

The Role of Media in the Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in

Indian Politics

A Thesis Submitted

To

Sikkim University



In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

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All the assistance and help received during the course of the investigation have been duly acknowledged by him.

We recommend this thesis to be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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Introduction

The diversities in the trajectory of the making of nations and nationalism, a concept that is part of our everyday life in modern society, has led to several attempts by sociologists, political scientists, anthropologists and historians to opt for varied definitions of it. The fact is no one definition suits all nations and nationalisms despite the ubiquitous presence of these in our discourse. No part of the world today is independent of being a nation and yet we have not landed on one standard explanation of its existence. History, indeed, is perhaps one tool and the only one, if one may say so, that helps resolve this dilemma to some extent. That the nation and nationalism are historical categories and each one being *sui generis*.

This diversity, that is indeed real, rendered scholars like Ernest Gellner, perhaps, one of those who came out with the most acceptable functional explanations of this phenomenon called the nation, to understand each nation through its own nationalism. Nationalism, he discerned as ‘political principle that holds that national and political units should be congruent’. Besides, in some cases, there might exist multiple nationalisms in a single nation competing with each other to *universalise* its own ideology.¹

While looking back at the emergence of Indian nationalism, together with its various stakeholders during freedom struggle, it is conspicuous that the Indian nationalism, as conceived by the nationalists, was not a single unit. Broadly, it consisted three different forms of nationalism; communal Hindu nationalism, communal Muslim

¹ As Marx illustrated, it is important for the both the ruling and the counter ruling class to universalize its ideologies to be appropriated by the rulers. The Ruling Class and the Ruling Ideas by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels discussed in . Durham, G. Meenakshi . Kellner M. Douglas (ed), *Media cultural studies keyWorks*. (Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2006) p. 10.

nationalism (in form of All India Muslim League of which the corollary was the formation of a separate nation, East and West Pakistan after independence) and liberal bourgeois nationalism as articulated by the Indian National Congress (INC), which was most successful in proliferating its ideology. Hindu nationalism, in this context, was one such competing nationalisms which was neither able to universalize its ideology nor was completely obliterated, though it abated in a few instances.

The growth of a unified economy, thanks to measures introduced by the colonial rulers, through the development of modern transportation, education and administrative unification, propelled the rise of new social classes.² But the problem was that these social classes, by themselves, were diverse resulting in the emergence of various organizations and groups with their own nationalistic ideas. Liberal nationalists, though dominant within the Indian National Congress, had to face continuous challenges from the two other distinct forms of nationalism which were based on religious idioms. At the time of independence, where the essence of communal Muslim nationalism was neutralized with the formation of the new nation state of Pakistan, communal Hindu nationalism got whammed after the assassination of Gandhi.³

However, Hindu nationalist leaders, somehow, have been able to sustain their vile rhetoric in the national politics since their existence and till the present day. And even the avowedly liberal political organizations, like the Indian National Congress, sometimes, became their citadel. For instance, even after the ban on the RSS and the Hindu Maha Sabha, one of the articulate spokespersons of Hindu nationalism, in the immediate aftermath of Gandhi's assassination on January 30, 1948, K.M. Munshi,

² See Desai. A. R, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan, 1948).

³ The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) a Hindu nationalistic fanatic organization formed in 1925 was banned on 4th February 1948 and its leader M.S. Golwalkar arrested in connection to the Gandhi's assassination. However, the ban was lifted in 1949.

‘continued on with his work, a one-man insomniac sleeper cell using his inside position of privilege within the Congress to open successfully a back door through which the proselytising of Hindu nationalism could proceed unobstructed.’⁴

The development of the two major events, in tandem -- the Congress split in 1969 and the Allahabad High Court decision in 1975 declaring Indira Gandhi’s election from Rae Bareilly as null and void,⁵ -- in the Indian political history provided an opportunity for the RSS and its arms, widely addressed to as the *Sangh Parivar* by a set of scholars, to openly participate thereafter, in the national political sphere. This was pronounced particularly after the emergency of 1975-1977 and the emergence of the Bharatiya Janata Party in 1980, from out of the Janata Party into which the Bharathiya Jan Sangh had ‘merged’ and yet functioned as a separate unit within the Janata. Since then, ‘the religious idiom and the use of other denominational identities such as caste and the mobilisation thereof on the basis of such idioms, in the past two decades, continues to rattle the political discourse in India.’⁶ Presently, Hindu nationalism is not just another form of nationalism but also an attempt to redefine Indian nationalism in religious idioms and has emerged into the mainstream ideology, so to say.

At this juncture, it won’t be erroneous to say that the attempt to redefine nationalism also demands greater participation of the masses. And this could be done through the proliferation of its ideas through the media, particularly the print media, as

⁴ Bhagavan, Manu. *The Hindutva Underground: Hindu Nationalism and the Indian National Congress in Late Colonial and Early Post-colonial India*. Economic and Political weekly. 13th September, 2008, p. 47.

⁵ Raj Narain of the Samyukta Socialist Party who contested election against the Indira Gandhi in March 1971 from Rae Bareilly contended against Indira Gandhi’s election in the Allahabad High Court for employing Yashpal Kapoor as her election agent who was then the prime minister’s secretary and was qualified to be a government servant. Therefore, Gandhi was proved of violating the provisions of the Representation of the People’s Act, 1951 and her election was declared to be null and void by the court.

⁶ Ananth, V. Krishna. *The Political Economy of Communalism: Some Observation on the Contemporary Political Discourse in India*. Social Scientist, Vol. 29. No 7-8. July- August 2001, p.28.

much as it is with Television.⁷ In other words, the press or the media as an Ideological State Apparatus⁸ becomes a significant institution for the proliferation of the fascist tendencies, integral to Hindu nationalism.

This, is notwithstanding the experience of the freedom struggle which indeed is evidence of the positive sides of the press during which, ‘the press was a powerful factor in building and developing Indian nationalism and the nationalist movement.’⁹ Nevertheless, the successful utilization of the press by freedom fighters in itself proves that one cannot ignore the double fact that it could be used for the fascist ideologies of Hindu nationalism too. India, as a country with a diverse population, has already witnessed the process through (entertainment) television media in building a ‘still relatively obscure campaign into the dominant issue before the country, one that made and unmade prime ministers and ruling parties.’¹⁰

The Press is considered as the fourth pillar of the democracy. But it would be insalubrious for Indian democracy, if the media, particularly the print media, start functioning as the Ideological State Apparatus of Hindu nationalism.

Therefore, this study has analysed the role and the relation between the media and Hindu nationalism in Indian politics. The study is carried out on the two major premises: First, that Hindu nationalism or communal fascism, is a threat to the plural

⁷ The role of the print media needs to be highlighted here because in the 1980s, which witnessed the rise of Hindu Nationalist propaganda in the political sphere, was a period of print media and Television, which furthered this project arrived on the Indian scene, in a big way, only in the late 1990s. However, the role of Doordarshan, in this regard, since the mid-1980s with the telecast of the Ramayana and the Mahabharatha and the expansion of terrestrial telecast in that period is a fact that cannot be denied. This certainly has been studied by scholars with effect.

⁸ L. Althusser illustrated the communication (press and other media) as one of the significant institutions, Ideological State Apparatus, of the state. Althusser, Louis. *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays* (India: Aakar Books. 2006).

⁹ Desai. A. R, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, p. 220.

¹⁰ Rajagopal, Arvind. *Politics after Television, Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India* (United Kingdom. Cambridge University Press 2001) p. 30.

character of Indian society. Second, the media, which is supposed to be independent and accountable to the people, in reality, ended up serving the ruling classes.

The research is based on an analysis of the reportage of some major daily newspapers like Times of India, The Hindu, Indian Express, the Telegraph and the Hindustan Times. The issues that were taken up for the analysis were the reportage on the events/incidents involving the campaign leading to the Nellie massacre during the Assam movement in 1983, the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992, the anti-Sikh pogrom in October-November 1984, the anti-Muslim pogrom in Gujarat in 2002 and the imageries and the issues brought to the fore by the media in the 2014 Parliamentary election.

Literature Review

Hindu nationalism has been the area of research for many researchers but the research on its nexus with the press for its proliferation are far and few. Some major works done in this area which are also reviewed in this thesis are: A. Rajagopal's Politics after Television: *Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India* (Rajagopal: 2001), Rita Manchanda's Militarised Hindu Nationalism and the Mass Media: *Shaping a Hindutva Public Discourse* (Manchanda: 2007), Press on Ayodhya 'Kar Seva', by A. A. Engineer (Engineer: 1991) and R. Ramaseshan's *The Press on Ayodhya* (Ramaseshan: 1990).

Apart from these, other related works that have been taken up include Bipan Chandra's India's Struggle for Independence (Chandra: 1987), Sanjay Suri's 1984: The Anti-Sikh violence and after (Suri: 2015), A.G. Noorani's Destruction of the Babri Masjid, *A National Dishonour* (Noorani: 2014) and Edward Said's Covering Islam (Said: 1981).

Books

Arvind Rajagopal's book *Politics after Television: Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India*¹¹ explains that it was not a coincidence that the Ram Janmabhumi movement, which aimed at demolishing the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya and build a Ram temple in its place, got momentum at a time when a version of the Ramayana epic was being serialized on national television in India. In fact, the Ramayana epic had its share in changing an ominous but still relatively obscure campaign into the dominant issue before the country. This is the reason why the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), in 1989, the year in which a serialised version of the Ramayana epic, produced by Ramanand Sagar, ended in television, declared the Ayodhya movement to have reached 'a state and status in Indian public life when it was no more possible to ignore its effects in politics, including electoral politics.'¹² With the BJP trying to make use of epic's success for its political benefits, it becomes clear that the media, though entertainment, can become a medium through which an ominous campaign linked to Hindutva could be universalized.

Suri's book, *1984 The Anti-Sikh Violence and After*,¹³ is an autobiographical account of a journalist who was covering the inhumane and undemocratic events and incidents during the 1984 anti-Sikh communal riots in Delhi. The author, through descriptions of events which he personally witnessed, tries to point out the lackadaisical approach of the then Rajiv Gandhi government and its apparatus -- the police -- in protecting the members of Sikh community during the riots after the assassination of Indira Gandhi. For instance, on November 1, 1984, the police remained mute and just

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Suri. Sanjay, *1984 The Anti-Sikh Violence and After* (India: HarperCollins Publishers, 2015).

watched when the crowd of screaming men was advancing towards the Rakab Ganj gurdwara in New Delhi, to attack the Sikhs. By providing the anecdote that he heard at the Karol Bagh police station, where a Congress MP was demanding to know why his men, who were prima facie found guilty of looting Sikh homes, have been arrested, the author suggests to an assurance of impunity for the perpetrators of violence and loot had come from the government itself.

Noorani, in his work,¹⁴ meticulously documents the state turning belligerent towards its own citizens. The perpetrators of inhuman actions against a section of the society, particularly the Muslim minority, are exonerated. The impunity granted to these perpetrators is provided through state's apparatus. These apparatus are held responsible in a democracy, for providing justice to the citizens, through putting such perpetrators behind the bars. The follow up of events that occurred in our democratic institutions after the demolition of the Babri Masjid evince the points made. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which included L.K. Advani in its charge-sheet for the conspiracy to demolish the mosque, removed his name when it filed a supplementary charge-sheet on 30 May 2003, without giving any reason for it. The point to be noted here is that, at this time L.K. Advani was the Home Minister. The Justice Liberhan Commission, which was set up just ten days after the demolition of the mosque by Government of India, took 17 long years to submit its final report. In its report, submitted on 30 June 2009, the commission failed to ascertain the truth. It exonerated P.V. Narasimha Rao and other congress leaders together with exculpating L.K. Advani from any charges through the suppression of evidences and materials. Such illegal and lukewarm approach of the commission in finding the truth behind the demolition came

¹⁴ Noorani. A. G, *Destruction of the Babri Masjid: A National Dishonour* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2014).

out when one of its members, Anupam Gupta, resigned from it and spoke the truth to the media.

