

India is a secular
country



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I think one of our contradictions and limitations of our democracy was conferral of group rights. Through this provision every religion most importantly Christianity and Muslims can have their own set of religious rights including having their own personal law and all the religious institutions are free to propoganda their own religion and raise money without taxes. Since 1947, Various religions, castes and tribes have been accommodated in our country through group rights, liberal constitutionalism and layered federalism.(Bajpai, 2003) I think adopting group rights in our constitution it led to a form of liberalism discourse where as there is a conflict between state sovereignty and Individual rights.

In India the concept of religion is deeply rooted, from time to time the ruling classes and the forces which want to control the society has always used religion to mobilise people for electoral votes. In the post-1947 period, all the political parties in order create their exclusive vote banks, they resort to linguistic, regional, religious identities which leads to polarisation among the masses. For eg: targeting Muslim vote banks, congress always appeased the fundamentalists of the community and agreed to all their religious demands while ignoring the basic issues of Muslims which would enable their political participation and economic and cultural development. The political parties to divert the attention of people from miserable ground realities will come up with deceptive slogans and issues. Exploiting the media they will create religious and communal differences among the common masses for their political interests. The decade of 1980s was a decade which saw " secular-nationalist" discourse. Its the time when the " Indian Identity" got fragmented into various smaller sectional identities. To put it in Foucauldian

terms “ Insurrection of little selves” . He notes that this modern form of power is characterized by “ an immensely flexible braiding of coercion and consent (Nigam, 2000). In 80’s, BJP, a Hindu nationalist, right wing party dubbed the Congress’s secularism as “ Pseudo-secularism”. The secular theory was condemned in the context that it did not respect the wishes and interests of Hindu majority; They felt Hindus were the ones most affected by it. They claimed it pampered the minority, especially Muslims and lower caste. By not respecting Hindu values, it snubs the Indian idea of secularism which calls for „ equal respect for all religions (“ sarva dharma-sambhav”). According to BJP, “ true secularism, can only be achieved through true equality, which must start from the premise that Hindus constitute the majority population” (Hansen 1996). The real pursuit of the discourse of Hindu Nationalism is to achieve “ equality through difference”. The rise of religious identities in India is questioning the fundamental values of democracy.

Though Hindu nationalism was steadily growing in 1980s it got radicalized in 1990s. The actors behind this radicalization were assertiveness of lower caste, underperforming political- administrative system (license Raj), increased insecurity because of Globalisation and feeling of dislocation of nation and national identity. The fervour of Hindu nationalism was at its peak at this time and struck chord with Hindu middle classes. Thus Nation-state became a vehicle to disseminate hindutva Ideology. This dogmatism resulted in the demolition of “ babri masjid”. In this discourse to Hindu Nationalism, Muslims were demonized as “ operational others” as they are constraining India to achieve modernity because their cultural obsolescence and

population overgrowth. Also they are considered to be the reason for the dislocation of the nation in the past and the contemporary times. They according to Hindu nationalism," also block the full realization of democracy due to their block voting and stunt the full development of a tolerant secularism due to their intransigence and intolerance" (Hansen 1996).

Thus the varied notions of authenticity, sovereignty and superiority among these religious groups especially Hindus and Muslims and discourse of rights and equality among these social groups lead to Hindu Nationalism.

Hindu Nationalist discourse sought to portray the Muslims as inherently doctrine, undemocratic, anti-modern and patriarchal. Hindutva forces like RSS, BJP used a religious language to create a political discourse. To acquire power Hindutva forces came up with a political ideology to influence the voters and mobilise them on religious grounds by making them increasingly religious consciousness. Hindutva's manifested Hinduism was more hegemonic, chauvinistic and political in character. Hindutva politics used selective religious symbolism that forms a to promote a particular version of Hinduism that fitted the RSS's larger vision of the nation-state by wiping those ideologically inconvenient components of Hinduism. The whole Hindu nationalist movement promoted a view that religion no longer needs to be hidden from the public space, under the garb of secularism.

Hindutva forces adapted an aggressive and chauvinistic form of Hinduism. For eg: They brought out the whole concept of " Bharartha Matha" who is pictured as one form of Hindu Kali. During processions they call for Hindu unity are common and one frequently heard chant is ' This country is a Hindu

country! It's the Hindu people's own country!' Most prevalent of all is 'Om Kali! Jai Kali! Bharatmata ki jai!' In other words, while proclaiming victory in Hindi to 'Mother India' - unambiguously understood as Bharat, Hindu India - it is supremely violent Kali who is invoked and praised. RSS's activists say Kali's name inspires courage in them, but almost all slogans are plainly intended, too, to be aggressively Hindu and they are understood as such by Muslims and Christians, who hear them most vigorously, yelled out when a procession passes a mosque or church.[1]

The thematic Hindu nationalism sought the support of religious institutions, orders and festivals in this regard. Among the various festivals, Hindutva has systematically targeted few religious festivals like Ganesh Chaturthi for political purposes. Through indoctrination of colourful, seductive processions the Hindutva forces on a daily basis succeeds in Hinduisation of the public spheres. Lot of Hindu festivals are no more a symbol of religious and cultural traditions but are symbols of communalism.

In the name of nationalist ideology, Hindutva forces manifest Hinduism through various institutions in an attempt to make the public internalise Hindutva ideas which indirectly influences the masses in everyday life. Thus these political elites artificially constructed this whole atmosphere of Hindu-Muslim antagonism through indoctrination and enfranchisement of manifested religious ideas and portrayed muslims as "enemies". This resulted in systematic "exorcision of muslims". Thus this resurgence of religious identities is not a problem of democracy or secularism it's a problem of political vested interests executed through our democratic institutions.

Muslims in India are increasingly facing socially exclusion. Muslims are looked at with suspicion and contempt. It's a very disturbing trend to see reports like Muslims are not able to find homes[2]and the highest number of untrailed cases are from muslim community[3].

How can we be a good democracy if Minorities of our country doesn't feel at peace?

A liberal secular democracy shouldnot tolerate matters of faith triumphing over ourconstitution. Religion should not interfere in state affairs.

Understanding tolerance as secularism is wrong. as citizens regardless of which community we belong to we must not tolerate certain things.