## RISE OF VIOLENT HINDU EXTREMISM AND STATE RESPONSE IN INDIA

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### Abstract

*The current research broadly focuses on violent religious extremism in India and its main focus is on Hindu extremism against Muslims, the largest ethno-religious minority in the country. The approach is that extremism is viable against ethnically minor groups in right-wing dominated political systems. The political sections of the Hindu majority in India seem to have prominently been working on the agenda of declaring the Muslims as foreigners. Furthermore, the Hindutva ideology is on the rise, which hampers the growth of the minority groups and may result in the social degradation of minorities. The research highlights "gap between theory and practice" and "unconstitutional behavior" of political and social groups. The research also focuses on government response to extremism against the Muslims in India. The qualitative method of research is used in the study that relies mainly on documents in printed and electronic form.*

**Keywords:** Ethnicity, violent extremism, hindutva, communal, muslims, India, BJP, RSS.

### INTRODUCTION

The roots of Hindu nationalism lie in the colonial India when the movement was launched by V.D Savarkar at the beginning of the twentieth century. The movement was aimed at the "Hindu Rashtra" an ideology that aimed at the proliferation of Hindu society. The term originally meant to build a Hindu nation in the Indian Subcontinent. Later on sought to establish the supremacy of Hindus in India. It had a politico-cultural bearing, but religious nature by having a broader conception of unifying different sects and religions into one whole (Hinduism) and establishing self-rule. Its thematic assumption of Muslims and Christians as foreigners was detrimental for Indian Nationalism was professed by Gandhi, Azad, and Nehru under the banner of the All Indian National Congress (AINC). The movement could be considered the main cause to jeopardize the very concept of "Mother India" or "Indian Nationhood." It also sabotaged the dream of Hindu-Muslim unity, dreamt by Muslim leaders the most prominent of them, Mr. Jinnah, who had achieved this goal up to the extent that Sarojini Naidu a Hindu leader called him "Ambassador of Hindu Muslim Unity." But the dream did not fulfill because the Hindu leadership of Congress was not sincere in the cause.

The independence movements before the partition of India such as the struggle for Pakistan on the basis of Islamic ideology and the parallel movement for the Independence of India on the theme of "all Indians as one nation" professing by the AINC turned the wind and India was divided into two states Pakistan a "nationalistic one" and India a "secular one." In proceeding paragraphs, the essence of Indian secularist or nationalist nature would be discussed. Also the current waves of *Hindu Rashtra* and *Hindu Nationalism* which are described to become into the limelight in the eighties and nineties and then systematically turned into an extremist ideology which is supported

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by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and up to a compromise by the Congress, will be discussed. The main targets of this extremist movement are the Muslims and the Christians, but this paper will focus only on the Muslim community. Before discussing the rise of Hindutva in Indian society, it seems necessary that we understand the relationship between ethnicity and extremism.

## UNDERSTANDING ETHNICITY AND EXTREMISM

### Ethnicity

There are two broader terms i.e. *"ethnicit"* and *"communalism"* which look different and maybe in the core meaning, but when applied to groups in India and Pakistan, become more understandable. Ethnicity means linkage with a community having a distinct (religious or racial) outlook.The term ethnic when applied to a group would mean a racial-lingo group. In India and Pakistan the term "communal" is more understandable than the term "ethnic or ethnicity." Shortly, one can interrelate the terms communal and ethnicity by referring both to the group having homogeneity. According to the understanding of Horowitz (1985), all conflicts related to group identities like race, religion, language, caste or tribe would be called ethnic. The domain of the concept is very broad as Varshney (2001) categorizes them into four main kinds: *a) religious; b) racial; c) lingo-religious; and d) sectarian.* The first type could be found in Northern Ireland in Christian conflict, in India Hindu extremism against the Muslims. The second type could be found in the Black and White conflict in the US and Africa. The third type could be found in the Tamil and Sinhala conflict in Sri Lanka while the fourth type could be found in the Shia and Sunni hostility in different Middle Eastern countries.

