Chosenness-Myth-Trauma Syndrome and Hindutva's Othering of Minorities in India

Muhammad Kumail Mehdi[*] and Muhammad Nadeem Mirza[**]

Abstract

The political rise of Hindutva, under the tutelage of Narendra Modi, has heralded an era where the life, liberty and property of religious minorities especially Muslims are under grave threat. Modi's India continues to lose its secular credentials. Minorities are presented as 'them' who can be subjected to physical attacks, state persecution and neglect with impunity. What are the root causes of this anger against the minorities and why did Hindutva construct the binaries of us and them? While employing qualitative process tracing methodology and using the lens of Chosenness-Myth-Trauma (CMT) Syndrome as a theory this study finds that the identity construction process, along the lines of Hindutva, had been set into motion even before 1947 and continued after the partition of the Subcontinent into India and Pakistan. Supporters of Hindutva presented the historical experiences and representations ─ they being ruled by the Muslims as an example of the trauma, thus 'othering' the Muslims, which automatically led to the creation of a sense of us versus them. They, having a substantial majority in India, constructed this myth of us being surrounded by them ─ the enemies, in this case, Muslims and other minorities. They also created the myth of a glorious age where they could transform India into a uniform Hindu society and state. The study examines that with the electoral success of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the process of identity construction started to gather steam in the late 1980s. However, the towering figure of Narendra Modi and his meteoric rise to power provided state patronage to the process. Since Modi has been a member of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), he successfully implemented its

[*] *The author is a graduate of Political Science from the School of Politics & International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad. Email: kumailhashmi452@gmail.com*

[**] *The author is Director and Associate Professor, School of Politics and IR, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. Email: mnadeemmirza@qau.edu.pk*

agenda of labelling minorities as 'others' resulting in the rise of anger that ultimately simmered into violence against minorities.

Keywords: Hindutva, Violence, Minorities, Majoritarian Rule, CMT Syndrome, Narendra Modi.

Introduction

Democratic polities cross the line into ethno-national entities when the majorities try to ethnically homogenise the society based on nationalism. It exacerbates the differences and deepens the ethnic cleavages within the society. Harbouring a fear of losing their status as the majority is known as anxiety of incompleteness. They begin to use violence against minorities because of this feeling of incompleteness.[1] Under the premiership of Narendra Modi, India is adopting Hindutva-based-ethno nationalism, relinquishing its secular character and targeting minorities ─ particularly Muslims and the non-governmental organisations which are promoting human rights therein.[2]

Hindutva preaches supremacy of the Hindu religion.[3] It is a branch of ethno nationalism that surfaced in the 20th century in the minds of a few Hindu elites, who were supposedly concerned and afraid of increasing Muslim and Christian populations. Resultantly, this fear moulded into a majoritarian inferiority complex which urged them to start the Hindu identity construction process. Hindutva was the base upon which Hindu identity was to be constructed. The purpose was to have a distinct identity which would inevitably 'otherise' the minorities. This type of nationalism relies on anger and resentment.[4] This paper endeavours to explore the identity-borne resentment between minorities and Hindus in India through

---

[1] Arjun Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* (Duke University Press, 2006), https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11smfkm

[2] Christophe Jaffrelot, *Modi's India: Hindu Nationalism and the Rise of Ethnic Democracy* (Princeton University Press, 2021).

[3] Summar Iqbal Babar and Muhammad Kumail Mehdi, "Rising Hindutva's Impact on Strategic Stability in South Asia," *CISS Insight Journal* 10, no. 2 (2023).

[4] Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Harvard University Press, 1993).

the lens of the Chosenness-Myth-Trauma (CMT) approach. It asserts that people suffering from CMT syndrome consider their nation's divine Chosenness, its traumatic past, and a forthcoming glorifying age. Resultantly, they harbour animosity against the groups, exacerbating their self-anxieties of incompleteness.

To accomplish this task, this paper resorts to asking a compelling question that what are the root causes of this anger against minorities and why did Hindutva construct the binaries of us and them? While pursuing qualitative process tracing methodology, this study hypothesises that Hindutva, by nature, is a violent ideology that created the distinction between us and them, which culminated in violence against minorities. This paper is divided into 3 parts: the first one pertains to the theoretical framework used in this paper, that is, CMT approach. The second chapter presents a tapestry that describes the identity construction processes in India. It began with the creation of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) which occurred out of the fear of the Muslim and Christian bourgeoning populations and reached its peak under Narendra Modi. The third part details how the constructed identity embraced violence against minorities, especially Muslims.

Understanding Chosenness-Myth-Trauma Syndrome

Chosenness-myth-trauma syndrome is primarily used to study conflictual cultures. It refers to an interplay of three things: C refers to chosen people with a glorious past and future, M describes a myth that people are surrounded by enemies, and T shows a traumatic experience embedded in their psychology. [5] People affected by this syndrome consider themselves to have a divine mandate with a victorious future awaiting them. The idea that we are destined to do great things because God is favouring us has an internal logic which would create a feeling of 'us'. Nations harbouring CMT complexes have a shared cognitive mindset, which may be called the DMA epistemology for Dichotomy,

---

[5] Johan Galtung, "Global Projections of Deep-Rooted US Pathologies," Occasional Paper 11 (Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University, October 1996), https://bsahely.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ICAR_occasional_paper_11.pdf.