Bipan Chandra¹⁵ gives a historical explanation to the rise and spread of communalism as a political spectre. Communalism, he argues, consists of three basic elements or stages in tandem. First, it is believed that people from the same religion have common political, economic and cultural interests. Second, these interests of one particular group, belonging to one particular religion, differ from the political, economic and cultural interests of the people from another religion. The third stage is reached, according to him, when it is believed that these interests of various religious communities are not only divergent to each other but also are incompatible, antagonistic and hostile. Communal violence is a conjunctural consequence of communal ideology. Every communalism, no matter Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian, belong to single species and are just the varieties of the same communal ideology. Communalism as an ideological politics is a modern phenomenon. Similar to nationalism and socialism, communalism can emerge as politics and as ideology only after politics based on people, popular participation and mobilization is pushed to the margins. Communalism in India was a by-product of colonial character of Indian economy. The economic stagnation and its impact on Indian people, particularly the middle classes, paved the way for division and antagonism within Indian society. During the freedom struggle, where many were organizing popular movements against the colonial exploitation as a long term solution to their problems, some actually lacked the wider vision and went for short term solutions with narrow interests, in his view.

¹⁵Chandra. Bipan et al., *India's Struggle for Independence 1857- 1947*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1989.

Academic Journals

Rita Manchanda¹⁶ discusses that the political vacuum produced by the collapse of the Nehruvian vision, failure of the modernity project, the Mandal challenge and the global Islamic resurgence; and the last of these became one of the prime factors behind the emergence of a socio-political milieu in which the Ram Janambhumi movement became prominent. During the 1980s, public discourse, in India, was manipulated in such a way as to showcase the minorities as the threat to the nation which morphed into 'Hindu nation'. The mass media had its role in it. The BJP, with its narrow view identified restructuring of Hinduisim into strong militant character, could present itself as a solution to the so-called minority, particularly the Muslim, threat. On the other hand, the media contributed to this by proliferating such threats in the security paradigm of a 'weak-strong state'. The mass media celebrated when the BJP government tested a nuclear device on 11 May 1998. It also promptly took up the responsibility of projecting Pakistan as the enemy. The mass media also did its best to distort the Kashmiri issue by framing of the Kashmir conflict into a terrorist and national security issue, thus reinforcing their alienation.

Asghar Ali Engineer,¹⁷ in his work, has discussed the role of the press in Ayodhya. To investigate the media's bias and the actions of authorities in regards to media-persons during the turmoil in Ayodhya from October 30 to November 2, 1990, the Press Council of India (PCI) set up a five member committee. The committee produced two sets of reports. The minority report criticized the reporting by the Hindi press, whereas, the majority report was harsher on the government of Uttar Pradesh

¹⁶ Manchanda. Rita, *Militarised Hindu nationalism and the mass media: Shaping a Hindutva public discourse*, South Asia: Journal of South Asian studies, 8th May 2007.

¹⁷ Ali Engineer. Ali. Asghar, *Press on Aydhoya 'kar Seva'*, Economic and Political Weekly, 18th May 1991.

(UP) for its curbs on the press. Altogether, both the reports pointed out on two major misconducts, one by the Hindi press and another by the authorities. Some newspapers and their editors were found to be provocative and sympathising with the *kar sevaks*. Headlines used in these papers were not only provocative but also intended to create the atmosphere of panic and confusion, in an already tensed situation. The report also used the term ‘editorial activism’ to highlight that some editors actually behaved as if they were part of the Ram Janmabhoomi campaign. These editors were also found to be delivering provocative speeches during the rallies. The Press Commission of India felt that the papers had shown ‘gross irresponsibility and impropriety, offending the cannons of journalistic ethics’. Based on the reports, the Commission, in 1991, censured four Hindi dailies Aaj, Dainik Jagran, Swatantra Chetna and Swatantra Bharat.

Radhika Ramaseshan¹⁸ explains how the Hindi press in Uttar Pradesh utilised the temple-mosque issue as a propaganda tool, through exaggeration, misinformation and blatant falsehoods. By carrying sensational and false reports to instigate the people, the press, she argues, was responsible for causing most of the communal riots that erupted in Uttar Pradesh after the Masjid was attacked, resulting in a death toll of over a hundred people. Some papers carried completely false statements when the canopy was removed, under the supervision of the district administration, on 23 October 1990. For instance, on 26 October 1990, *Swatantra Chetna* (Lucknow and Gorakhpur), informed that two kar sevaks had died in police custody and *Aaj* (Lucknow) in its headline carried another false information that an idol of Ram, housed in the pit, had been removed by the administration.

¹⁸ Ramaseshan. Radhika, The Press on Ayodhya, Economic and Political Weekly, 15th December 1990.

Rationale of the Study

The history of the press in India marks the epoch where the State feared the press, knowing very well its capacity against the oppressive state. It was this fear that prompted the State to impose the first press regulation, known as Wellesley regulation, in 1799, just after 19 years of the emergence of first newspaper in India, The Bengal Gazette, in 1780. Though the Wellesley regulation, which introduced the notion of pre-censorship, was abolished in 1818, the colonial rulers brought more press regulations since then. Introduction of Section 124-A in Indian Penal Code and the Vernacular Press Act in 1878, proves that the colonial rulers, by no means, wanted to allow the freedom of press. Therefore, the colonial state's unwillingness to allow freedom of press also points towards the fact that the press, particularly under the editorship and ownership of freedom fighters, were critically vocal and fighting against the oppressive foreign rule.

Here, Althusser's concept of Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) seems to get challenged because, in his idea, the media (or tools of communication) serves as an apparatus for the proliferation of the ruling ideology. Therefore, it is important to note that the term 'media' is a nomenclature for a whole range of communication tools including the print and the electronic. Moreover, print and electronic is also a homogenous term for the different and distinct tools of communication. The point here is that newspapers and journals which were critically vocal against the colonial rule were from the particular section of the press which were edited and owned by leaders of the freedom struggle. Thus, the term 'press' then also included the newspapers which were, in fact, in support of colonial rule. For instance, The Times of India, started in

1861, supported the British policies. The Madras Mail, started in 1868, represented the interest of European commercial community.

Therefore, in this sense, Althusser's concept (ISA) can neither be completely discarded nor completely adopted for the analysis of the history of press, particularly in India. A significant point to be noted here is, the history of press serving as the propaganda tool for Hindu orthodox views is as old as the history of press in India. In fact, the emergence of the Hindu orthodox ideology in the press began when Bhawani Charan Banerji started the Samachar Chandrika. Banerji, who was the founding editor of Sambad Kaumidi started by Rammohan Roy, walked out of the paper in protest against its progressive views. Roy started Sambad Kaumidi and two other journals -- Mirat-ul-Akhbar and Brahmucal Magazine-- in 1821, to counter the British owned evangelical journals. Together with this, Roy also wanted to educate his fellow citizens about the oppressive elements within the Hindu traditions and rituals like *sati*. It was on this point that Banerji differed ideologically with Roy and therefore, resigned from Sambad Kaumidi after its 13th issue. His intentions behind starting the Samachar Chandrika were to propagate orthodox Hindu views and oppose the teaching of English.¹⁹

Another point to be noted here is that the Hindutva of 21st century India is not completely as similar as the orthodox Hinduism during the colonial times even if some features remain the same. Though, one of the prominent features of today's Hindutva, of targeting the minority community, existed since 1920s, with the emergence of so-called socio-cultural organisations like RSS, it was only during the 1980s that Hindutva,

¹⁹ Raghavan, G. N. S. *The Press in India, A New History* (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House. 1994).

that we know of today, was enunciated as a political project in the national level.²⁰ It was since the 1980s that the concept of Hindu nationalism became more prominent and frequent in the national political sphere. And after the economic crises and the economic reforms of 1991, the space occupied by orthodox Hinduism was captured by communal fascism. This process started in the 1920s itself but got momentum during the Ram Jannmabhumi movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s and became the reality.

Moreover, the shift from the Nehruvian economy to neo-liberal economy had its impact on the characteristics and functioning of the media too. The media, which till now, was divided into liberals and conservatives²¹ and had the pluralistic approach was now more market driven. The ideology did not matter when there was profit involved. And since the perpetrators of Hindu nationalism promised more profits for the media through the neo-liberal economy, it has now started serving as an ISA of Hindu nationalism in the Althusserian sense. Since the 1990s, as Prabhat Patnaik has suggested, the media has fallen prey to the hegemony created by the mixture of neo-liberal economy and religious fascism.²² Here, Althusser's concept of Ideological State Apparatus becomes relevant. Arvind Rajagopal's²³ analysis of the entertainment media in relation to the emergence of Hindutva during the 1980s too, shows the media as an ISA.

²⁰ It may be stressed here that Hindutwa, as a political doctrine, has its origins in M.S. Golwalkar's *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, the argument here is that it found political expression in a prominent way since the 1980s.

²¹ The terms 'liberals' and 'conservatives' here are not used as synonyms for any political organisation, rather it is used to highlight the existence of two different sections of people in the media, one who believes in India as a Hindu nation, another who believed in Indian society as a culturally mixed society.

²² Patnaik, Prabhat. *Markets, Morals and the Media*. Frontline. Vol. 19. Issue 15. <http://www.frontline.in/static/html/fl1915/19151280.htm> (Accessed on 24/05/2015).

²³ Rajagopal, Arvind. *Politics after Television, Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India*.

In this context, it is necessary to analyse the role of news media, particularly print, to understand its nexus with the emergence of Hindutva in Indian political sphere.

Objectives of the Study

- The objective of this study is to historically analyse the nexus between the news media (print in particular), and the emergence of Hindu nationalism in Indian politics.
- The study also focuses on the level of relevance of the ISA framework proposed by Althusser in context to media's experience in India.
- An attempt to understand the Hindutva politics in the present context and role of media in it.
- The study is also focussed on the representation of various communities by the media and its impact on society.

Methodology

- This study is qualitative in nature.
- The study is based on the primary sources, such as contemporary newspaper reports/editorials during the specific periods/events/developments such as the Babri Masjid demolition campaign, the 1984 riots, the 2002 Gujarat riots and the 2014 general elections and secondary materials like academic books and journals on the subject.
- Both print and online news magazines have been used as secondary sources.
- Interviews were conducted with senior journalists who had reported on the events and issues which have been taken as case studies in this thesis. These

interviews, however, were meant to help the research perspective and have not been used as a source in any sense.

- The study also involved reading up theoretical works of Louis Althusser, Stuart Hall and Michel Foucault.
- The major theoretical framework is the 'Ideological State Apparatus' by Althusser in the context of the functioning of the media in Indian polity.

Chapterisation

Chapter I *Representation of the Nation and the Media*

This chapter begins with the discussion on the concepts of 'nation' and 'nationalism' in general and Indian nationalism in particular. An attempt is also made to understand the role of the media during the freedom struggle in India. Further, it has been discussed how the media in present times is representing the idea of 'nation' and 'nationalism'.

Chapter II *Hindutva as Ideology and Politics*

This Chapter deals with the historical trajectory of Hindutva ideology since its emergence to the post-independence period in context to its political-economy. The comparison between the Hindu nationalism and Indian nationalism has been made.

Chapter III *The Ram Janmabhumi Movement and the Role of the Press*

This Chapter deals with the political context in which the Ram Janmabhumi movement emerged in India. The role of media in the movement has been discussed through the framework of *Discursive formation* enunciated by Michel Foucault.

Chapter IV *Politics of Riots and the Media*

This Chapter deals with the role of the media during the communal violence in India. The major parts of the study is based on, but not limited to 1983 Nellie massacre, 1984 Anti-Sikh riot and 2002 Gujarat riot. The trajectory of media reportage from 1983 to 2002 is analysed and an attempt is made to find any similarities or dissimilarities among these three riots in different juncture of history. Through the analysis of the events taken as the case studies for this chapter it has been discussed how the media in India functions as the Ideological State Apparatus.