There are four main approaches explaining the term properly which include: a) primordial phenomenon approach; b) epiphenomenon approach; c) situational phenomenon approach; and d) subjective phenomenon approach. The *Primordial phenomenon* approach is a sociological and anthropological stereotype. It considers the term as permanent and stresses that it is derived from the social structure of kin and clan relationship which is ascribed to birth (Isajiw, 1992) Green (2006) observed that after the 1960s, the word ethnicity took a new meaning, the idea of a tribe which previously referred to society and kinship. The shift of meaning occurred when the social scientists criticized the Eurocentric approach of the term in which they referred groups from the developing world as "tribes" while the developed world as "people" or "nations" (Green 2006, p. 3).

The *epiphenomenal approach* was given by Hector in his theory of "Internal Colonialism and Cultural Division of Labours." According to his theory, the economic system is divided into two spheres i.e. center and periphery (Isajiw, 1992). This approach lays that ethnicity is the creation of economic exploitation and unjust economic order; "it is upheld by uneven economic order" (Isajiw 1992, p. 2). During the 1970s, the Marxist school of thought rejected ethnic studies as an independent area of study. Their assumption was that all cultures were epiphenomenal to class (Isajiw 1992, p. 2).

The *situational school* laid emphasis on rationalism. This approach lays that ethnicity has different modes in different situations. Individuals may be represented by certain groups, but they will be joining it according to their own needs which the group can fulfill. Rational choice theory is

represented by Banton  according to him, individuals may have their choice in any given circumstances (Isajiw 1992, p.3). Ross (1982) observed that ethnic groups try to pressurize the political decision and turn it in their favour. The theory laid emphasis on the social identity of certain ethnic groups in different social orientations. The proponents of this theory are Ross, Bell, and Banton, etc. The theory gained popularity in the 1970s-1980s. The theory is a great contribution towards the understanding of the term itself but in logic,  it does not give a complete picture of the scene. Critics of the theory say that the theory is an opaque presentation of function and phenomenon and lacks the basic essence to comprehend the term in its complete sense. They also lay that by applying instrumental reasons alone the subject matter could not be fully explained. It is not only the pursuit of interests that compels individuals to become members of groups but the most important is the inner feeling of identity.

The *Subjective approach* is based on the psychological perception of social class. It gives an understanding of the ethnic class as something "given" which existed prematurely. Here the subjective theories do not totally reject the objectivity of the term but give currency to it.  The proponents laid great emphasis on "group relations" and "mutual perception." According to them, ethnic groups come into being through group interactions, hence the discourse is fixed through mutual perceptions.  Another interpretation of the term is presented by the *constructivist school* of thought. They point out that ethnicity has "every day form" and it is something that comes into being during human interactions. So that it is an active concept which is the basic theorem of the daily life of human beings.

The perception of the term ethnicity has been changing since its inception. Eriksen (1993) observed that ethnicity basically referred to as heathens, pagans or gentiles. The racial characteristic was brought to use in the nineteenth century, which gained currency in twentieth-century America.  The immigrants were dealt as such. Accordingly, one understanding of the concept of the term itself presents different types of identities that have the same order. So different stereotypes and identities do not clarify the basic understanding and make it more confusing. According to an analysis, social scientists fail to achieve a broad consensus about the term by which the social world is analyzed, so it is without a good conclusion (Gerring & Barresi, 2003, p. 202).

**Extremism**

*Extremism* however presents a sense of understanding for the researchers. According to Cambridge dictionary online the term *extremism* means having such beliefs as are thought unreasonable and unacceptable. "dictionary.com" defines it as "a tendency or disposition to extremes or an instance of going to extremes, especially in political matters e.g. leftist extremism or the extremism of the Nazis Germany". According to the Oxford online dictionary, extremism means the holding of extreme political or religious views; fanaticism. Those people are labeled *extremists* who tend to use violence as a tool to impose their beliefs, ideology and moral values on others (Baqai, 2011, p. 242). The term has been applied to *radicals* or *fundamentalists* both these terms have an understanding of going to the base i.e. *religious radicalism* or *religious fundamentalism,* as in the recent shape. Baqai (2011) observed that "extremism is found in many contemporary religions like Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam." She further analyzed that such groups tend to follow fear-based

obedience to their religious doctrines through tactics like fear-mongering, "opposition of physical realities" and "intentional concealment or distortion of realities."