Manicheism, and Armageddon.[6] CMT and DMA collectively assure the conviction that two worlds exist: us and them. The DMA/CMT alliance is a recipe for disaster: DMA assumptions define valid cognitions, and CMT defines valid emotions; together they constitute a self-fulfilling prophecy. Polities, having people with CMT syndrome, have a natural tendency to subjugate others.[7]

How are Hindu identity construction processes that sowed anger which then ignited violence against minorities can be explained using the CMT syndrome approach. First, the 'Chosenness Myth nexus' refers to the belief among certain Hindutva proponents that Hindus are the chosen or rightful inheritors of India, claiming a privileged status rooted in their ancient civilisation. They believe in a glorious age coming for them in the form of a Hindu Rashtra. This nexus plays a central role in constructing a collective identity and justifying political and cultural dominance.

Second, the 'Trauma' aspect of the theory highlights historical events like invasions, colonisation and religious conflicts that have left deep scars on the collective memory of Hindus. These perceived traumas, whether real or exaggerated, fuel a sense of victimhood, leading to a desire for restoration and self-preservation.

Third, the 'syndrome' implies that these narratives of 'chosenness' and trauma work together synergistically.[8] The perception of being chosen can act as a coping mechanism for historical traumas, reinforcing a sense of cultural and religious superiority. This syndrome becomes a potent ideological tool, driving the Hindutva movement's goals, including the assertion of Hindu identity and the marginalisation of religious minorities.

---

[6] Galtung.

[7] Johan Galtung, "Rethinking Conflict: The Cultural Approach," Council of Europe Strasbourg: Intercultural Dialogue and Conflict Prevention Project, 2002, https://www.galtung-institut.de/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/DGIV_CULT_PREV20021_Galtung_E.pdf.

[8] Galtung, " Global Projections of Deep-Rooted US Pathologies."

Construction of the Hindu Identity: The 'Us'

In human history, numerous achievements have been made possible by an ideology, for instance, the scientific revolution was made possible by the ideology of rationality, human rights movements are based on the ideology of equality and justice. In the same manner, numerous gruesome acts have also been committed in the name of ideologies, for example, the holocaust, among others. Nearly all of them were inspired by a powerful divine status. As an ideology, Hindutva has been instrumental in shaping the identity discourse in contemporary India. Hindutva ideology mentions a glorious past to depict the purity of the religious, national and cultural past, describing the Hindu people as one organic community.[9] The proponents of Hindutva assert that India is essentially a Hindu nation and fosters the image of a distinct Hindu identity as the core of Indian heritage and culture.[10]

Though most Hindus are strictly divided into a caste system, yet proponents of a Hindutva ideology remained very much successful in developing a sense of 'us' across all the castes, by constructing a fear of 'them.' For instance, in response to the 1993 Mumbai bomb blasts, the Hindu militant groups like the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Shiv Sena gained support as they fought what they saw as a growing assault on Hindu values.[11] Hindu unity — irrespective of caste — began to rise. Likewise, religion, when used in politics, plays an important role in identity construction; the RSS-BJP duo established a symbiotic relationship, supported by the socio-political environment in which they urged the Hindus — previously segregated based on class and caste —to form a common identity. This heritage led Atal Bihari Vajpayee to say

---

[9] Roger van Zwanenberg, " Hindu Nationalism: BJP in Historical and Comparative Perspective of Fascism," *Policy Perspectives* 19, no. 1 (2022): 95-109.

[10] Michael Witzel, " Rama's Realm: Indocentric Rewriting of Early South Asian Archaeology and History," *Archaeological Fantasies : How Pseudoarchaeology Misrepresents the Past and Misleads the Public*, 2006, https://www.academia.edu/19380740/Ramas_realm.

[11] Andrea Malji, "The Rise of Hindu Nationalism and Its Regional and Global Ramifications," *Association for Asian Studies*, Spring 2018, https://www.asianstudies.org/publications/eaa/archives/the-rise-of-hindu-nationalism-and-its-regional-and-global-ramifications/.

that my only identity is Hindu. [12] This process of Hindu identity construction in India is a conglomeration of different but interrelated factors: demonising minorities, mobilising Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC), whom the Indian constitution terms as 'Other Backward Classes (OBCs)'[13] to present a united front for brainwashing of unemployed and disgruntled youth which filled the ranks of Bajrang Dal and follow the charismatic leadership of Narendra Modi. So, the roots of the Hindu identity construction process were laid down by the union of the RSS and BJP and flourished under Modi's religious populism. In this section, we shall focus on how the discourse of nationalism was gradually transformed into far-right ethnonationalism, that is, Hindutva, and then the formulation of the Hindu identity of the 'us.'

The post-1857 era shows how under British rule the fear of losing identity captured both Muslims and Hindus. In this regard, both religious under the Madrasah Deoband and secular movements led by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan were formed. Hindu revivalists also felt the need to construct their identity because of Western arrogance and largely out of fear of Muslims. Hindu nationalists propagated that Muslims, with their higher birthrate and polygamous practice, would outnumber Hindus. With Muslims constituting only 12 per cent of the Indian population, this fear was nothing but a ruse to promote and protect Hindu identity. Hindu intelligentsias began to portray their race as a dying one. That dying race construction compelled Indian nationalists — Golwalkar, Savarkar, Hedgewar, and the like — to readily have a Hindu revivalism, bearing Hindu identity. They began to assert Hindu primacy: Hindus are the descendants of the Aryans, who first appeared on the Earth.[14] Savarkar emphatically asserted that, like the Jews, Hindus can honestly claim to

---

[12] Devi Prasad Srivastava, "Ideology of RSS," *Review Journal of Political Philosophy* 15, no. 1 (2017).

