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## **Paper Due Date**

The documentary “ Ram ke Naam” (1991) by Anand Patwardhan attempts to capture the complex emotional conundrum among the various sections of India, finally culminating into one of the worst communal riots witnessed in the history of the Indian sub-continent. The Babri masjid demolition episode, as depicted in the documentary was the eventual result of narrow and obscure interpretation given to the very idea of nationalism and secularism by various states, regional and political players. The role played the judiciary, the extremist Hindu organizations like Bajrang Dal and Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the central political party, namely the Bhartiya Janata Party, the communist party, the state and the central police force, the various sections of the Hindu community and finally the Muslims of India added multitude of complexity to this whole issue by introducing conflicting brand of nationalism and secularism.

The right winged political party, namely the Bhartiya Janta Party, repeatedly used the term “ pseudo-secularism” to debunk the brand of secularism that was being followed by the other political parties prior to the advent of this issue. The foregoing party openly equated nationalism with a sympathy to the temple cause. Anybody who was critical to the Ramjanmbhoomi cause was considered as anti-national and pseudo secular. The long suppressed Hindu sentiments were provoked by giving legitimacy to the militant Hindu pride. The Bhartiya Janata Party secured maximum political advantage by preaching a right winged brand of nationalism and secularism. An attempt was made to justify the demolition as very much secular. Mr. L. K Advani, the

main politician in the Bhartiya Janata Party, who headed the whole movement, through the medium of his national wide chariot tour and vitriolic speeches actively, propagated a new definition of nationalism by equating it with sympathy for the Hindu cause. The repeated usage of the term “pseudo-secularism” was with the intent to do away and create a new definition of the term “secularism”. Secularism, in the common parlance means treating all religions equally. To this end, religious interest of one community would not supersede those of the other community. This commonly understood meaning of secularism was attempted to be done away with by repeatedly terming it as “pseudo-secular”. As per the Bhartiya Janta Party’s definition of the term “secularism” it was completely justified to undo the wrong that was done centuries earlier irrespective of the communal consequence. This value rested on the basic premise that undoing the wrong that was done long time back was essential to restore the national pride that was bruised by the Muslim invaders. No attention was paid to the vicious circle of violence that would result as a result of this right winged brand of secularism that was practiced by the Bhartiya Janata Party.

The Hindu community’s reaction to this whole episode was entirely caste based. Among the Hindus, the Brahmins (the priest class) and the Banyas (the trader community) were at the forefront of the movement. The upper caste Hindu community completely identified with the concept of nationalism and secularism propagated by the Bhartiya Janata Party. The upper caste Hindus identified nationalism with the Hindu way of living and the Hindu pride. The definition of who is a “Hindu” was given new meaning and the militant nationalist brand of Hinduism was propagated. What can be seen

from the documentary is that the concept of secularism was completely put on the back-burner as what really mattered to the upper caste Hindu was undoing the wrong that was committed centuries earlier. The militant upper caste Hindus who supported the movement were under the presumption that they were working for national cause with a view to restoring the national pride that was destroyed by the Muslim raider, Baber, centuries ago. It is observed from the documentary that the upper caste Hindus consider Muslims as outsiders who wrongfully occupied the Indian land. In one particular scene, a Hindu kar sevak (worker) is seen to be justifying the killer of Mahatma Gandhi on the grounds that the killer was a true Hindu as he killed someone who was nothing but a Muslim appeaser. This clearly shows that a new brand of nationalism was deeply rooted among the upper caste Hindus to the extent that even a killer of a universally respected leader was looked upon merely account of the fact that the leader was secular and attempted in brining the Hindus and the Muslims together at the time of the partition of the Indian sub-continent into India and Pakistan. Insofar as the reaction of the upper caste Hindu was concerned, anyone and anything that did not support the Hindu cause was considered as anti-national. Various militant Hindu organizations like Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajarang Dal was composed of upper caste Hindus. They therefore practiced the same brand of nationalism and secularism as is stated above with respect to the upper caste Hindus. The state, central and local police force, largely consisting of upper caste Hindus, appears to be practicing the right winged brand of secularism and nationalism.

The left winged political party, namely the communist party of India was

completely against the movement as it defied the common sense definition of nationalism and secularism. An attempt was made by the communist party to make the people see through the façade practiced by the right winged political parties of India.

In the documentary, the Indian Muslim community is shown to be vulnerable and disillusioned. As the Muslim community is in minority, it appears that the movement created a very strong apprehension among the Muslim community. Any other definition of secularism aside to the one that is normally understood would greatly undermine the social standing of the Indian Muslim and it is this fear that is strongly getting reflected in the documentary.

The modern form of technology, especially the mass media, plays the role of a catalyst, more often than not, in a negative sense. The media often becomes a tool for spread heading the sectarian propaganda. The scenes of riot and violence against a particular community act as a tool for provocation if displayed repeatedly. The news of the demolition spread like a wild fire and it provoked large scale violence on account of repeated telecast.

It can finally be concluded from the documentary that the complex social fabric of the Indian sub-continent created multiple brands of secularism and nationalism.