According to the observations of Zinchenko (2014), extremism cannot be confined to the underdeveloped world or developing or the so-called third world but even it can emerge in industrially developed and politically sound countries of the world. According to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) observations, "extremism should be regarded as a political activity that is in direct or indirect contradiction with democratic values and principles" (Zinchenko 2014, p.24). Psychological research reveals that the term is multifaceted and it has variant shapes in various socio-psychological setups, it has manifestations in the actions of individuals and groups. Extremism is a complex phenomenon and there is no general agreement on the nature and meaning of the term (Coleman & Bartoli, 2003). As Zinchenko (2014) puts that the concept is seemingly clear and simple, but in a scientific environment, it has different understandings. He further goes, saying that the world community is divided and has no conformity in the meaning of *extremism*, and it is discussed with a frequency in the entire world. Due to this disagreement, every state and society treats the phenomenon differently.

There are different interpretations of the terms by social scientists who understand the phenomenon differently, but the views of all schools are sound logically and one cannot reject any of them turning a back to reality. One interpretation of the term presents *"Extremism as not a Crime,"* to them, it includes all that goes beyond the limits of "commonly accepted" (Zinchenko, 2014, p. 25). The word in itself gives a negative image; and, as far as the extremism is concerned worldwide, it is observed that it is not modern but conservative in nature. It also denies the acceptance of true democratic rules and also negates the pluralism of society. In the modern globalized and interdependent world, the lingo-religious and religious types of extremism are negative phenomena which is also a matter of concern of this research.

Another dimension of the phenomenon is "how it is dealt." Extremism cannot be defined on the 'elements basis' i.e. the extremist activities. Extremism is widespread in society in comparison to explicit aggression or hatred. By extremism, he means such attitudes, beliefs, views, and ideas which fall in this category. Extremism has its future, "it reproduces itself in the future generations" because it affects the socialization and world perceptions of the youth and thus it is of equal importance in the day-to-day social life. The recent research finds out that extremism is intermingled with other terms like terrorism and fanaticism. Another dimension of this research is that fanaticism and terrorism are both similar in nature because both tend to use violence and destructive methods for achieving their goals (Zinchenko, 2014).

Thus both terms can be separated on the dimensional ground such as "broader dimension" and "narrower dimension." . Comparatively, terrorism in practice adopts or involves one action type or method type. There is some correlation between *ethnic minorities* and *extremism.* The research so far on ethnicity and extremism reveals that extremism "type-religion" or religious extremism is adopted as a tool against religious minorities by ethno-religious majority groups. There are many instances from the Middle East, Africa, America, Europe and Asia.

**VIOLENT HINDU EXTREMISM AND STATE RESPONSE IN INDIA**

The current waves of Hindu extremism and Hindu nationalism got its strength in the 1980s and 90s. However, Hindu nationalism and the nationalism of AINC should not be intermingled. The Congress party often referred to their kind as Indian nationalism (Jaffrelot, 1996). It is not surprising that the doctrine of *Hindutva* or pan-Hinduism is less supported by the religious elite, the Brahmins and the Hindi speaking segments of the Gangetic plains. It is misleading that Hindu nationalism is a conservative and preserving the privileges of the existing elite (Swamy, 2003).

The term *Hindu Nationalist* was popularized by Graham (1990), who also distinguished the term from the other term *Hindu Traditionalist*. It is believed that the Hindu traditionalists had a conservative approach, they honoured exiting social values for the continuation of hierarchical society while the Hindu nationalists wanted to remold the Hindu social order on corporate lines and restructure the state (Graham, 1990). The Hindu traditionalists professing for preserving the religious beliefs and stressing the study of Hindi and Sanskrit scriptures and literature while the other segment, the Hindu nationalists are not only working for the preservation of Hinduism but also for empowering the latent Hindu community (Swamy 2003).  Hindu traditionalists are just concerned with the preservation of existing social order while the Hindu nationalists aim at re-organizing the social order for promoting unity (*Sangathan*) of Hindus as a socio-political class. Despite these fundamental differences, both Nationalists and Traditionalists are often seen cooperating politically and present in the same organizations.