[13] Government of India, " Article 342A: Socially and Educationally Backward Classes," Constitution of India, 2018, 34, https://www.constitutionofindia.net/articles/article-342a-socially-and-educationally-backward-classes/.

[14] Asko Parpola, *The Roots of Hinduism: The Early Aryans and The Indus Civilization* (Oxford University Press, 2015), https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190226909.001.0001.

be recognised as one racial unit.[15] The stage had been set for Hindu nationalists to dominate and steer Hindu nationalism to far-off corners of India.

They have been anti-Muslims, considering them to be inimical to the Hindu identity. According to Savarkar, Hindu civilisation is tied to an Indian identity which was threatened by Muslims. Not only their contribution to Indian culture was overlooked, but also due to their love for the Khilafat movement, Muslims were thought of as having more allegiance to the Middle East than India.[16] He believed Muslims had to either leave India or submit to Hinduism. He said, "they must either adopt Hindu language and culture, must learn to appreciate Hindu civilisation, must have no idea other than those of grandeur of Hindus, or may stay in this land with no rights and no special treatment."[17] To keep this thought reviving and mobilising Hindu people, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) was established in 1925.

After the partition of 1947, India, under the guidance of Jawaharlal Nehru, adopted a secular overture. When Nathuram Godse killed Mohandas Gandhi, RSS became a target of government policies. Yet, it continued its operations and expanded its base in India. From 1947 to the mid-1980s, the RSS and Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) which later transformed into the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had minimal electoral success. The main reason remained the rule of Congress which during and after Nehruvian era remained committed to secularism and never hesitated in banning the RSS. However, the tables started to turn because of several factors. First, Indira Gandhi declared an emergency in India in the 1970s which created a political vacuum.[18] RSS was banned during the emergency thus exacerbating tensions between the RSS and the government. This led RSS to gather sympathy from the common Hindus. Second, the 1970s oil boom in the Middle East created immense

---

[15] Bhumika Pruthi, "Hinduism and Judaism Should Come Together," *Hindu*, August 26, 2019, sec. Mumbai, https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/mumbai/hinduism-and-judaism-should-come-together/article29263943.ece.

[16] M.S. Golwalkar, *We Or Our Nationhood Defined* (Bharat Publishers, 1939), http://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.66003.

[17] Golwalkar, *We Or Our Nationhood Defined*.

[18] Ashutosh Varshney, "Contested Meanings: India's National Identity, Hindu Nationalism, and the Politics of Anxiety," *Daedalus* 122, no. 3 (1993): 227-61.

opportunities for Muslims, thus raising their standard of living, which was exploited by the RSS to create a sense of insecurity among Hindus. Third, the Shah Bano Case of the 1980s[19] was exploited by the RSS which demanded a uniform civil code across the religions and claimed that the government was trying to appease Muslims, thus instigating hatred against them in the Hindu population.

Since the 1980s, in connection with the Shah Bano case, it has been a potent strategy of the RSS and BJP to enrage Hindus by portraying Muslims as foes to their norms and values and the ones who are enjoying special protection from the government.[20] One incident of the 1990s, that is, the demolition of Babri Masjid and the promise to construct Ram's Janambhoomi in its place sped up the process of Hindu identity construction. Using this issue, the BJP was successful in uniting Hindus of all castes and creed. BJP propagated that "the demolition of Babri Masjid was not only just an act of revenge but also a religious duty."[21] These agitations increased the vote bank of the BJP.

As the BJP formed government in Gujrat in 2001, with Narendra Modi as its Chief Minister, violence against minorities, especially Muslims, turned out to be the most reliable method to forge a Hindu identity. Modi's objective was clear to unite Hindus and pit them against the Muslims of India. Gujrat pogroms of 2002 and the politics of fear and anger found in a spate of fake encounters[22] when numerous Muslims were gunned down are a testament to this fact. Resultantly, the religious division had become extremely acute and deep as to put caste identities on the back burner. For instance, a poll in 2002 described that 59 per cent of the Gujaratis did not wish to live as neighbours with communities.[23]

---

[19] Kalpana Kannabiran, *Tools of Justice: Non-Discrimination and the Indian Constitution* (London: Routledge India, 2015), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203085523.

[20] Jaffrelot, *Modi's India*.

[21] Apoorvanand, "Why India's BJP Wants to Rekindle the Babri Mosque Dispute," *Al Jazeera*, December 15, 2018, https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2018/12/15/why-indias-bjp-wants-to-rekindle-the-babri-mosque-dispute.

[22] Jaffrelot, *Modi's India*.