Chapter V *Parliamentary Elections and the Media: The Role of Media in the 2014 General Election in India*

Applying the concept of 'Manufacturing consent' of Chomsky and Herman and through content analysis of the newspapers, this chapter will analyse the role played by the news media during Parliamentary elections. The study will mainly focus on, but not limited to 2014 Parliamentary election.

Conclusion is an attempt to summarise the evidence and place them in perspective from the theories on the media as well as nationalism.

CHAPTER I

Representation of the Nation and the Media

Nation and nationalism is a relatively modern concept that evolved in the post industrialisation milieu in the Western society. The question as to *what is a nation* has produced varying answers and views; but none have been able to give a comprehensive definition for the whole gamut of nations that exist in ‘modern’ world. In that sense, the nation as a category and nationalism as an idea (or ideology) has been most represented and yet misrepresented in academic as well as day to day discourse. The kernel of this chapter is to delve into the representation of nation and nationalism in the media in India. In other words, the attempt here is to study on how the media represents the concept of the nation and nationalism and thus manufacture a *certain* consensus among the people. In order to place the conscious attempts of the Indian media in the recent past, to redefine the concepts of nation and nationalism, in terms of a Right wing proposition, it is necessary to discuss in some detail, the various definitions/explanations of these concepts. This is done in the introductory part of this chapter. This will act as a base to understand the emergence of the idea of India and Indian nationalism, which was largely secular in nature to state at the outset.

One of the earliest attempts to define the nation was by French scholar, a sociologist, Ernest Renan in 1882. His definition focused on the human collectivity brought together by will, consciousness and collective memory comprising with collective amnesia. Renan saw the nation as a *human collectivity* brought together by *will, consciousness* and *collective memory*.¹ Resting his case on the historical

¹ Renan. Ernest, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation*, (Paris, 1982)

experience of the French people, in the one hundred years between the Revolution of 1789 and the Paris Commune of 1871, Renan held that the nation was an exercise in *everyday plebiscite*. Later in 1912, Joseph Stalin came out with his definition of the nation as a ‘historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and *psychological make-up manifested in a common culture*.’² Both, Renan’s and Stalin’s definitions had their own drawbacks. While Renan’s definition is too wide and would comprise both nations and non-nations,³ Stalin’s definition precluded the possibilities of many human groups forming a nation without already having a single language or a common territory and most of all a common culture.⁴ Stalin’s definition was basically to serve a political purpose and if stretched would allow for one dominant culture to subsume others and even kill them. The stress on ‘a psychological make-up manifested in a common culture’ which was central to Stalin’s definition of the nation led to concerted efforts to secure homogeneity through a range of means including mass murders, forcible displacement of the people from their lands and colonization during the War years and subsequently.⁵ However, both definitions do provide some important aspects of national formation, but because of the diverse characteristics among the various nations with their own forms of nationalism, neither or even both can be seen as providing a comprehensive definition that would fit all the nations in one.

² Stalin. Joseph, *Marxism and the National Question*, (*Prosveshcheniye*, Nos. 3-5, 1913) <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1913/03.htm> (accessed on March 29, 2017)

³ This definition does not sets apart those human collectivity that may have been brought together by will and consciousness and collective memory together with collective amnesia but not for nation building rather for other purposes. For instance, the members of a club or residents of a locality.

⁴ Stalin’s definition excludes countries like India and Israel which did not have any common language or territory before they came into being.

⁵ Unpublished paper Dr V. Krishna. Ananth, *Reclaiming The Nation and Nationalism: A Marxist Praxis*, (Presented at the International Conference on Marxism & Contemporary South Asia: Relevance and Issues, November 11 – 12, 2016; Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, South Asia University and Rosa Luxemburg – Stiftung).

It was at least one hundred years after Renan that Ernest Gellner introduced a new approach to understand the idea of nation. That was in 1983. His approach was to understand nations through the spirit of nationalism. In his view, nations are created by nationalism.⁶ It made sense to the newly independent colonies. In the same year, Benedict Anderson defined the nation as an imagined political community which is imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign,⁷ and this indeed was a considerably radical attempt in comparison with the existing theoretical presumptions.

Anderson pointed out that nations are imagined because even the members of the smallest nations never know about their fellow-members, meet them or hear about them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of communion. They are imagined as limited because not a single nation, even the largest one, will ever imagine to comprise all the members of the human race. There always is another nation beyond its boundaries that would consist other humans. They are imagined as sovereign because the concept of nation was born during the time when Enlightenment and Revolutions were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm. They tended to free themselves from any such religious dictums. And they are imagined as community because even if the inequality and exploitation exist, nations are conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.⁸

In this definition, Anderson lays down an interesting contrary element of the nation. That is, at one level it is invented and imagined and at another level it is real and demands human sacrifice. It is real to such an extent that some of its citizens sacrifice their lives for its protection, yet can be approached only through the

⁶ Gellner. Ernest, *Nations and Nationalism* (Cornell University Press, 1983)

⁷ Anderson. Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New Delhi: Rawat Publication (Reprint), 2015), p- 6

⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 6-7.

imagination. By bringing in the concepts like death and sacrifice, Anderson attempted to discuss nation from the ordinary peoples' perspective. This is important because nations consist of a 'dual phenomena' which are "constructed essentially from above, but which cannot be understood unless also analysed from below, that is in terms of the assumption, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people."⁹

The question that arises now is how is it that something that is constructed essentially from above represents the sentiments such as the hopes and needs in the minds of the ordinary people? This question has also been the reference point for historians like E.J Hobsbawm to understand nations and nationalism. For a clearer understanding of the concept 'nation', it then becomes necessary to understand why ordinary people sacrifice their lives and feel a sense of communion towards other fellow members and identify themselves as the members of a community which is invented and imagined. And this leads us to comprehend the concept of nationalism in a historical sense.

Nationalism is an important element of any nation that exist today. This is why Ernest Gellner pointed out that a nation can be analysed through its nationalism. He defined nationalism as "a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent."¹⁰ In addition, nationalism is not a onetime phenomenon. It needs to be reinvented or reimagined in regular intervals. Hobsbawm, meanwhile, argued that the nation "belongs exclusively to a particular, and historically recent, period."¹¹ The fact is that ever since the emergence of the nation, in its modern sense, new generations

⁹ Hobsbawm. J. E, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780 Programme, myth, reality* (Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 10.

¹⁰ Gellner. Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*.

¹¹ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780 Programme, myth, reality*, p. 9

have taken birth and died and it is then necessary to internalise that the nation too has undergone mutations in the course of this process.

Therefore, it is also necessary for the nations to recapitulate the nationalism in the minds of its citizens regularly to make them feel that they are the members of the community which is actually imagined. In a sense, it is the continuous *re-creation* of the imagination. In this sense, a historical study on nationalism would also comprise the analysis of nationalism in its present form and the constant mutations it had gone through over a period of historical time, which this chapter intends to do.

Modern nationalistic ideas and nationalism as an ideology which indeed had and continues to contribute to “the readiness of people to identify themselves emotionally with ‘their’ nation and to be politically mobilized as Czechs, Germans, Italians.., a readiness which could be politically exploited”¹² emerged after what Hobsbawm called the ‘dual revolution’ in Western Europe. The European society which was transformed due to the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution became a fertile ground for the growth of nationalism.

During the 1780s, with the help of technological advancement, humans were able to take the ‘shackles’ off from their productive power. This led to the limitless multiplication of men, goods and services. Britain, with its imperial rule of exploitation of labour and wars, gained monopoly over the cotton industry. With the technological improvements in the spinning, looming and weaving, it was able to fulfil the demands of cotton markets abroad. Plus, the birth of the railways in the first half of the nineteenth century proliferated other industries like iron. The expansion of industrialisation was unprecedented. However, this expansion had also created its own contradictions. In

¹² Hobsbawm. E. J, *The Age of Empire* (Vintage Books, April 1989), p. 143.

Britain, where the industrial revolution emerged and expanded more than anywhere else, the living conditions of the labours and proletariat deteriorated. This explains why the “simple-minded labourers reacted to the new system by smashing the machines which they thought responsible for their troubles.”¹³ Exploitation of labourers was the key feature of the industrial revolution “which kept its incomes at subsistence level, thus enabling the rich to accumulate the profits which financed industrialisation (and their own ample comforts), antagonised the proletariat.”¹⁴

It could be stated that the burden of the industrial revolution was held by labourers without bearing any fruits for themselves in return. At one level, the industrial revolution created discontent among the labourers and proletariats, at another level it also transformed the old social and political structures in the European societies. It was now that the economy was going to govern the societies and “the gods and kings of the past were powerless before the businessmen and steam engines of the present.”¹⁵

At the time when Britain was witnessing social transformation through industrial revolution a kingdom on its south, across the English Channel, was witnessing its own social transformation through a political revolution known as French revolution. Whereas the industrial revolution in Britain laid down the foundation for the future economic structure and one that would render capitalism as a world system, the French Revolution of 1789 laid the foundation of the political ideology for most of the future emerging nations. “Britain provided the model for its railways and factories, the economic explosive which cracked open the traditional economic and social structures of the non-European world; but France made its revolution and gave them

¹³ Hobsbawm. E.J, *The Age of Revolution 1789-1848* (Sphere Books, 1973), p. 55.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.55

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 69

their ideas, to the point where a tricolour of some kind became the emblem of virtually every emerging nation, and European (or indeed world) politics between 1789 and 1917.”¹⁶

The period preceding 1789 in French and other societies was the period of crisis of the old regime. The crisis was due to the years of exploitation of the peasantry and other low classes of the people by the privileged few. “Ancien regime society-in France, as elsewhere, on the Continent—was essentially inegalitarian.”¹⁷ It was the exploitation of the masses by the French noblemen which made it necessary for the French revolution not just to introduce the foundation of the nation state but also decide on the status of the individuals within the nation state. Hence, the ideology of national citizenship was also the by-product of the French revolution.

Brubaker argues: “Citizenship was central to the theory and practice of the French Revolution. This can be seen by considering the Revolution successively as (1) a bourgeois revolution, (2) a democratic revolution, (3) a national revolution, and (4) a bureaucratic, state-strengthening revolution. These perspectives are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive, but they bring into focus the multiple significance of the French Revolution for the development of the modern institution of national citizenship.”¹⁸

In simple terms, the French revolution introduced the world to two varied, yet closely related, phenomenon that were the nation and the idea of national citizenship. The relationship between the idea of the nation and the idea of national citizenship could also be seen in the emergence of nationalism in the countries that gained their independence from colonial rule during the twentieth century, prominent among those

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 73

¹⁷ Brubaker. R. Williams, *The French Revolution and the Invention of Citizenship*, French Politics and Society, Vol 7, No 3, Commemorating the French, p. 31.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, pp.34-35.

being India; the case of India and its independence is important not only in the context of the de-colonisation in the post-War world but also from the point that India's independence and the nationalism as it emerged in that context calls for a treatment as a historical process central to the concerns of this thesis. In this premise, an attempt will be made to locate the emergence of Indian nationalism in order to understand the complexities of the concept and its representation and misrepresentation by the media in our own times.

This chapter has four sections. Section one is about the evolution of Indian nationalism. Section two deals with the role of the press in the construction of Indian nationalism and will also try to locate the struggle for Civil liberties which is parallel to the history of press in India. Section three is about civil liberties as a prominent feature of the Constitutional scheme that India adopted in the wake of independence on January 26, 1950. Section four deals with the representation of the nation and nationalism in the contemporary context in the Indian media in brief. It will further look into the role of the media in manufacturing a consensus behind a certain Right wing notion of the idea of nation and nationalism as distinct from the historical process of the emergence of nationalism in India. In order to substantiate the arguments, two major events that were extensively reported by the Indian press in the past few years – the Anna Hazare movement since 2011 involving the fast by the Octogenarian and the events in New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University since February 2016 -- have been taken for analysis.