The Hindu Nationalists are strongly hostile to Pakistan and this hatred goes through the region to the Middle East, where they unlike the Congress which support the Palestinian cause supports Israel. They believe in increased military capability, use of force and they were also advocating the acquisition of nuclear technology during the 1960s (Swamy, 2003). They are against the secularization of India and have expressed their unified concern over such issues. They have a great interest in India is a unitary state, they also believed in cultural assimilation in areas where they expressed their commitment to Hindi as their national language. But throughout history, it has been difficult for them to manage their affairs in the southern states where Hindi is not a native language. The states' right or regional identity issues also hampered the Nationalists' stance of preserving *Hindutva* in these states and others like west Bengal and non-Hindi speaking states.

The concern for the researchers is the relationship between the nationalists and the religious minorities. For instance, the basic question during the 1930s was either to grant the minorities special electoral rights or not. In this case, the Congress party agreed to grant some concession to the Muslims and the low caste minorities, but the nationalists were not ready for any such move. The conflict continued after the partition.

**The Indian Constitution and Minorities**

The constitution of India in its preamble makes no discrimination between majority and minority. Article 14 grants every citizen equality before law and articles 15(1) and 15(2) states the prohibition and discrimination on religious grounds while article 25 grants the religious minorities rights to "profess, propagate and practice religion" without any discrimination. From the

above-mentioned illustrations from the Indian constitution, it becomes clear that the constitution puts no restriction on religious minorities and they can enjoy equal citizenship rights. But it is also true that beyond all minorities, it is difficult for the Muslims in India to fully avail their constitutional rights. The preamble also maintains the secular nature of the state which means that there is no state religion in India and all religious sections of the populations are free to practice their own religion (Jayalakshmi 2014, pp.79-80).

According to Jayalakshmi (2014), though the constitution tries to protect the minorities, yet the minorities are not fully satisfied by *"the constitution in practice"* and they fear "communal tension" and "poor representation." He maintained that the basic aim of every law should be to remove such fear from the mind of minorities and build confidence in them. However, the recent trends in India show that the space for religious freedom, particularly for Muslims is shrinking. Moreover, the extremist tendencies have carried more often than not, the political overtones and government has put forth an inadequate response.

**Politics of Extremism and Government Response**

The violent Hindu extremism against minorities especially the Muslims is so deep-rooted in India that communalist Hindus even spare no efforts to kill Muslims. There have been many instances of the communal or ethnic violence and genocide attacks on the Muslims in Hindu majority areas. For instance, the Gujarat ethnic violence in 2002 was a well planned and systematic genocide of the Muslims, which was supported by the state (Shah, 2004; Ahmad 2015). During this attack (violence spoke at length) everything that belonged to the Muslims was targeted such as lives, properties, businesses, and even women who were sexually harassed, raped and killed). According to the report of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the state authorities completely failed to protect the basic rights of citizens in Gujarat, granted to them by the constitution (NHRC Report, 2002). Hindu nationalism gained influence and support of the government in the last two decades or so and the nationalists are trying their best to change the image of the state from Secular Democratic to "*Hindu Rashtra.*"

Shah (2004) observes that the Hindu fundamentalism is more fatal than Islamic fundamentalism as in the case of India and it must be given priority because of the following reasons: a) it has gained as much state power in democratic system of India that it can divide the electorates on religious bases and have the power to change the shape of Indian society; b) Hindu nationalists have been successful in imaging themselves as such as they are undermined, victimized and under attack by the dominance of foreign culture and its religion like Islam and Christianity; c) being in power for them means threatening and oppressing the minorities in a manner to deprive them of their citizenship rights which is undemocratic.

By observing these facts one can understand the gravity of the issue that extremism speaks at a high tune in India. The fundamentalists are so successful in their agenda that they have gained the sympathies of their community. Also, they have reached the apex, the government power which would enable them to amend the constitution and deprive the Muslims and other minority groups of their democratic rights such as the electoral one.

In the Babri Mosque demolition case, it can be observed that the government was incapable of securing the minority rights, *to protect their holy place of worship*. The incident itself is enough for the divide of the Indian social fabric and undermining the secular image and the constitution of India. Another dimension of the issue is that secular India is under attack by "*cultural nationalism"* which means that those who are not affiliated to Hindu religion or culture are not Hindus so they cannot belong to Hindustan and thus non-nationals.