[23] I.T., "Opinion Poll: Conclusive Victory for BJP, Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi," *India Today*, December 16, 2002,

With Narendra Modi holding the reins of the BJP, he united almost all the Hindu castes and OBCs under the banner of Hindutva and the BJP. According to a poll conducted by the Centre for Studying Developing Societies (CSDS) in 2002, a majority of Hindus belonging to upper class and OBCs prefer the BJP in elections. Even Dalits, who traditionally have been supporters of the Congress Party, started supporting BJP because of the Hindutva factor.[24] This was one of the biggest successes of the BJP, "There were elections, after the pogroms, and the Dalit castes – Chamars – had adopted Hindu identity, so the Hindus won."[25] Being the Chief Minister of Gujarat, Modi carried forward Hindu identity by appearing in public with Hindu religious figures, strengthening Bajrang Dal and its affiliated organisations, and keeping himself away from Muslims. He invited Sadhus and priests to take part in what would otherwise be a secular gathering, for instance, in the inauguration of a dam in Gujarat, where Modi performed a *Puja* (Prayer). To add further reverence to religion, Modi made cows ─ considered holy in the Hindu religion ─ his theme for the 2012 election campaigns. He launched a campaign against cow slaughter and made it a national issue during the elections, thus striking another important chord in the identity construction process.[26]

Modi's aversion towards Muslims cannot be ignored, for example, when in 2011 — a cleric came on stage to greet Modi and offered a skull cap to him, the latter refused to wear it.[27] He was so committed to the Hindu identity that he aborted the tradition of *Iftar* (the meal eaten by Muslims to break their fast after sunset every day during Ramadan) gatherings carried out by all his predecessors. With this, his discrimination towards Muslims continued to increase, when he refused to grant

---

https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/nation/story/20021216-opinion-poll-conclusive-victory-for-bjp-gujarat-chief-minister-narendra-modi-793890-2002-12-15

[24] Sanjay Kumar, "Gujarat Assembly Elections 2002: Analysing the Verdict," *Economic and Political Weekly* 38, no. 4 (2003): 270-75.

[25] Ward Berenschot, *Riot Politics: Hindu-Muslim Violence and the Indian State* (Columbia University Press, 2011).

[26] Sangeeta Singh et al., "Subaltern Studies II: A Review Article," ed. Ranajit Guha, *Social Scientist* 12, no. 10 (1984): 3-41, https://doi.org/10.2307/3520181.

[27] Mahesh Langa, "Revealed: Why Modi Refused to Wear Muslim Skull Cap," *Hindustan Times*, September 19, 2011, https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/revealed-why-modi-refused-to-wear-muslim-skull-cap/story-y6EVuyRTJmeRPxuyiAecNK.html

scholarships to needy and deserving Muslim pupils that the central government has funded. What was more astonishing was that the BJP did not give a single ticket to a Muslim candidate in the 2007 and 2012 elections. Even when Muslims were invited to Modi's rallies, specific areas were reserved for them in the audience; *Burqas* (an enveloping outer garment worn by some Muslim women which fully covers the body) and skull caps were handed out to Muslim women and men before their entry so that they could be easily recognised.[28] This created polarisation and animosity towards Muslims.[29]

India in the 21st century had been facing numerous issues: severe economic inequality, population growth and less employment,[30] which created anger among educated and unemployed people.[31] To increase street power during agitations, Modi and the Sangh leaders started to focus on these educated, unemployed youth in underdeveloped states, such as Uttar Pradesh (UP). These men were called on to participate in daily campaigns: against the conversion of religion from Hinduism to another, but promoting reverse conversions, against cow slaughter, and interreligious marriages. According to the research of Prashant Jha in 2017, "one local BJP leader described how the party (BJP) tried to depict Hindus as the sufferers of Muslims to make them angry and unite them against Muslims … When you wonder of these slaughterhouses, Muslim butchers come to our minds; I think of how Muslims control our public life. By raising (this issue) we wish to wake up the Hindus and make them furious."[32] These tactics created an environment of discord between

---

[28] BS Reporter, "BJP's Jaipur Rally to Display Modi's 'Burqa of Secularism,'" *Business Standard*, September 10, 2013, https://www.business-standard.com/article/politics/bjp-s-jaipur-rally-to-display-modi-s-burqa-of-secularism-113091000201_1.html.

[29] Deller Rose, "Book Review: Dreamers: How Young Indians Are Changing the World by Snigdha Poonam," *LSE Review of Books* (blog), October 18, 2018, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/2018/10/18/book-review-dreamers-how-young-indians-are-changing-the-world-by-snigdha-poonam/.

[30] Lucas Chancel and Thomas Piketty, "Indian Income Inequality, 1922-2015: From British Raj to Billionaire Raj?," *Review of Income and Wealth* 65, no. S1 (2019): S33-62, https://doi.org/10.1111/roiw.12439.

[31] Jaffrelot, *Modi's India*.

[32] Prashant Jha, *How the BJP Wins: Inside India's Greatest Election Machine* (Juggernaut Books, 2017).

