionable bearing by the people, where one is systematic, political and consciously moulding the others thought whatever is the hidden motive and agenda, and the other is at the receiving end, emotionally driven, treated as an object and quickly dilapidated.

Chetan Sinha, Assistant Professor [Psychology], Jindal Global Law School


[2]Muslims votes were less and almost the same in both the Lok Sabha elections

[3]As congress seems to be more elitist, arrogant and pro-diverse which include the affirmative actions for the minorities and Dalits, caste-based politics, inclusion of Ambedkarites into the Hindu system which was later rejected by Ambedkar in Annihilation of caste and Bahiskrit Bharat. Also, Congress seems centrist but it has pro Hindutva inclinations and it was once supported by RSS rather than BJP (see Hansen 2005)


[11]See also India’s Silent Revolution: The Rise of the Lower Castes in North India


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