Tools which are used by these fanatics to popularize their doctrines are the communal attacks at the time of partition; Islamic terrorism is also used as a tool to secure their agenda. The Hindu fanatics or extremists use fear phobia of Islamic terrorism on nonviolent or tolerant Hindus. They cite the myths of the past Muslims invaders; according to them, they raked their population and demolished their temples so the Muslims today are also not their well-wishers. This identity politics, which are constantly propagated by these fanatics have gained some sort of global concern for them.

The increase in the population growth rate of the Muslims and the decline of the same in Hindus and other ethnic groups is also a major factor behind the perception that this growth of Muslim population can undermine the influence of Hindus in Muslim majority areas and can be detrimental to the ideology of *Hindutva* or the doctrine of *Hindu Rashtra* (Nadadur, 2006)*.* Tthe Muslim population is on the constant rise. The data presented below in a table shows that since independence up to the 1990s their population has increased tremendously (Mistry, 1999). Another report says that the Muslims have recorded a comparatively higher birth rate than the Hindus during the 50's, '60s and '70s (Elst, 1997), as shown in table 1 below:

**Table 1:** *Decade wise growth Rate by each ethnic group*

| Religion | 1931-41 | 1951-61 | 1961-71 | 1971-81 | 1981-91 |
|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Hindus | 13.23 | 20.89 | 23.69 | 24.15 | 22.78 |
| Muslims | 19.09 | 32.89 | 30.85 | 30.58 | 32.76 |
| Christians | 24.50 | 30.78 | 32.60 | 16.77 | 16.89 |
| Sikhs | 31.60 | 26.53 | 32.28 | 26.16 | 25.48 |
| Jains | 15.81 | 26.73 | 28.48 | 23.69 | 4.42 |
| Buddhists | 4.24 | 16.71 | 17.20 | 22.52 | 35.98 |

**Source:** (Nadadur, 2006, p. 90)

During the 1980s and 1990s, illegal Bangladeshis immigrants entered into India because of unemployment and poverty etc. in Bangladesh. According to the data of 1990, 15 million Bangladeshis were living in India illegally (Dutta, 2004). This hike in the population is also taken seriously by the extremist elements. The process of immigration has two-fold impacts: on one side, the immigrants were helping the west Bengali politicians and, on the other side: they were detrimental for the Hindu fanatics because the increase in their number was hampering fanatics' agenda in the areas. In the words of Nadadur (2006) the illegal immigration was fueling the regional divide and constituting a Muslim threat to the sovereignty of India. He further draws some apprehension by saying that the Hindu fundamentalism got strength due the following

development during the 1980s-1990s: a) the growth of Islamic fundamentalism in Zia's era in Pakistan; b) the emergence of terrorist organizations; c) *"ethnic cleansing"* and relocating the Kashmiri Hindus by force; d) the terrorist attacks in Bombay. Accordingly, these factors gave a perception that the Muslims were challenging the Indian Hindus (Nadadur, p. 92).

Another factor that is under discussion by scholars relates to the decline of the Congress party which paved ways for different interest groups to fill the vacuum such as regional political parties got a rise, caste, and linguistic elements emerged on the scene and *Hindu Rashtra* got its momentum. In the Hindu nationalists' literature, India is named as *'Ram Rajya'* which means the *Kingdom of Ram*. The BJP, RSS and VHP leadership portray Muslims as converts from Hinduism (Nadadur, 2006).

India after partition faced communal strife and religious riots. The years from 1947-48 witnessed a significant rise in the religious hatred and massacre of Muslims by the Hindus and the Sikhs believed to be motivated by the Hindu organizations like RSS. It was observed that after getting independence, Hindu culture flourished in India's formal and informal institutions (Khalidi, 2008). The events like the demolition of the historic Babri Mosque by Hindu nationalists in the city of Ayodhya is the glaring example of such moves. The Hindus had a narrative that the place where a mosque was standing was the birthplace of their god Ram and there happened to be a temple which was demolished by the Mughul Emperor Babur. The Muslims, however, reject such narratives of the Hindus by saying that there had been no temple at the place before the mosque was built (Choudhary, 1991; Ahmad 2015).