Muslims and Hindus, increasing the possibility of inciting riots readily, as in Mau in 2005 and Gorakhpur in 2007. [33]

Since education is a milestone of the nation's development, the BJP ─ after Modi became the Prime Minister of India in August 2014 ─ decided to add the Indian essence to the Indian education system by refurbishing the schemes of the Ministry of Human Resource Development bearing the responsibility of education. The BJP policy was to make sure that the attacks by Muslims which heralded the bleakest chapter in the Indian archives be included in Indian textbooks. The textbooks put out by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) have been extensively rewritten by the BJP government.[34] Key nationalists ─ Shivaji, Pratap and others like them, whom the BJP considered were deliberately ignored by the previous governments replaced the Muslim era in the textbooks of history. [35] In an interview, one of the government ministers said, "Every nation has the sole right to formulate its historical books. I call this process Indianisation." [36] In this way, the BJP spearheaded by Narendra Modi sought to establish the Hindu identity on the lines of Hindutva.

From Identity Construction to Violence

This section laid forward the identity construction project of the BJP on the lines of Hindutva. This section endeavours to describe how the policies of the BJP ─ after constructing Hindu identity among its adherents ─

---

[33] Web Desk, 'What Is the Yogi Adityanath Hate Speech Case of 2007?', *The Indian Express*, 21 August 2018, https://indianexpress.com/article/what-is/what-is-the-yogi-adityanath-hate-speech-case-of-2007/; Binay Singh, "Mau Leaves Nightmare of 2005 Behind," *Times of India*, April 9, 2009, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/varanasi/Mau-leaves-nightmare-of-2005-behind/articleshow/4381268.cms

[34] Ritika Chopra, "New Icons in NCERT Books: Bajirao to Maharana Pratap," *Indian Express*, May 30, 2018, https://indianexpress.com/article/education/new-icons-in-ncert-books-bajirao-to-maharana-pratap-5196491/.

[35] Chopra, "New Icons in NCERT Books."

[36] Y Sudershan Rao, "Interview of the Week: We Need to Indianise Historical Research," *Organiser*, October 20, 2014, https://organiser.org/2014/10/20/117040/bharat/interview-of-the-week-we-need-to-indianise-historical-research-prof-y-sudershan-rao/.

demonised Muslims and ignited violence against them. This shall be done by applying the CMT approach.[37] Such beliefs thrive from an ideology. Nations bearing such syndromes have a shared conscious mindset that assures the conviction that two distinct worlds exist i.e. them and us. This is a prelude to an impending disaster.[38] This approach helps us understand how Muslims were collectively labelled as 'them' by the zealots of Hindutva which eventually caused violence and mayhem.

In 1923, Savarkar published a book titled, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* In this book, he endeavoured to assert the divine, 'Chosenness' of Hindus and argued, 'Hindus are the progeny of the Aryans to have lived in the subcontinent, and they have the mighty blood of their Vedic fathers.' [39] He and his ideological fellows, emphasised ethnic and historical cultural traits, like that of the Jews who have a golden history and a rich past. He asserted that no people in the world can more justly prove to be recognised as an ethnic group than the Jews and the Hindus.[40] As discussed earlier Hindu nationalists ─ Savarkar, Golwalkar, especially Hedgewar, and many others formed the RSS to kick-start their project of reviving Hindu identity while also glorifying Hinduism.

Simultaneously a traumatic version of their Hindu past also exists which contains major grievances. Hindu nationalists claim that Muslim invaders forcibly converted Hindus to Islam. They razed thousands of Hindu temples and some mosques were built on their ruins. Hindus survived because Hindu princes ─ the Rajput resurgence in Rajasthan, Bundelkhand and the Ganga-Yamuna Doab; the Hindu princes at Devagiri, Warangal, Dvarasamudra and Madurai, the Vijayanagara

---

[37] C indicates Chosenness by some divine forces- such as God- M refers to Myth- about a glorious future- and T stands of trauma- the gruesome memory of the past. Galtung, "Global Projections of Deep-Rooted US Pathologies."

[38] Galtung, "Rethinking Conflict: The Cultural Approach."

[39] V.D. Savarkar, *Essentials of Hindutva* (S.S. Savarkar, 1923), http://archive.org/details/essentials-of-hindutva. It seems that Savarkar thinking share the characteristics of Ethno-Symbolism as is described by Anthony D. Smith. Farhan Hanif Siddiqi and Muhammad Nadeem Mirza, *Introducing International Relations: Concepts, Theories, and Practices* (Oxford University Press, 2023), https://oup.com.pk/introducing-international-relations.html.

[40] Pruthi, "Hinduism and Judaism Should Come Together."

Empire, the Marathas, the Ahoms of Assam and the Sikhs in Punjab did not give up resistance against Muslim tyrants.[41]

This version of a traumatic past was popular among Hindu nationalists which was often soothed by spreading diatribes against Muslims. For instance, Hedgewar's intellectual teacher, B.S. Monjee, instigated the Hindus to follow organised violence. Moreover, he highlighted the Muhammadans for their virility with which they have been guarding their interests which are lacking among Hindus.[42] That traumatic memory was further exacerbated by the majoritarian inferiority complex that Hindu nationalists expressed towards Muslims because of the latter's pan-Islamism.[43] Grievances against the Muslims were surging fast. According to Lala Har Dayal, a Hindu zealot, "I believe that the coming years of Hindu race rests on four pillars: i. Hindu Raj (Hindu Rule), ii. Hindu *Sangathan* (Hindu unification and organisation as one people), iii. *Shuddhi* of Muslims (cleansing of Muslims ─ the objective is to force them and Christians to convert to Hinduism) and iv. conquest of Afghanistan and the frontiers.[44] In the same manner, Hindu nationalists started to chant the concept of a greater Hindustan *(Hindu Rashtra)* as a myth to mobilise people. For instance, in the 19th session of Hindu Mahasabha in 1937 it claimed itself to be prominently a Hindu-Rashtra-Sabha.[45] This myth-depicting project continues to present an idealised picture of India and Hindus. Dr. Hedgewar, claimed, "India is the sole nation which was born with the gift of immortality."[46] In the same way, nationalists have been decrying the partition of India. Savarkar accused the Indian National Congress of adopting a weak-kneed and expedient appeasement policy toward Muslims which eventually led to India's partition.