I

Indian Nationalism

Till the eighteenth century, as it was with societies in other parts of the world, societies in the Indian subcontinent were also largely agrarian. But one major difference between the agrarian societies of Europe and India was the absence of any class of land owners in India.¹⁹ The Monarch definitely took the lion's share of the produce from the peasants but he too was not regarded as the owner of the lands. In fact, it was the village community, which as a whole had ownership of their village lands including the commons. This equation, however, changed after the British emerged victorious in Battle of Plassey in 1757.

A major change in the Indian agrarian structure, particularly in Bengal, came in the form of the Permanent Revenue Settlement of 1793. Governor General, Lord Cornwallis, created a class of landlords "out of the tax farmers in the provinces who had been appointed by the political predecessors of the British rulers to collect revenue from these provinces on a commission basis."²⁰

There were two major implications of the new land settlements introduced by the British Raj. Firstly, it was the commodification of land and commercialisation of agriculture in India. As stated earlier, the lands in pre-British era belonged to the community as a whole. This changed and the lands now became a commodity to be bought and sold in the market. In traditional agricultural settings, the villagers produced largely for the consumption within themselves. After the new land settlements,

¹⁹ I am using this in the sense that land in pre-British India was not a commodity as it happened after the British established their presence in India and the advent of the various land revenue regimes in the various parts. This, and the debate among economic historians, however, are not central to the concerns of this study and it is suffice to mention this.

²⁰ Desai. A.R, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* (Popular Prakashan Pvt. Ltd, 1948), p. 31

agricultural produce was predominantly for the market. Apart from these, the new land settlements turned the isolated village character of agriculture into a national character. It did not mean an improvement in the level of the living condition of the ryots. Instead, this had made the peasantry restive and later on turned them against the imperialist forces. In other words, one can find the roots of the *kisan Sabhas* in the various localized peasant/tribal revolts in different parts of the country against manifestations of the colonial agricultural policies, prominently the alienation of land from the peasants and the incidents of evictions and this indeed culminated in the formation of the All India Kisan Sabha in 1935. In the 1930s, the peasants became a significant part of the national liberation movement in India.

One of the major factors that contributed towards the emergence of Indian nationalism was the introduction and expansion of the transport and communication system that connected the unconnected regions in India. It was, indeed, to serve the purpose of colonialism: The industrial revolution in the Britain gave rise to powerful machines based industries, enhancing the production of goods and these products produced in these factories needed to be disposed in the markets outside Britain. Mass production meant more demands for raw material from India and other colonies. It was also the time when the British wanted to extend their influence into the inner segments of the Indian society. Better transportation system was needed for political-administrative and military- strategic reasons. Hence, the British got involved in the development of transportation, particularly railways. This was also possible because the capitalist bourgeoisie of England wanted to invest their surplus capital which cannot always be employed in England. As A.R.Desai put it:

An outlet was needed for this surplus capital. If the Indian government were to adopt a programme of railway construction, it would require capital. A part of the surplus capital accumulated in Britain could be loaned to the Indian government and thus find an outlet.²¹

However, an unintended impact of this was the physical unification of the country that contributed to development of nationalism in India. It may be stressed here that Gandhi, since his return to India in January 1916, could not have reached all parts of India if the British did not develop the transport and communication system.

Together with the changes in the agrarian structure, transportation and communication, another colonial contribution in building Indian nationalism was in the education sector. The smooth functioning of the colonial order and its economy needed the persons with 'scientific' knowledge. And to administer the large colony like India, it was impossible for the British to import the large numbers of educated individuals from Britain. "The political-administrative and economic necessity mainly urged the British government to establish schools and colleges in India."²² Needless to say, these universities and colleges became the hubs of nationalist activities while the early leadership for the national movement came from among those who went to England for higher learning.

The economic and administrative transformation on the one side and the growth of western education on the other gave the space to the growth of the new social classes. Within these social classes a modern Indian intelligentsia developed. It was this modern Indian intelligentsia that laid the foundations for Indian nationalism. Ram Mohan Roy was one of the prominent members of this intelligentsia. However, it was not an easy job for Ram Mohan Roy and others like him to create the national consciousness among the people who were largely influenced by the religious idioms than any political

²¹ *Ibid* pp. 118-119.

²² *Ibid*. p. 130.

ideologies. Roy himself was greatly influenced by the events of 1789 in France. As Hobsbawm pointed out, the French revolution's "direct influence radiated as far as Bengal, where Ram Mohan Roy was inspired by it to found the first Hindu reform movement, the ancestor of modern Indian nationalism. (When he visited England in 1830, he insisted on travelling in a French ship to demonstrate his enthusiasm for its principles)."²³

From his understanding of the French revolution, Roy rightfully realized that the Indian national consciousness cannot gain momentum until and unless the common Indian masses were brought into its ambit. For this, it was necessary for him and other concurring individuals to work for the socio-cultural reforms. Hence, the Brahma Samaj was founded by Roy in the year 1828. Soon, other socio-cultural organisations were founded like the Prarthana Samaj, the Arya Samaj among the Hindus, the Ahmadiya and Aligarh movement among the Muslims, apart from such caste based organisations as the Kayasth Sabha, Sarin Sabha, etc. "Given the inter-connection between religious beliefs and social practices, religious reformation was a necessary pre-requisite for social reform."²⁴

It was a historical necessity, then, to draw the common man into the ambit of nationalistic feeling. However, the character of the social reform movement too underwent a transformation with the realization that the existence of such organisations were antithetical to the secular fabric of the society. This rupture, indeed, is to be stressed to make sense of its revival of sorts, in the present context with the attempts at building a consensus on nation and nationalism by the Right wing on Hindutva

²³ Hobsbawm. E.J, *The Age of Revolution 1789-1848*, p. 75

²⁴ Panikkar. N. K, 'Socio-Religious Reforms and the National Awakening', in Chandra. Bipan et al., *India's Struggle for Independence 1857- 1947* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1989). P-83.

nationalism and the role of the media in this attempt. The emergence of the Hindu nationalism and the manner in which it is a departure from the mainstream of the emergence of Indian nationalism will be discussed in detail later (in Chapter III) in this thesis. However, it is appropriate to deal with this aspect, in brief, here.

Some historians argue that the 1857 revolt was the first instance of the independence struggle, but the revolt lacked a national character; it was restricted to few regions like Avad and Delhi. Major regions like Punjab, Bengal and the South of India were hardly affected. Though “the rebels received the sympathy of the people, the country as a whole was not behind them. The merchants, intelligentsia and Indian rulers not only kept aloof, but actively supported the British.”²⁵

The lessons of the 1857 revolt was that no nationalist struggle could be successful until and unless the struggle is given a national character. And for this, it was necessary to create nationalist feelings and give emphasis to the unity of Indians. Though the British succeeded in quelling the 1857 revolt, Indians continued to show their discontent against the colonial ruler, particularly in the years preceding 1885. As for instance, since 1875, the Indian Textile Industry was campaigning against the cotton import duties. Indianisation of Government services was another major demand of the campaigns organized since 1877. Indians were also opposing the British Government’s Afghan adventure. On the other side, the Indian Press was opposing the Vernacular Press Act of 1878. There were agitations during 1883 in favour of the Illbert Bill which would have enabled Indian magistrates to try Europeans.²⁶ Through these demonstrations and agitations and many more, Indians continued to pressurize the British Imperial Government. All these culminated in the emergence of the new

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 38.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 73.

political organisation, the Indian National Congress, in 1885. This institutionalized the process. The Indian National Congress, in its initial years, attempted to do this. “India had just entered the process of becoming a nation or a people. The first major objective of the founders of the Indian national movement was to promote this process, to weld Indians into a nation, to create an Indian people.”²⁷ The Indian National Congress also became the foundation for secular nationalism in India.

At this point it is necessary to note that the leaders of the Indian National Congress gave much emphases to political democracy. “They based their politics on the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people, or, as Dadabhai Naoroji put it, on ‘the new lesson that Kings are made for the people, not peoples for their kings’.”²⁸ Therefore, the idea of national citizenship that emerged during the French revolution could also be seen as emerging in the midst of modern Indian Nationalist thought.

Meanwhile, it is necessary to stress here that although there were stirrings of such ideas of a ‘national citizenship’ in the late 19th Century, nationalism in India emerged as a pan-Indian movement only after the arrival of Gandhi in India. The idea of ‘national citizenship’ got magnified after the entry of Gandhi into the scene of the Indian freedom struggle. When M. K. Gandhi returned to India in January 1915 he already had experiences of organizing and participating in the protests with both the poor and the rich. The experiences he had gained in South Africa made him believe in the capacity of the common people in sacrificing and fighting for their rights. It was because of this that during his speech in the Banaras Hindu University he reminded everyone that the “salvation can only come through the farmer. Neither the lawyers,

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 74.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 78

nor the doctors, nor the rich landlords are going to secure it.”²⁹ His confidence on the method of *Satyagraha* as an effective form of protest rested on his confidence on the capacity of the common people who otherwise were considered docile. He not only identified himself with the common masses but also participated and led their movement in Champaran, Ahmedabad and Kheda, which were indeed dress rehearsals for the much larger freedom struggle he led since then and until the exit of the British rulers in August 1947.

Indian nationalism, hence, cannot be understood without the actions and aspirations of the common mass. The attempt to sensitize the Indian masses on the nationalistic terms which was started during the first half of the nineteenth century by individuals like Ram Mohan Roy and was furthered by leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji was now completed by Gandhi.

What Gandhi, unlike other leaders of the freedom struggle leaders, succeeded in was to inject the national consciousness deep into the inner segments of the Indian society. After joining the freedom struggle, he ensured the participation of the common masses in the freedom struggle. For instance, during the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920-22, he asked congress to “reach down to the village and the *mohalla* level by the formation of village and *mohalla* or ward committees.”³⁰

At this point, while we are discussing the significance of common mass in the freedom struggle, it is important for the concerns of this thesis in general and this chapter in particular, to discuss on civil liberties which is indispensable to any movement for liberation. No discussion on nationalism is complete without the

²⁹ Gandhi Literature: Collected Works of Gandhi Vol. No- 15

³⁰ Mukherjee. Mridula, ‘The Non-Cooperation Movement- 1920-22’, in Chandra. Bipan et al., *India’s Struggle for Independence 1857- 1947*, pp. 186-87.

discussion on national citizenship. Similarly, no discussion on national citizenship is complete without the discussion on civil liberties.

II

Press and Civil liberties

British India had a long history of scuttling Indian voices; so they thought, they could prevent the rise of Indian nationalistic sentiments. The history of struggle for civil liberties, which indeed was an integral part of the Indian national movement, was also accompanied and ran in tandem with the history of the press in India. This section will discuss the history of the struggle for civil liberties in the larger context of freedom of expression and the press.

The first newspaper in India *Bengal Gazette*³¹ or *The Calcutta General Advertiser* with the masthead “A Weekly Political and Commercial Paper, Open to All Parties but Influenced by None” started publication on 29th January 1780. It was a weekly paper owned by James Augustus Hickey in Calcutta (now Kolkata). However, this would not have been possible without the establishment of printing press in India; the credit goes to the Portuguese who first brought the printing press to India in 1557.