The three largest and most influential Hindu nationalist groups supporting violent extremism against the Muslims today include: 1) RSS founded in 1925 by B. Hedgewar; 2 BJP - a political affiliate of the RSS; 3) VHP - the religious wing of the RSS.  The founders of the RSS are believed to be highly influenced by the ideas of Savarkar such as Hindu nationalism (*Hindutva*). The organization is basically not a political one, rather it considers itself to be a cultural one, and its symbols and flag having an association with god Ram (Basu, Datta, Sen, Sarkar, & Sarkar, 1993). The organization though is cultural in nature, but some of their objectives are political in nature. Though it has kept itself aloof from active politics, some of its members hold responsible governmental positions. The current Indian premier Narendra Modi, former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and L.K. Advani, a minister of home affairs and also deputy prime minister was once secretary of the RSS. The RSS not only opposed the colonial rule but also was against the partition of India. It is also against the narration of secular India propounded by the Congress Party. The RSS was banned almost three times. First time, it was banned by the then Congress party government after the assassination of Gandhi in 1948. Though the organization was not directly involved in the assassination, it is believed that the activities indirectly contributed towards the tragedy (Aoun et. al., 2012). The organization was also banned mainly because of its extremist activities during 1975-1977 emergency and again in 1992 after the Babri Mosque demolition (Fautre, Vaiya & Romeo, 2014). The RSS was censured several times after partition of India because the forces in power feared it to be growing into a major political force that may threaten the secular image of India (Anderson & Dalme 1987).

The campaign of Hindu Right's which aims at the reformation of Indian identity through the revolution of history. According to Indian history by Sangh Parivar, "*The Muslims domination of India had a tendency to suppress the Hindus more and more and subjugate them.*" The BJP party members trace history back to the eleventh century when the Ghaznavids invasion brought the Hindu civilization down. The subsequent conquest like the establishment of the Slave dynasty and then the Mughal Empire are mentioned as "*bloody struggles"* during which the Hindus were targeted and massacred (Elst, 1997). By projecting this image the BJP is trying to label the Muslims as foreigners who invaded their motherland looted and plundered them.

Elst (1997)  puts that the Hindu identity aims at preventing any such invasion and moves by the Muslim minority populations in the present. The symbolic identity campaign of the BJP, which was demonstrated in the Ayodhya campaign, aimed at countering the rising influence of the Muslims in the "*Hindu Samajh"* (Hindu society). According to Malik & Singh (1994) in the "*Ram Janmabhoomi"* campaign, it is important that before the campaign, BJP with the help of RSS organized the mass Hindu movement to perform *Puja (worship)* on bricks and then sent them to Ayodhya. There are many instances in which the BJP activists tried to show the symbolic identity. L.K Advani, the BJP leader, organized a religious procession from the city of Somanath to Ayodhya in a bus decorated with the chariot of their god Rama). The symbolic identity campaigns raised BJP politics to prominence during 1990, 1998... and the 2014 elections.

The VHP is regarded as the religious cum extremist militant group through which main agendas are fulfilled. For instance, in the demolition of Babri Mosque, the main actor was VHP that was created from the RSS after consultation with different sects of Hindus (Jayaprasad, 1991). When the state High Court ordered a stay over the construction of a temple at the site on account that the site was disputed, VHP defied the orders. The VHP laid the foundation of the new Ram Mandir (temple) a few miles away from that site. The Congress did not show any resistance to that and allowed the VHP to proceed with its decision of building the temple. The demolition of the Babri Mosque was also a failure of the Congress government, the so-called champion of secular India. The Babri Mosque was not the only target of Hindu extremist elements. There are hundreds of cases when many mosques were closed by the authorities under the RSS and VHP pressure (Majid 2015).

In the 1980s, the Mandal Commission was established to examine the basis of religious extremism in India. The report of the commission provided recommendations for improving the social and economic conditions of the backward classes including the Muslims. Under the recommendations of the commission quota system was introduced for backward classes and religious minorities, which sought to increase job opportunities for them. The policy was severely criticized by the right-wing political parties and Hindu nationalist organizations. They even encouraged the student's riots and protests to revise the policy. According to Majid (2015), it was hard for BJP to accept the commission scheme in view of its hostile policy towards minorities. The Congress Party became weak in dealing with the revivalist movements of Hindus and its position was further weakened by the emergence of the BJP. Reportedly, during the electoral campaign of 1984 and 1989 elections, the Congress Party was guilty of double game. Rajiv Gandhi is reported to have taken a stance that there will be no Hindu Rashtra. But after he changed his political stance, the appeal he made to the masses was against the party ideology. He said that if the Hindus wanted

Ram Rajya they should vote for Congress the only party which could bring Ram Rajya to the country Majid, 2015, p.567).