---

[41] Pingali Gopal, "The Story of Islamic Imperialism in India – Part 2," Pragyata, May 14, 2021, https://pragyata.com/the-story-of-islamic-imperialism-in-india-part-2/.

[42] Brian K. Pennington, ed., "Striking the Delicate Balance: Teaching Violence and Hinduism," in *Teaching Religion and Violence* (Oxford University Press, 2012), https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195372427.003.0001.

[43] Jaffrelot, *Modi's India*.

[44] A.G. Noorani, *The RSS: A Menace to India* (Left Word, 2020).

[45] V.D Savarkar, *Hindu Rashtra Darshan: A Collection of the Presidential Speeches Delivered from the Hindu Mahasabha Platform*, 1949, http://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.66161.

[46] Noorani, *The RSS*.

After the partition till late 1970s, the RSS project ─ constructing a unified Hindu identity and making Hindus furious by depicting Muslims as foes of their values remained under severe pressure. The relationship between the Congress which ruled India from independence in 1947 till the 1980s and the RSS remained tense and cold. For instance, the Special Marriage Act 1954, and the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act amended 1956 were opposed by the RSS, considering those as promoting and protecting Muslim identity. In that period the RSS, lacking political power started to gather support by depicting Muslims as others, thus, sowing the seeds of violence.[47] In 1966, the RSS established the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) which spearheaded the RSS drive to desecrate the Babri Masjid.[48] They propagated a myth that the Babri mosque was constructed in the 16th century after demolishing a Hindu temple which was also the birthplace of Ram ─ a Hindu deity. During the movement against Babri Masjid, a new image of 'Angry Ram and Hanuman' was promoted to stir up Hindu outrage. The demand to demolish *Babri Masjid* gathered pace, and finally, in 1992 the mosque was desecrated by an infuriated Hindu mob. To direct Hindu anger against Muslims, Hindu nationalists left no stone unturned. The Shah Bano case and Hindu nationalists ─ BJP, RSS and the like depicting it as a threat to Hindus and appeasement of Muslims revived the majoritarian inferiority complex of the Hindus.[49]

However, as discussed earlier, the project of inculcating Hindutva among Hindus gathers enormous speed under the suzerainty of Narendra Modi. His populist personality supporting ethnic nationalism and the resultant charm earned him the title of 'India's Divider-in-Chief.'[50] He wished to cast Muslims as 'Others' and vehemently pushed forward the agenda for the formulation of an Indian nation, based solely on

[47] Johan Galtung, "Are There Therapies for Bad Cosmologies?," *Medicine and War* 10, no. 3 (1994): 170-82.

[48] Noorani, *The RSS*.

[49] Jill M. Oglesbee, "The Shah Bano Controversy: A Case Study of Individual Rights, Religious Tolerance, and the Role of the Secular State," *Inquiries Journal* 7, no. 08 (2015), http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1061/the-shah-bano-controversy-a-case-study-of-individual-rights-religious-tolerance-and-the-role-of-the-secular-state

[50] Staff, "Time Magazine Cover Story Says PM Narendra Modi is India's "Divider-in-Chief," *Scroll*, May 10, 2019, https://scroll.in/latest/923004/time-magazine-cover-story-calls-pm-narendra-modi-indias-divider-in-chief.

Hinduism.[51] That nation would be united socially and politically to resist the others mainly Muslims. Not only Muslims were the prime target of Hindu nationalists but also Christians. Subramanian Swamy, a former federal minister and prominent Indian politician noted, "Hindus have been subjected to a grave situation: speedy population growth of Muslims and outlawed migration combined with Christian money-induced proselytising missions; we can see what the Muslim majority means to Hindus when we look at Kashmir." [52] For Hindu nationalists, Muslims are the epitome of the 'others.' "Why are all terrorists in this country Muslims? Why don't they (Muslims) vote for the BJP? Muslims do not vote for the BJP because it is a nationalist party."[53] Swamy also depicts Muslims and Christians as threats, not only because of demographic evolution, a typical trauma of having a majoritarian inferiority complex but also because of historical traumas. He considers every Christian and Muslim to be a stark reminder of the gruesome violence against the Hindus that plagued this land because of the Muslim attacks and the English conquest and called for revenge against perpetrators' descendants.[54]

To revive the traumas of Hindus, Modi played the *Gujarat card*. Gujarat state has a tumultuous and unstable tie with Islam. It was among those areas that were first attacked by Muslims — Mahmood Ghaznavi, in the 11th century, sacked *Somnath*, which disproportionately hurt the Gujarati community, and since then has adopted a symbol of resilience for Hindus across India. [55] That trauma was further reactivated when Pakistan, in 1965, started a war and used the soil of Gujarat as a battleground. That's why we see why Ahmedabad was the most affected city in terms of violence and killings because there had been a political culture characterised by animosity towards Muslims. Therefore, the

---

[51] Amalendu Misra, "Hindu Nationalism and Muslim Minority Rights in India," *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 7, no. 1 (2000): 1-18.