³¹ Though Bengal Gazette was the first ever newspaper in India it was never meant to be for Indians. It was the product of rivalry between the two once contending candidates of Governor Generalship Philip Francis and Warren Hastings. It was because of the support of Philip Francis that Hickey was able to start a newspaper in India. Naturally, the paper targeted the Company’s government lead by Warren Hastings. Also it carried the reports of parties and balls given by European residents. Broadly, the paper was interested in targeting Warren Hastings and carrying sensationalizing stories that would interest Europeans. In addition, the paper also carried advertisements which shows how it viewed the non-Europeans. For Instance, on 16th December 1780 an advertisement announced the availability of slave boy for sale. “It reads: TO be SOLD: A fine Coffre Boy that understands the Business of a Butler, Kismutdar and Cooking. Price four hundered Sicca Rupees. Any Gentlement wanting such a Servant may see him, and be informed of further particulars by applying to the printer.”(Moitra. Mohit, *A History of Indian Journalism*, National Book Agency Pvt. Ltd, Calcutta 1969) Another advertisement read “A garden house and ground situated at Taltolah Bazar, which to any gentleman about to leave India, who may be solicitous to provide for an Hindoostanee female friend, will be found a most desirable purchase.”(Moitra, Mohit, , *A History of Indian Journalism*, p. 27)

Later, in 1674, the British East India Company installed printing presses in Bombay (now Mumbai). This was followed by the installation of more printing presses in Madras (now Chennai) and Kolkata in 1772 and 1779 respectively. After the East India Company won the Battle of Plassey in 1757 the importance of Calcutta as a center of political and commercial activities increased. “It was but natural that India’s first newspaper should also be published from this new city.”³²

This was also the time when European missionaries were actively using newspapers like Serampore Journals for the promotion of Christianity and the interests of the British Empire. While promoting Christianity, these newspapers also used this tool to derogate the native religions. In response to this onslaught, Indians like Ram Mohun Roy started three weekly journals, namely *Sambad Kaumidi* in Bengali, *Mirat ul Akbhar* in Persian and *Brahmunical Magazine* in English during 1821. Through these journals, Roy countered the missionaries’ and their derogatory campaign against Indian religions and also tried to educate the Indian society on the quintessential need for social reforms. “The first among the Indian owned newspapers of whose sustained publication there is evidence, Rammohun Roy’s publication marked the true beginning of Indian Journalism. They addressed mainly to Indians, but also appealed to the better sense of Englishmen living in India.”³³

Interestingly, even before Roy endeavored into the print journals, the Censorship of Press Act of 1799, which was also known as Wellesley regulation 1799,

³² Moitra. Mohit, *A History of Indian Journalism* (Calcutta: National Book Agency Pvt. Ltd, 1969).

³³ Raghavan. G. N. S, *The Press in India: A New History* (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1994), p. 8.

was in force.³⁴ Governor General Wellesley enacted this law to control the published materials of other European countries, particularly the French, which would damage the interest of British rule in India. The law, however, was scrapped by the Marquess of Hastings in 1818. Though many in the Government argued for control of the press, Hastings believed that “a responsible attitude towards public opinion would foster a sense of responsibility in the press.”³⁵

After John Adam became the Governor General, he introduced a new regulation known as the Licensing Regulation Act in 1823. According to this regulation it became mandatory for all the publishers to acquire license for their publications. Rs 400 fine and imprisonment not exceeding four months were imposed as penalty for printing and publishing any literature without the requisite license. Magistrates were given the power to confiscate the unlicensed presses. And also all the printed materials was now required to bear, on the first and last pages, the names of the printer and of the city, town or place where the paper was printed. Such a regulation was necessary, from the oppressive colonial rulers’ point of view, for by now Indians like Roy were engaged in publishing their own journals. In fact, *Mirat-ul-Akbar* was among the newspapers whose writings were cited as justification of the regulations. “It was known for its moderate language and constructive attitude and Ram Mohun Roy had pledged himself to have due regards for truth and for rank of persons in authority”; his two-fold objective was to enlighten the public and to “communicate to the rulers a knowledge of the real situation of their subjects and make the subjects acquainted with the established laws and customs of their rulers; that the rulers may more readily find an opportunity of

³⁴ It may be pointed out here that this was many years after John Milton rendered the *Aeropagatica*, a treatise on freedom of expression and speech before the English Parliament, opposing any attempt to curtail the freedom.

³⁵ Rau. Chalapathi. M, *The Press*, (New Delhi: National Book Trust, India, 1974), pp. 28-29.

granting relief to the people, and the people may be put in possession of the means of obtaining protection and redress from their rulers”. But the newspaper attracted the displeasure of the Government.³⁶

In response, Roy wrote a memorandum to the Supreme Court and protested against the regulations restricting the freedom of press. Thus begins the struggle for freedom of expression and press in India. Mridula Mukherjee argues:

Even before the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885, which we usually take as the beginning of the modern national movement, right from the 1860, 1870, 1880, the demand for civil liberties, and particularly for freedom of press was an invariant part of the programme of Indian nationalist.³⁷

Yet another curb on the freedom of the press was the Gagging Act of 1857. Through this, Governor General Canning, on 13th June 1857, imposed the Licensing Regulation Act of 1823 to the whole of India. The imposition of this Act was the rulers’ response towards the role of the press owned by Indians during the revolt of 1857.

Some Indian language newspapers, like *Payam-e-Azadi*, which started its publication that very year in Hindi and Urdu called upon the people to fight against the British rule. *Samachar Sudhavarshan*, *Dorbeen* and *Sultan-ul-Akbhar*, newspapers in Hindi, Urdu and Persian respectively, published Bahadur Shah Zafar’s appeal to the people to drive the British out of India.³⁸ Apart from few of these instances, the press largely did not play any active role in the revolt of 1857. Rev. Long, in his 1859 report, said: “The opinions of the native press may often be regarded as the safety value which gives warning of danger. Thus had the Delhi Native Newspapers of January 1857 been

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 33.

³⁷ Mukherjee. Mridula, ‘Civil Liberties and Indian Nationalism’, in Azad. Rohit et al., (ed), *What The Nation Really Needs To Know, The JNU Nationalism Lectures* (India: Harper Collins Publishers India, 2016), p. 66.

³⁸ Raghavan. G. N. S, *The Press in India: A New History*, p- 18.

consulted by European functionaries, they would have seen in them how the Natives were ripe for revolt, and were expecting aid from Persia and Russia.”³⁹

It may then be held that the decades following the 1857 revolt were when Indians expressed their discontent against the oppressive colonial rule. Because of the absence of any platform from where mass agitation could be carried out, their expressions of protest were confined to specific areas and issues. At this time “the Press was the chief instrument for carrying out this task, that is, for arousing, training, mobilizing and consolidating nationalist public opinion.”⁴⁰

This pattern – the nexus between the political and the press – continued since then and was clearer when the Indian National Congress was founded in 1885. A large number of the prominent members of the Indian National Congress, it may be stressed, happened to be editors and most of them were wedded to the cause of nationalism. And newspapers acted as messengers to convey the resolutions and proceedings of the Congress sessions to the people. “Interestingly, nearly one-third of the founding fathers of the Congress in 1885 were journalists.”⁴¹ Naturally, it was also the time when major Indian owned newspapers came into being; like the *Hindu* and *Swadesamitran* under the editorship of G. Subramaniya Iyer in Madras, *Kesari* and *Mahratta* under B. G. Tilak in Bombay, *Bengalee* under Surendranath Banerjea, *Amrita Bazar Patrika* by Sisir Kumar Ghosh and Motilal Ghosh in Calcutta, to name a few. The Newspapers now were not only carrying the nationalist messages to the urban literate subscribers but were also catering to the rural illiterate Indians. “A newspaper would reach remote

³⁹ Rau. Chalapathi. M, *The Press*, p. 65.

⁴⁰ Chandra. Bipan, ‘The Fight to Secure Press Freedom’, in Chandra. Bipan et al., *India’s Struggle for Independence 1857- 1947*, p. 102.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

village and would then be read by a reader to tens of others.”⁴² For the first time, in Indian history, the press was used in a major way to generate public opinion against the oppressive policies and actions of the colonial government by informing them about those political issues regularly. Viceroy Dufferin wrote, in March 1886: ‘Day after day, hundreds of sharp-witted babus pour forth their indignation against their English oppressor in very pungent and effective diatribe.’ The effective use of the press could also be seen through Dufferin’s statement where he added: ‘In this way there can be no doubt there is generated in the minds of those who read these papers...a sincere conviction that we are all of us the enemies of mankind in general and of India in particular.’⁴³

The impact of the press in arousing the nationalist consciousness could also be understood through the response of the British. The colonial rulers got worried to such an extent that two new regulations were introduced for censoring the press within a short span of eight years: Section 124 A of the Indian Penal Code in 1870 and the Vernacular Press Act in 1878. But as we have seen in the case of the Licensing Regulation Act in 1823, every oppressive attempt to curb the freedom of expression and the press had also met with resistance in one form or another. When Section 124A was inserted in the Indian Penal Code, the Indian nationalists developed new strategies like extracting and publishing anti-imperialist notes from London based socialist and Irish newspapers or letters from radical British citizens to their own writings. They knew that it was not easy for the rulers to discriminate and punish the Indians separately in the event. According to Section 124 A, “Whoever attempts to excite feelings of

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 103.

⁴³ Dufferin to Secretary of State, 21 March and 17 May 1886, Dufferin Papers. Referred in Chandra. Bipan, ‘The Fight to Secure Press Freedom’ Chandra. Bipan et al., *India’s Struggle for Independence 1857- 1947*, pp. 103-104.

disaffection to the Government established by law in British India” was to be punished with transportation for life or for any term or with imprisonment upto three years. This clause was, moreover, later supplemented with even more strident measures.⁴⁴ Defiance of this regulation by leaders like Tilak (in 1897 and in 1906) and Gandhi (in 1922), which will be discussed later in this chapter, became the eminent examples of the struggle for freedom of expression and press by the Nationalists and in the process the combining of the two.

The Indian owned newspapers like *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, published in both Bengali and English, were much effective in disseminating the nationalistic ideas among the masses. It was in this context that the colonial rulers imposed the Vernacular Press Act in 1878. According to this Act, printing presses, papers and other materials of the newspaper could be confiscated if the Government believed that it was publishing seditious materials and had flouted an official warning. To counter this, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, which was initially in Bengalee language, converted itself into an English newspaper overnight. The Act was firmly opposed by the Indian nationalists and demonstrations were organized in Kolkata; various public bodies and the press also campaigned against it. The Act was finally repealed in 1881.

Soon, the time had come when the Indian nationalist leaders were jailed because of their journalistic work. The first leader to be jailed for his “seditious” writing was Surendranath Banerjea. He was hauled up for contempt of court for writing an editorial, on 2 April 1883, in his newspaper *Bengalee*. The incident goes like this. “A dispute concerning a family idol, a *saligram*, had come up before Justice Norris of the Calcutta High Court. To decide the age of the idol, Norris ordered it to be brought to the Court

⁴⁴ Chandra. Bipan, ‘The Fight to Secure Press Freedom’, in Chandra. Bipan et al., *India’s Struggle for Independence*, p. 104.

and pronounced that it could not be a hundred years old. This action deeply hurt the sentiments of the Bengalee Hindus.”⁴⁵ Banerjea criticized Justice Norris for his action in his editorial. And for this he was sentenced for two months imprisonment. The silver lining of this episode of the Indian freedom struggle was that there were popular reaction against it. Spontaneous *hartals* was held in Calcutta. Students demonstrated outside the court. Demonstrations were held in other towns of Bengal and also in Lahore, Amritsar, Agra, Fyzabad, Poona and other cities. What these demonstrations and protests signified was that it was not only the nationalist leaders but also the common people who were now in support of freedom of expression and the press, particularly because they realized that freedom of expression and press were immanent in Indian freedom struggle.