Gandhi's backward stance betrayed the trust of Muslims as they were seeing Congress as the only savior of their rights. The Congress' failure to intervene in the communal strikes before the elections made the Muslims suspicious of its secular ideology. In the wake of these developments and others alike, the Muslims realized that they are to confront not only the BJP but also other forces like Congress, which shows her image as secular but in practice uses communal cards for retaining its political power.

During the VP Singh's government, the role that was played by Congress party raised suspicions. At times, it played both cards, i.e. the secular and the communal for gaining the sympathies of both Hindus and Muslims. According to the news reports, Congress during its 1991 electoral campaign expressed that the party had a pledge not to question the status of any mosque, which exited at the time of India's independence, but after the elections, it failed to keep its promise the way the Narasimha Rao government dealt with the issue showed that *Rao and BJP were hand and glove* (Majid 2015, p.568; Ahmad 2015). Rao failed to dismiss the government when the Chief Minister Kalyan Singh defied the State Court's order and allowed the activists of the VHP to lay the foundation of the temple in 1992. Also, the inefficiency of Congress to curb corruption, remove unemployment and ensure the protection of minorities' rights gave way to BJP to fulfill its agenda of the communal divide.

The decline of Congress and the emergence of the BJP as a political force is also regarded as a reason for weak governmental response to the rising extremism against Muslims in India. In the city of Bombay the alliance of BJP and Shiv Sena against the illegal Muslims, "to drive them out" is another such example. Mukta (1995) puts that the construction of the controversial Narmada Dam fulfilling the interests of rich landowners, the move against physical labourers in Maharashtra, the legitimizing of "extra constitutional authorities" and above all the ongoing efforts to transform the state into a "Hindu polity" all speak about "authoritarian ideological move" and rising "resurgent nationalism" are all bias in the emerging globalized system. In the Indian constitution, article 25 has been remained controversial. It hampers the right of freedom of religion by curtailing the separate religious identities of Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists and treating them as Hindus. According to a BJP activist who is also a close friend of PM Modi, "our target is to make India a Hindu Rashtra by 2021 and the Muslims and Christians have no right to stay here. I ensure you that India will be free of Muslims and Christians by December 2021." The hatred that the BJP and its activists have is often exposed as in the case Jaswant Singh, one of the founding fathers of the party who also remained minister under Vajpayee government was expelled from the party for his writing of a book in which he had praised Mr. Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan.

A report about the current Modi the government pointed out that almost 600 attacks were reported on minorities during the first three months' rule of the BJP. The tendency of BJP shows its contradiction to the basic principles of democracy, though it came into power through the electoral process, after assuming power it never gave heed to democracy by undermining the religious freedom of the minorities.

**CONCLUSION**

India is a country having multiple ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. The religious factor plays a decisive role in shaping the Indian state image of what it is in theory and what it is in practice. The above discussion analyzes that in theory, the Indian state is secular where there are no limitations on any religion or religious faction. All the ethnic-cum-religious groups are supposed to be free in their choice of religion, practicing and professing it with complete freedom. But, in actual practice, there is nothing about secular state and it looks a far behind the dream of the constitution-makers who, while drafting the Indian constitution tried their best to make India a modern, democratic and secular state but the successive governments failed to implement this goal. The congress failed in securing a pure nationalistic image of all Indians as one nation too many times. Its election campaigns became empty doll drums without contacting to religious slogans as were often professed by the religious extremist Hindus. The party also fails in protecting the minorities' rights to safeguarding their places of worship which is evident from many cases. Also, the rise of BJP to prominence and its support for *Hindutva, Ramrajya* or *Hindu Rashtra* is detrimental for the very essence of the Indian images as "the largest democracy of the world," "a secular state" and beyond all it is enough to speak of India as if it is ruled by violent religious extremist groups. The Indian state and society have badly failed to check the rise of Hindu violent extremism in the country.

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