[52] Subramanian Swamy, *Hindus Under Siege: The Way Out* (Har-Anand Publications, 2006).

[53] Pragya Kaushika, "Muslims Don't Vote Us (BJP) since We Are Patriotic: MP Parvesh Verma," *Indian Express*, December 20, 2016, https://indianexpress.com/article/india/parvesh-verma-muslim-remark-bjp-muslims-dont-vote-us-bjp-4436206/.

[54] Swamy, *Hindus Under Siege*.

[55] Acyuta Yājñika and Suchitra Sheth, *The Shaping of Modern Gujarat: Plurality, Hindutva, and Beyond* (Penguin Books India, 2005).

success of Modi largely rests on his formidable Gujarati support and his categorisation of Muslims as 'others.'

Nations suffering from CMT syndrome remain afraid of their traumas. Such nations mobilise people based on an endangered majority, threatened by a racial minority.[56] In the case of India, the fear was largely related to the massive population surge of Muslims, for instance, the annual growth rate of Muslims is 2.2 per cent while that of Hindus is 1.4 per cent. These figures are being utilised by Hindu nationalists. They also started a campaign and developed a conspiracy theory against Muslims with the name of 'love jihad.' They claim that Muslims have launched a Jihad against Hindus through 'love marriages.' Muslim men – the 'love Romeos' – trap innocent Hindu girls and then marry them.[57] They then not only convert those Hindu girls to Islam but also their children are considered as born Muslims.[58] The Sangh Parivar, from 2014 to 2019, launched four types of movements: i. against conversions to Islam and Christianity, ii. against land, iii. Love Jihad and, iv. against cow slaughtering. Muslims were as usual soft targets. Two weekly RSS magazines devoted their cover stories to love jihad, depicting Hindu women as victims of Muslim men's virility and desire.[59] The strategy of Bajrang Dal was that if a Muslim man came to the courts to file his marriage to a Hindu lady, another worker must let Hindu nationalists know when the couple was going to appear in the court. Then anyone must make a call or send an instant message to the Bajrang Dal. " The day when the couple enters the court, the ranks of Bajrang Dal received them at the entrance, they would tell the man to show if he was

---

[56] Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers.*

[57] Mohan Rao, "Love Jihad and Demographic Fears," *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 18, no. 3 (October 1, 2011): 425=30, https://doi.org/10.1177/097152151101800307; Nadira Khatun, '"Love-Jihad" and Bollywood: Constructing Muslims as "Other"', *Journal of Religion & Film* 22, no. 3 (December 14, 2018), https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/jrf/vol22/iss3/8; Iselin Frydenlund and Eviane Leidig, "Introduction: "Love Jihad": Sexuality, Reproduction and the Construction of the Predatory Muslim Male," *Religions* 13, no. 3 (March 2022): 201, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13030201.

[58] Jaffrelot, *Modi's India.*.

[59] Lalmani Verma, "As 12 Seats in UP Prepare to Vote, 2 RSS Magazines Discuss 'Love Jihad," *Indian Express*, September 6, 2014, https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/as-12-seats-in-up-prepare-to-vote-2-rss-magazines-discuss-love-jihad/.

circumcised, a sign that he is a Muslim and then they would hand over the man to Police." [60]

To create collective 'others', stereotyping and identity contrast are used to set boundaries and create fear and threat for 'we, the selves.' Indians, like the Germans, harbour the idea that unless another minority disappears, they could be turned into a minority.[61] This has been true of Muslims and Christians who continue to face discrimination. The BJP always considered that the Muslim invasions led to the bleakest period starting from the invasion of Muhammad Bin Qasim to the Mughal Era. After being declared victorious in the elections in 2017 in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP updated the state's tourist guide, and surprisingly they removed the name of Taj Mahal, which was the most visited place in India. A BJP member of parliament, Sangeet Som, approved the step by labelling the Taj Mahal a blot on Indian culture and civilisation, which was built by traitors.[62] Directing his wrath on the Mughal dynasty he further added, it is very unfortunate and sad that such despots are still a part of our history.[63]

With the BJP in power, laws that erode Muslim identity have been enacted. For example, in 2019, the Indian parliament passed a bill outlawing triple *talaq,* a Muslim way of instant divorce.[64] Moreover, the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) of 2019 has caused severe insecurity among Muslims. CAA flagrantly violates the secular constitution of India. Many Muslims were afraid that this Act

---

[60] Staff, "Uttar Pradesh: Muslim Man Attacked as He Goes to Marry Hindu Woman at Ghaziabad Court,'" *Scroll*, July 24, 2018, https://scroll.in/latest/887797/uttar-pradesh-muslim-man-attacked-as-he-goes-to-marry-hindu-woman-at-ghaziabad-court.