The next important chapter in the struggle for freedom of expression and the press had begun with the intervention of Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Tilak, in collaboration with G. G. Agarkar, had founded *Kesari* and *Mahratta* in Marathi and English respectively in 1881. He used these papers to raise the discontent of the people against the oppressive colonial rule. He called for national resistance against it. It needs to be mentioned here that Tilak, like Gandhi, was a firm believer in the important role that the lower middle classes, peasants, artisans and workers could play in the national movement. Therefore, he also criticized the Indian National Congress for ignoring the peasants through his paper *Kesari* in 1897 where he wrote:

The country's emancipation can only be achieved by removing the clouds of lethargy and indifference which have been hanging over the peasant, who is the soul of India. We must remove these clouds, and for that we must completely identify ourselves with the peasant- we must feel that he is ours and we are his. Only when this is done would the Government realize

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p- 106.

that to despise the Congress is to despise the Indian Nation. Then only will the efforts of the Congress leaders be crowned with success.⁴⁶

One can easily discern the analogy between these words of Tilak and that of Gandhi later in a speech at the inauguration of Banaras Hindu University.

On 27th July 1897, Tilak was arrested and charged under Section 124 A of the Indian Penal Code. He was charged with sedition for his publication of a poem ‘*Shivaji’s Utterance*’ in the *Kesari* on 15 June 1897. This poem was read out by a young man at the Shivaji Festival.⁴⁷ During the festival, Tilak also delivered a speech in defense of Shivaji’s killing of Afzal Khan. ‘Tilak’s defence of Shivaji’s killing of Afzal Khan was portrayed by the prosecution as an incitement to kill British officials.’⁴⁸ He was sentenced for eighteen months of rigorous imprisonment. It should be noted here that Tilak, at that time, was a member of the Bombay Legislative Council.

As it happened when Surendranath Banerjea was imprisoned, people did protest Tilak’s imprisonment too. The Moderate nationalists, who were otherwise critical of Tilak’s ways, also organized a country-wide protest movement. The trial stands, till today, as one of the worst examples of the attack on the freedom of expression and an attempt to curb the press freedom. Interestingly, this colonial aberration, 124A (sedition charges) is used by the post independent rulers to curb the freedom of expression even today.

Tilak was arrested for the second time on 24th June 1908 under the charges of sedition for writing a series of articles on the ‘Bomb’ that were being used by some of the extremists group among the Indian nationalists. In his articles, though Tilak

⁴⁶ D. V. Tahmankar, *Lokamanya Tilak*, London (1956), p. 73; and Ram Gopal, *Lokamanya Tilak*, p. 133. Referred in Chandra. Bipan et al., *India’s Struggle for Independence 1857- 1947*, pp. 107-108

⁴⁷ Tilak started Shivaji festival in 1896 to propagate nationalism among young Maharashtrians.

⁴⁸ Chandra. Bipan, ‘The Fight to Secure Press Freedom’, in Chandra. Bipan et al., *India’s Struggle for Independence*, p. 109.

condemned the use of violence, he blamed the British government for inviting such violence by suppressing criticism and dissent and the urge of the people for greater freedom. In both the cases – first on 27th July 1897 and 24th June 1908 – Tilak pleaded not guilty and stated in the court “Tilak or no Tilak is not the question. The question is, do you really intend, as guardians of the liberty of the Press, to allow as much liberty here in India as is enjoyed by the people of England?”⁴⁹ On the second occasion, Tilak was sentenced to six years imprisonment and transportation and was sent to prison in Mandalay in Burma.

Again, public reaction was massive. Other Newspapers came out openly and defended the freedom of press. Workers of all the textile mills and railway workshops in Bombay, went on strike for six days. Sixteen workers lost their lives when violence broke out between the workers and the army who were called to force workers to get back to their work.

The struggle for civil liberties, once again, strongly surfaced when Gandhi, after the Non- Cooperation movement, was arrested and put to trial under the same section of the IPC – Section 124 A – as Tilak. Gandhi was accused of sedition for writing articles in his paper, *Young India*, during 1922. While pronouncing his judgment, the judge stated that his offence was similar to that of Tilak and he would give him the same punishment -- of Six years of imprisonment -- that was given to Tilak. Gandhi's bold reply was that “Since you have done me the honour of recalling the trial of the late Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, I just want to say that I consider it to be proudest privilege and honour to be associated with his name.”⁵⁰ Interestingly, unlike Tilak,

⁴⁹ Pradhan and Bhagwat, *Lokamanta Tilak- A Biograpgy* (Bombay, 1958). Referred in Chandra. Bipan, ‘The Fight to Secure Press Freedom’, in Chandra. Bipan et al., *India's Struggle for Independence 1857-1947*, p. 111.

⁵⁰ Gandhi Literature: Collected Works of Gandhi Vol. No-23.

Gandhi pleaded guilty. His pleading of guilt also marks the change in the nature of Indian nationalism of 1922 to that of 1908. He explained to the masses that it was an honor to fight against the oppressive state and its illegitimate laws. In fact, this had already constituted the basis for the Champaran satyagraha, the protests against the Rowlatt Acts and the non-Cooperation movement and would occur later in the Civil Disobedience movement, the salt *satyagraha* and so on in the later stage of the freedom struggle.

Gandhi had already placed the idea of civil liberties in the context of the Non-Cooperation movement holding that “we must first make good the right of free speech and free association before we make any further progress towards our goal. We must defend these elementary rights with our lives.”⁵¹In one of the articles he wrote, Gandhi stressed:

Liberty of speech means that it is unassailed even when the speech hurts. Liberty of the press can be said to be truly respected only when the press can comment on the severest terms upon and even misrepresent matters. Freedom of association is truly respected when assemblies of people can discuss even revolutionary projects.⁵²

Gandhi was unambiguous on this and to him ‘Civil liberty, consistent with the observance of non-violence, is the first step towards *Swaraj*. It is the breath of political and social life, it is the *foundation of freedom*. There is no room here for dilution or compromise, it is the *water of life*.’⁵³(Emphasis added by author)

⁵¹ Mukherjee. Mridula, ‘Civil Liberties and Indian Nationalism’, in Azad. Rohit et al., (ed), *What The Nation Really Needs To Know, The JNU Nationalism Lectures* p. 72.

⁵² Gandhi Literature: Collected Works of Gandhi Vol. No-23. Referred in Mukherjee. Mridula, ‘Civil Liberties and Indian Nationalism’, in Azad. Rohit et al., (ed), *What The Nation Really Needs To Know, The JNU Nationalism Lectures*, p. 72.

⁵³ Gandhi Literature: Collected Works of Gandhi Vol. No- 69. Referred in Mukherjee. Mridula, ‘Civil Liberties and Indian Nationalism’, in Azad. Rohit et al., (ed), *What The Nation Really Needs To Know, The JNU Nationalism Lectures*, p. 72.

III

Civil liberties in the Constitution of India

As stated in the beginning of this section, the struggle for civil liberties were very much part of the process of the making of Indian nationalism and this was reflected in the famous Karachi resolution of the Indian National Congress, in 1931. It defined freedom in terms of the rights of the workers and the peasants, in terms of the fundamental rights.

The historical trajectory of Indian nationalism brings forth very clearly as to how valuable the idea of civil liberties was for both the leaders and the common people during freedom struggle. Whenever any leader was imprisoned for exercising their rights, the people reacted. Freedom of speech and expression was considered important, not just by the leaders, but by the common masses too. Many laid their lives for it, like in the case of mill workers strike after Tilak's arrest in 1908. Struggle for civil liberty was an integral part of the struggle for freedom from colonial rule. Therefore, it was natural that the constitution of independent India, given its history of such struggles, comprised of the civil liberties as one of its prominent features.

The 'Objective Resolution' that Jawaharlal Nehru moved in the Constituent Assembly on December 13, 1946, had this aspect in clear terms. This resolution carried the ideas like equality, liberty and democracy. Nehru himself was a staunch advocate of civil liberty. In 1936, he had said 'If civil liberties are suppressed, a nation loses all vitality and becomes impotent for anything substantial.'⁵⁴ Therefore, Article 19 (1) was one of the significant elements of Indian constitution when it was adopted on November 26, 1949 and brought into force on January 26, 1950. Accordingly all citizens shall have

⁵⁴ Jawaharlal. Nehru, Selected Works, Vol. 7. Referred in Mukherjee. Mridula, 'Civil Liberties and Indian Nationalism', in Azad. Rohit et al., (ed), *What The Nation Really Needs To Know, The JNU Nationalism Lectures*, p. 72.

the right to freedom of expression, to assemble peaceably and without arms, to form associations or unions, to move freely throughout the territory of India, to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India, to practice any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business.⁵⁵

On the matter of freedom of the press, there were many instances of intense debates in the Constituent Assembly on the need for separate provisions in the constitution itself. Some members of the Constituent Assembly, Somnath Lahiri in particular, argued in favour of adding some separate provision for the freedom of the press. During the debate on the Interim Report on Fundamental Rights he stated:

One vital thing which our people have been suffering from in the past has been the curtailment of liberty of the press by means of securities and by other methods. The press has been crushed completely. This is a thing against which every patriotic Indian is up in arms, including every congressman, and therefore, in his heart of hearts every Indian feels that in a free India in order that people may feel freedom and act up to it, there should not be such drastic curtailment of liberties of the press. But what do we find? There is not even a mention of the liberty of the press in the whole list of the fundamental rights submitted by the Committee, except a solitary mention made at one place that there will be liberty of expression.⁵⁶

However, the consensus was that Article 19 (1) (a), which guarantees the right to freedom of expression for all citizens itself carries the right to freedom of press. It was, rightfully, realized by the founding fathers of Indian constitution, that citizens could only exercise the right to freedom of expression if they are informed in the first place. And it was the press which was going to inform the citizens therefore, the right to freedom of press naturally flows from the right to freedom of expression.

There have been instances where the concerns of press freedom in the country have not only been extensively discussed and advocated but have also been a major

⁵⁵ It may be stressed here that these were enlisted as fundamental rights in the resolution at the Karachi session of the Indian National Congress. See Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, Vol. 1, (Padma Prakashan Bombay 1943).

⁵⁶ Constituent Assembly Debates, Book No. 1, 9th December, 1946 to 27th January 1948, Lok Sabha Secretariat, p. 404.

factor behind the judgments pronounced by the Supreme Court and thus rendering wide, the scope of Article 19 (1) (a). In one such judgment, for instance, in the Sakal Newspapers case (1961), the Supreme Court struck down the Newspapers (Price and Pages) Act, 1956 on grounds that it violated the freedom guaranteed under Article 19 (1) (a) of the Constitution.⁵⁷ The judgment was indeed a victory for press freedom. Another instance of this kind was in the battle between the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India and the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) in 1995.⁵⁸ The judiciary again stood for the freedom of speech and expression, which can only be achieved through freedom to propagate ideas and views, until and unless those ideas and views infringe law under Article 19 (2). Therefore, these were the instances where one of the pillars of Indian democracy, i.e. Judiciary stood by the freedom of fourth pillar of democracy, i.e. media.

The historical trajectory of Indian nationalism that we have discussed brings forth three important features of Indian nationalism. Firstly, like Professor Prabhat Patnaik argues, Indian nationalism which emerged in context of the anti-colonial struggle had to be inclusive.⁵⁹ As it was realized, particularly after 1857 revolt, that Indian nationalism could not succeed until and unless the common masses are encouraged to participate actively in it, nationalist leaders starting from Tilak to Gandhi emphasised on people's participation in the freedom struggle. Secondly, the struggle

⁵⁷ Sakal Newspapers vs Government of India AIR 1962 SC 305. The case pertained to the passing of the Newspaper (Price and Page) Act, 1960 fixing the maximum number of pages that could be published according to the price charged. On the grounds that it infringes upon the fundamental rights, ensured under Article 19 (1) (a) in the Constitution of India, of the citizens by limiting the maximum numbers of pages and by prescribing a price, the Supreme Court struck down the Act.

⁵⁸ Cricket Association of Bengal vs Ministry of Information and Broadcasting AIR 1995-SC-1236. In this case Supreme Court held that the broadcasting is the means of communication and therefore a medium of speech and expression. It also hold that no private individual institution or organisation nor any Government or Governmental organisation can claim exclusive right over broadcasting.