[61] Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers.*

[62] Staff, "Taj Mahal Is a Blot on Indian Culture,' was Built by Traitors, Says BJP Leader Sangeet Som," *Scroll*, October 16, 2017, https://scroll.in/latest/854253/taj-mahal-is-a-blot-on-indian-culture-was-built-by-traitors-says-bjp-leader-sangeet-som.

[63] Reporter, "Another Stab at Taj Mahal's Heritage," *Hindu*, October 16, 2017, sec. Other States, https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/sangeet-som-terms-mughal-emperors-traitors-questions-taj-mahal-history/article19870060.ece. .

[64] Amy Woodyatt and Sugam Pokharel, "Indian Parliament Criminalizes Muslim Practice of Instant Divorce," *CNN*, July 31, 2019, https://www.cnn.com/2019/07/31/india/triple-talaq-criminalized-india-intl-scli/index.html.

could snatch their Indian citizenship. In 2020, riots broke out between Muslims and Hindus in Delhi over CAA, leaving 298 people injured.[65] To continue oppressing Muslims, the Modi regime tightened anti-cow slaughter laws in Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. They were barred from eating cow meat.

CMT syndrome describes that nations suffering from this trauma have strong desires to subjugate others.[66] The vulnerable situation of Muslims in India is an appropriate testimony. According to Human Rights Watch, Muslims continue to face discrimination from the state's institutions, police and courts which are empowering nationalists to harass, subjugate and threaten Muslims.[67] In the 2020 Delhi attacks 53 men lost their lives, out of them 38 were Muslims.[68] The process of identity construction brought envy and hate among Hindus. According to a Pew Survey, 64 per cent of Hindus believe that it is mandatory to be a Hindu to be considered an Indian.[69] Hindus' anger and inherent anxieties led to the otherisation of Muslims.[70] Since violence springs from hatred and bigotry, physical attacks on Muslims became severe and highly damaging. Not to mention numerous small incidents, the major incidents are the Babri masjid in 1992, the Gujrat riots, the Muzaffarnagar riots in 2013, the New Delhi clashes in 2020, and protests over Islamophobic rhetoric in 2022. According to one professor at Jawaharlal University, "If you happened to be a Muslim, you would be maimed and brutalized anywhere and anytime."[71] Muslim lives, liberties and properties were violated. Authorities in multiple states, in 2022,

[65] Oishika Neogi, "Delhi Riots: For Muslim Teens Who Were Shot, No Justice in Sight," *Al Jazeera*, March 2, 2002, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/2/the-living-memories-of-the-2020-delhi-riots-in-india.

[66] Galtung, "Rethinking Conflict: The Cultural Approach."

[67] HRW, "India: Government Policies, Actions Target Minorities' Human Rights Watch," February 19, 2021, https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/02/19/india-government-policies-actions-target-minorities.

[68] Alisha Dutta and Samridhi Tewari, "2020 Delhi Riots: Three Years Later, the Scars Remain," *Hindu*, February 22, 2023, sec. Delhi, https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/2020-delhi-riots-3-years-later-the-scars-remain/article66542087.ece.

[69] David O'Reilly, "Exploring Religion and Identity Politics in India," Pew Survey, March 3, 2022, https://pew.org/3Bghqjk.

[70] Jaffrelot, *Modi's India*.

[71] Lindsay Maizland, "India's Muslims: An Increasingly Marginalised Population," *Council on Foreign Relations*, March 18, 2024, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/india-muslims-marginalized-population-bjp-modi.

destroyed Muslim homes on the pretext that these buildings lacked appropriate documents.[72]

Conclusion

This study described how an identity (Hindutva) can be constructed that causes otherisation of those who do not fulfil its criteria (minorities in India). It explains how Hindutva as an ideology mobilised people to such an extent that violence erupted. Hindutva 'otherised' Muslims. This process was started in the times of Savarkar and Hedgewar in the 20th century and climaxed under the patronage of Narendra Modi. The blend of Modi's populism and his vociferous opposition against Muslims made the otherisation of Muslims possible. After the otherisation, the BJP and its cadres intentionally made Hindus angry by depicting a traumatic past under the rule of the Muslims, specifically the Mughals. Muslims were shown as outsiders who do not belong to India and their infiltration has tarnished Hinduism. The proponents of Hindutva asserted their chosen status and propagated that a glorifying age was due to come. To achieve this, textbooks were changed, and narratives were built. Resultantly, Muslims were subjected to discrimination — political, social, and economic. Minorities feel largely threatened by Hindu nationalists. The latter continue to blame minorities especially Muslims for violating Hindu norms and principles. Nations suffering from CMT remain afraid. This fear was constructed in the early 20th century to preserve Hindu identity from the growing Muslim population. It continued even after independence and gathered pace in the 1980s and 1990s. However, this fear climaxed under Narendra Modi. His religious populism, which relies on culture and religion, caused the otherisation of minorities in India. Likewise, the incumbents of CMT vie to dominate others, which is vindicated by Hindu nationalists' aggressive and threatening overtures against minorities — especially Muslims. This paper, thus, by applying the CMT approach described how intrinsically Hindutva is a violent ideology which leads to mayhem and violence.

---

[72] *AJ News,* "Why Is Amnesty Urging India to Halt Bulldozing of Muslim Properties?," *Al Jazeera*, February 7, 2024, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/7/why-is-amnesty-urging-india-to-halt-bulldozing-of-muslim-properties.