⁵⁹ Patnaik. Prabhat, 'Two Concepts of Nationalism', in Azad. Rohit et al., (ed.), *What The Nation Really Needs To Know, The JNU Nationalism Lectures*, pp. 230-240.

for civil liberty was ingrained in the struggle for freedom. Thirdly, because civil liberties like freedom of expression was underpinned by the freedom of press, Indian nationalists advocated for press freedom.

As freedom of the press is guaranteed through the freedom of expression, it is important to analyze how the media is representing nationalism in the present situation. While doing so, it also becomes necessary to analyze how and in what ways the discourse on civil liberties were presented within the larger discourse on nationalism. What needs to be noted here is that during the anti-colonial struggle, and till the time of framing the constitution, Indian nationalism largely remained secular. Though Hindu nationalist sentiments existed, it remained latent within the larger secular notion of nationalism. Then, the media played the larger role to manufacture a consensus around secular nationalism. However, over a period of time, it is Hindu nationalism or the understanding of Indian nationalism in religious terms which is gaining momentum. And the media is consciously playing an important role in creating a consensus on the resurgence of Hindu nationalism among the common masses which is indeed antithetical to the secular nationalism cultivated by the freedom struggle.

Therefore, in order to understand the resurgence of Hindu nationalism as a prominent discourse, the media representation of Indian nationalism is important. The next section will present the concept of representation in general and media representation in particular and this will also present two narratives from the recent past – the Anti-corruption movement or the Anna Hazare movement and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) controversy on nationalism after the arrest of then Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) president Kanhaiya Kumar.

IV

Representation of the nation and nationalism in the contemporary context in the Indian media

Stuart Hall defines representation as ‘the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to refer to either the “real” world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary world of fictional objects, people and events.’⁶⁰ There are broadly three approaches that tries to explain how representation of meaning through language works. It should be noted that the term ‘language’ here refers to a whole range of communication mediums like spoken words, written text, images and sounds, body gesture, etc.

The first approach is called reflective approach. In this the meaning is thought to be in the object, person, idea or event in the real world. Here language’s only function is believed to be like that of a mirror which reflects the true meaning as it already exists in the world. For instance, a pen is a pen. There are some flaws in this interpretation. An object can have different nouns in different languages. The English term ‘pen’ could not be used to refer the same object (pen) in Hindi or any other language.

The second approach is known as intentional approach. Here, the meaning is thought to be in the intentions of the speaker. For instance, a pen is pen because the author says so. This approach too has its own flaws. Every culture consists its own shared conceptual map, shared language system and the codes. When an author speaks the word ‘pen’ the listener imagines the real ‘pen’ because in his mind he has the concept of pen, which means both the speaker and the listener share the codes which

⁶⁰ Hall, Stuart, ‘The Works of Representation’, in Laurie Ouellette (ed), *The Media Studies Reader* (Routledge, NY 2013), p. 172.

fix the relationship between the concept of 'pen' and the spoken word 'pen'. It is also the code, which in the first place, makes the speaker speak the word 'pen' when he is referring to the object in which uses ink to write. Therefore, when we say the meaning lies with the speaker, we are actually ignoring the fact that the code has to be a shared code. The speaker cannot be the only source of the meaning of the word he is speaking.

Therefore, a third approach emerged which is called the constructionist approach. This approach discards the interpretations of representation provided by both the reflective and the intentional approaches. According to this approach, neither things in themselves nor the individual users of language can fix the meaning in language. One of the well-known theorists of this approach was Ferdinand de Saussure.

Saussure brought out the significance of language in the process of representation. For him, the production of meaning depended upon the language. Language, as a system of signs, serves to express or communicate ideas. Material objects themselves can also function as signs and communicate meanings too. Saussure analysed the sign in two elements. First, he argued that there is the actual form like the actual word 'pen', image (of a pen), and the object itself (a pen in real). This actual form he called signifier. Second, there are ideas or concepts in our mind with which the form is associated. For instance, the idea or concept of pen as an object which uses ink and is used to write. He named this element of sign as signified. Every time we see, read or hear the signifier (the word or image of pen), it correlates with the signified which is the concept of pen. To produce the meaning, both the signifier and the signified are required and it is the relation between them, fixed by our cultural and linguistic codes, which sustains representation. Signs in broader sense are the combination of the signifier and the signified. The fixing of relationship between the signifier and the

signified by our cultural and linguistic code is not static. Hence, in many cases, words and images can change their meaning and the concepts too can change.

Furthermore, Saussure emphasized on the differences within the languages like difference between a pen and a paper. For him, the difference within the language is fundamental to the production of meaning. It is difficult to define the meaning of the word 'pen' except in relation to, and in terms of its differences, from other writing objects like pencil, chalk and text marker.

Roland Barthes took this further ahead and introduced two levels of meaning. The first level, which he called as descriptive level, is the simple basic meaning of an object which most of the people would agree with. For instance, an object pen creates the concept of pen in our mind which means we all agree that it is a pen and not a pencil or a table. Barthes called this level as denotation. The second level of meaning, according to Barthes, arises from a wider kind of code. In this level, the sign is interpreted in wider realms of social ideology. For instance, an object (pen) is a weapon for journalists and writers. It is a tool for struggle against the oppressive elements in the society. This level, Barthes called, as connotation.

Later, Michel Foucault, based his interpretation of representation on the production of knowledge. Rather than just the meaning, Foucault focused on the production of knowledge through what he called discourse. 'His project,' he said, was to analyse 'how human beings understand themselves in our culture' and how our knowledge about 'the social, the embodied individual and shared meanings' comes to

be produced in different periods.’⁶¹ In doing so, Foucault shifted focus from language to discourse.

By ‘discourse’, Foucault meant ‘a group of statements which provide a language for talking about- a way of representing the knowledge about- a particular topic at a particular historical moment....Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. Butsince all social practices entail meanings, and meanings shape and influence what we do –our conduct- all practices have a discursive aspect.’⁶²

In other words, meaning ensues from knowledge which ensues from discourse. He further states that different historical epochs have different discourses and therefore the meaning of an object in one particular historical epoch may not be same in another historical period. However, in both the historical periods, meaning to that object is produced through the knowledge which is produced through the discursive formation. For instance, Sex and sexuality (as a matter of object here), did not need the secrecy till the beginning of the Seventeenth Century. There were no reticence and concealment when it came to sex and sexuality. It was only during the Seventeenth Century, with the beginning of the age of Victorian bourgeoisie, that sex and sexuality became a matter of secrecy.⁶³ Even the concept and meaning of mental illness that we have today was constructed within a definite discursive formation. It was ‘constituted by all that was said, in all the statements that named it, divided it up, described it, explained it, traced its development, indicated its various correlation, judged it, and possibly gave it speech by articulating, in its name, discourses that were to be taken as its own.’⁶⁴

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 185.

⁶² Hall. Stuart, ‘The West and the Rest’, Hall. Stuart and Gieben. B (ed.) *Formations of Modernity* (Cambridge Polity press, 1992), p. 291.

⁶³ Foucault. Michel, *The will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality: 1* (Penguin Books, 1998).

⁶⁴ Foucault. Michel, *The Archeology of Knowledge* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010).

In this larger framework of representation of the nation and nationalism where the media acted as agents of manufacturing consensus, two media events of importance will be analyzed in the following parts of this section

The Nation and Nationalism in the Media reportage of the Anti-corruption movement and JNU developments

The rationale behind taking these two events for analysis are the similarities and differences between them. The similarity between these events is that both these events were the demonstration of discontent of the citizens of a democratic country. Both the events were able to attract large scale media attention and thus caught the imagination of the people. However, the most surprising fact was that these events were treated very differently.

On 5th April 2011, anti-corruption activist Anna Hazare and his team geared up for an agitation against corruption in public life in India. Their hunger strike at New Delhi's *Jantar Mantar* attracted massive media attention which gave a huge hype to the issue. This helped the team Anna to scale up its agitation and gain popular support. One of the main demands of this movement was the inclusion of the civil society in drafting a stringent anti-corruption or Lokpal Bill. The octogenarian Gandhian activist from Maharashtra, "Anna" to his followers, by all means, was not the only person sitting on a hunger strike there. But he became the metaphor of the struggle against corruption due to the media coverage. While the government was drowning in a flood of corruption scandals – most prominently, the 2G spectrum allocation controversy and

the Commonwealth Games fiasco – Anna Hazare’s perfectly timed protest managed to ride the wave.’⁶⁵

The second event occurred on 12th February 2016 in the premises of the academically well-known Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). The elected president of the JNU Students’ Union, Kanhaiya Kumar, was arrested by the police from the JNU campus. This was followed by the arrest of two more students; Umar Khalid and Anirbhan Bhattacharya. All of them were arrested under the charges of sedition under Section 124 A of the Indian Penal Code for allegedly organizing and participating in an evening of poetry, speeches, talks and songs on campus on 9th February 2016, commemorating the execution of Afzal Guru the same day in 2013. Consequently, a video circulated in the social networking sites showing Kumar shouting slogans for the freedom of Kashmir and this was aired in some of the news channels.

An analysis of the nature of the presentation of both the events in the news television channels and newspapers are presented below. The footage from Times Now TV channel has been taken for close and intense analysis while those from other channels too are used intermittently.

To begin with, in the coverage of the anti-corruption movement, Arnab Goswami of Times Now (where he was then) conducted a debate on the anti-corruption movement with the title ‘India vs. corruption’ on 7th April 2011.⁶⁶ The way his guests were introduced by the anchor, by itself, exposed the stand of Goswami and Times Now. While introducing two young speakers, among others- one a content writer and another a post graduate advertisement professional - Goswami states “They are both

⁶⁵ Sitapati. Vinay, *What Anna Hazare’s Movement and India’s New Middle Classes Say About Each Other*, Economic and Political Weekly. 23rd July 2011.

⁶⁶ Times Now, Debate: India vs. Corruption-1, 7th April 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C69n1Cn4vmQ&t=21s> (Accessed on 9th March, 2017).

part of this protest, *representative of young Indians*, who have been *spontaneously coming out*” (emphasis in italics added by author). This introduction was followed by the question “You were both in Azad Maidan?⁶⁷” and when both answered in the affirmative, he commented “*fantastic*”. There is not much to discuss on this episode of ‘Newshour debate’. Everyone in the programme agreed on the need for such a movement in the country. The only concern that was raised was whether or not Anna Hazare was becoming an icon. The reason for highlighting this debate is to showcase the contrary position that the channel and its anchor took when another democratic protest was held by the students inside the JNU campus.

On 10 February 2016, Arnab Goswami of Times Now conducted a debate on the JNU issue with the title ‘Tribute To Afzal Guru at JNU - Students Crossed All Lines? : The Newshour Debate.’⁶⁸ The title said everything – and most importantly on where does the channel stand on the issue. The interesting part of this debate was the choice of the guests.

The guest list included Nupur Sharma from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). She was/is a prominent member of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), a student wing of the RSS and a former president of the Delhi University Students’ Union (DUSU). She also contested the 2015 Delhi Assembly elections against the Aam Admi Party (AAP) chief, Arvind Kejriwal. Another guest from her side was Prafulla Ketkar, Editor of the *Organiser*, a weekly newspaper and the official organ of the Rashtriya

⁶⁷ Azad Maidan in Mumbai was well known venue for protest meetings and rallies.

⁶⁸ The Newshour Debate, Tribute To Afzal Guru at JNU - Students Crossed All Lines? : The Newshour Debate, 10th February 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oGN2KOJMaeM&t=38s> (Accessed on 9th March, 2017).

Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).⁶⁹ They were joined by Kashmiri Hindu activist Sushil Pandit.

On the other side was Junaid Azim Mattu, a member of Jammu & Kashmir National Conference Party, Umar Khalid, a PhD scholar from JNU, who turned out as one of the accused in the case subsequently. He is a communist and an atheist. Ishan Anand from the Democratic Students Front (DSF), a left students' organisation. V. Lenin Kumar, former president of JUNSU also from DSF, was also a guest in the debate.

From the composition of the guests on each side, viewers could easily see that the programme was going to be more like a verbal battle and less of a debate. In a way, the channel tried to project the JNU incident as the battle between the right and the left ideologies. What is more surprising is the fact that in such a situation, Goswami seemed to attack the left students' leaders more than the BJP members. He started the debate with a verdict. He accused the students who were protesting against capital punishment were, in fact, trying to glorify terrorists like Afzal Guru who attacked Indian Parliament on 13 December 2001. In response to the accusation, V. Lenin tried to explain that they were principally criticizing capital punishment. But this issue was, at no point of time, allowed to be highlighted as the media had pronounced the verdict even before the trial.

Next, Goswami put another accusation in the form of a question: "You will not slam Pakistan for the atrocities in Balochistan. You will not slam Pakistan or the Hizbul Mujahideen for forcing the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits. If you are not anti-national, why is it that only the Indian state is your enemy in the protest and why Pakistan is not?"

⁶⁹ The detail discussion on the history and ideology of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh is presented in the next chapter.

Which side you are on? This question reminded many, who are familiar with the history of Partition of India, of the question that was raised to Gandhi. Why was he only talking about the safety of Muslims in India and not the Hindus in Pakistan? Anyways, the multiple questions raised in a single rapid fire format by Goswami contained some flaws which is included intentionally to confuse the audience. The first flaw was that the allegation of anti-India slogans and slogans portraying the Indian state as enemy was based on the video which was later proved to be doctored.

Some of the news channels, like India Today, under the headline ‘JNU row: Did a fake video fuel the anti-national fire?’⁷⁰ highlighted that the video was fake. The second flaw was that the channel tried to fuse the social issues with national and anti-national issues. In the translation of the speech by Kanhaiya Kumar, produced by the Telegraph,⁷¹ readers could see that apart from criticizing the RSS and its student wing the ABVP, Kanhaiya also raised social issues like equal rights for students, workers, women and the struggle against the exploitation, against caste based exploitation and discrimination, against the Manuvad and Brahminism. But that was never highlighted. The media was keen to create a binary of national and anti-national and thus create a consensus among the people that these young students are anti-State and hence anti-national.

Both the Times Now and Goswami showcased their insensitivity towards the journalistic ethics. More than a debate, the programme seemed to be an exercise in

⁷⁰ Kanwal. Rahul, JNU row: Did a fake video fuel the anti-national fire? [indiatoday.in](http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/panelists-debate-whether-kanhaiya-sedition-video-doctored-or-not/1/599933.html), 18th February 2016, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/panelists-debate-whether-kanhaiya-sedition-video-doctored-or-not/1/599933.html> (Accessed on 15th March, 2017).

⁷¹ Yadav. J. P, If anti-national means this, God save our country, The Telegraph, Calcutta India, 16th February 2016
https://www.telegraphindia.com/1160216/jsp/frontpage/story_69576.jsp#.WM_lzVWGPIU (Accessed on 15th March, 2017).

interrogation where one section of the guests were pressurised to prove their innocence on the charges put forward by the anchor, who considered it a matter of his right.

Arnab invited JNU students on his show to discuss anti-India slogans that were shouted in the campus. While the credibility of the allegation about the slogans remained to be ascertained, Arnab chose to jump the gun and called the student panelists anti-nationals. That night, his voice resonated with other panelists and millions of his viewers alike. Arnab has his way of “reporting” issues and his opinion became the written word for millions of viewers watching the show at home. And before they even got the chance to gather information from both sides of the spectrum, a popular (read strong) mass opinion was already manufactured.⁷²

Times Now was not alone in this. In fact, it was the Hindi news channel, Zee tv, which aired the fake footage in the first place based on which the FIR was lodged against these students. The media watch website, *The Hoot* reported:

On February 10 the police came to know that Zee TV had telecast a programme which showed that the students had been chanting anti-national slogans. The FIR says the police requested footage from Zee TV and a CD given to them showed them the kind of slogans which were being shouted, including Pakistan Zindabad. The slogans are further described and then an FIR registered on the basis of the offences recorded.⁷³

The Delhi Police took no pains to check the authenticity of the video. A few days later Zee news defended their act of spreading false news on 22nd February 2016 shamelessly.⁷⁴

And it was when it faced severe criticism for its unethical journalistic practices that Zee News tried to divert the issue and focus extensively on the ‘national and anti-national’ debate. Not surprisingly, Pakistan was dragged into the discourse to lend credibility to their designs. On 11th March 2016, under the headline ‘Pakistan Media Reflected The JNU’s Anti-Nationalist Slogans On TV’⁷⁵ Zee News ‘informed’ its

⁷² Kasotia. Yash, How Arnab Goswami’s ‘Newshour’ Blew The JNU Debate Out of Proportion, Scoopwhoop, 18th February 2016, <https://www.scoopwhoop.com/How-Arnab-blew-JNU-debate-out-of-proportion/#.4kqkru1iw> (Accessed on 15th March, 2017).

⁷³ How Zee TV fuelled state action against JNU Students, 21st February 2016, The hoot <http://www.thehoot.org/media-watch/media-practice/how-zee-tv-fuelled-state-action-against-jnu-students-9191> (Accessed on 15th March, 2017).

⁷⁴ Zee News, DNA: Hidden Truth of J.N.U scandal 22nd February 2016 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8Y5ca97RNk&t=69s> (Accessed on 15th March, 2017).

⁷⁵ Zee News, Pakistan Media Reflected The JNU’s Anti-Nationalist Slogans On TV, 11th March 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=774HKOJHgNU> (Accessed on 15th March 2015).

viewers that Pakistan is happy about the ‘polluted’ thinking of Kanhaiya and showed the video clip of Kanhaiya where he is actually talking about the atrocities against women in Kashmir. This clip was referred to by one of the news channels in Pakistan. Together with Kanhaiya, the Zee news report also showed how ‘anti-India’ statements of Nivedita Menon, a professor at JNU, was allowing Pakistan to point fingers towards India. Pointing fingers at JNU was not a new thing for the TV channels. During the agitation after the suicide of University of Hyderabad Ph. D candidate, Rohith Vemula, Zee news anchor, Sudhir Chaudhary ⁷⁶stated that the debate on caste discrimination was a mere political propaganda.

Vishwas Deepak, a journalist who resigned from the channel suggesting that the channel deliberately ‘misinterpreted the video clip to brand some students, including Kanhaiya Kumar, as anti-nationals and trigger the controversy at the Jawaharlal Nehru University’⁷⁷ also stated that Zee news ‘even in its coverage of the controversy surrounding the suicide by Dalit scholar Rohit Vemula, the channel tried to “dilute the issue” and act as the savior of Union minister Bangaru Dattatreya and a leader of the right-wing Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), who are accused in the case.’⁷⁸

If the television reportage of the Anna Hazare movement and the JNU issues are compared, one could easily reach a conclusion that issues from JNU were always discussed and debated from the framework of binaries such as the nationalists vs. anti-nationalist, terrorists vs. patriots, etc. The reportage in some of the newspapers like Times of India were also not very different from that of television channels.

⁷⁶ Zee News, DNA: Analysis of Dalit student Rohit Vemula’s suicide note, 21 January 2016 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLVYdiJWO_w (Accessed on 15th March, 2017).

⁷⁷ Hindustan Times, Journalist resigns from news channel over JNU coverage, 22 February 2016 <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/journalist-vishwa-deepak-resigns-from-zee-news-channel-over-jnu-coverage/story-Ov1ToVEI7DiSOZ3vYb3LIL.html> (Accessed on 15th March, 2017).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

The Times of India supported the Anna Hazare movement and reported it in a favourable manner. The headlines said everything. ‘Hundreds join Anna Hazare led campaign against corruption’⁷⁹, ‘City rises to Hazare’s call’⁸⁰, ‘Nagpur comes out in support of Hazare’⁸¹ and ‘Support mounts for Hazare’s crusade’⁸² were few among them. However, when it came to the JNU events, it tended to give headlines like ‘A year on, Afzal splits JNU down the middle’⁸³In this report, the newspaper tries to bring out the difference of opinion regarding the issue but implies that the ‘Police filed a case under Section 124 A (sedition) and 120 B (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code and took the students’ union president into custody and so on which were indicative. The fractious event had been scheduled as a cultural evening, but posters had appeared later indicating that it was a protest against the hanging of Afzal Guru’, the report added.⁸⁴

The newspaper reports, nowhere, made a reference to the larger social issues such as social inequalities and discrimination against women and so on that were raised by the students, including Kanhaiya, in their slogans. Moreover, the name ‘Afzal Guru’ came up only in the context of the debate on capital punishment, against which the students were protesting. This small fact did not matter for the paper and it tried to

⁷⁹ D’Mello. Hundreds joins Anna Hazare led campaign against corruption, Times of India, 6th April 2011 http://m.timesofindia.com/city/mumbai/Hundreds-join-Anna-Hazare-led-campaign-against-corruption/amp_articleshow/7879973.cms (Accessed on 15th March, 2017).

⁸⁰ Yadav. Deepak, City Raises to Hazare’s call, Times of India 7th April 2011 <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chandigarh/City-rises-to-Hazares-call/articleshow/7888870.cms> (Accessed on 15th March, 2017).

⁸¹ Deshpande, Avani, Nagpur comes out in support of Hazare, Times of India 8th April 2011 <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/nagpur/Nagpur-comes-out-in-support-of-Hazare/articleshow/7907124.cms> (Accessed on 15th March, 2017).

⁸² Support mounts for Hazare’s crusade, Times of India, 9th April 2011, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/pune/Support-mounts-for-Hazares-crusade/articleshow/7920473.cms> (Accessed on 15th March, 2017).

⁸³ Gohaini. P. Manash, A year on, Afzal splits JNU down the middle, Times of India 13 February 2016, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/A-year-on-Afzal-splits-JNU-down-the-middle/articleshow/50967591.cms> (Accessed on 15th March, 2017).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

project that JNU ‘splits’ because of ‘Afzal’. The fact is, rather than ‘Afzal,’ it was a debate over the ‘capital punishment’ or the ‘death sentence’ on which not just JNU but the whole Indian society is divided. Many believe that a democratic society should have no place for it. In a way, it is also killing, in their view, though judicially. And there are also many who believe its existence deters acts of crime. Which is the best option to adapt is still vague. In such a vague matter, discussion and debate becomes significant. And democracy matures only through these kinds of debates and the spaces available for such debates. In this case, the whole media trial did nothing but shrank these spaces.

As Kanhaiya was arrested under a very serious charge, the media should have been more sensitive while reporting. In times when nationalism is sacrosanct, labels such as anti-national could destroy not just the accused but also the people around him/her. In such cases, it is important for the security of the accused and his family and companions that the media refrains from making their identity public. But most of the media outlets completely ignored the journalistic ethics and exposed Kanhaiya’s family members with photographs. Among the newspapers, The Indian Express took the lead in this with its report titled ‘Meet the family of the student who is a ‘danger to Mother India.’⁸⁵ On the next day, The Times of India followed The Indian Express but reported in very different way under the headline ‘Mini Moscow deals with its pain’.⁸⁶ During this time, much emphasis was made about JNU’s left lineage and this was synonymous with being anti-national. This suited well to a government which was led by the right-wing.

⁸⁵ Singh. Santosh, JNU sedition case, Meet the family of the student who is a ‘danger to mother India, Indian Express 14th February 2016 <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/jnu-sedition-case-afzal-guru-event-kanhaiya-kumar/> (Accessed on 16th March, 2017).

⁸⁶ Kumar. Rajiv, ‘Mini Moscow’ deals with its pain, Times of India 15th Feb 2016.

As the Times group had already decided to go against the accused ‘anti-nationals’, calling one of the village in Bihar as ‘Mini Moscow’ could only be interpreted as an attempt to strengthen the accuser’s position. Moreover, something funny comes out of these reports. A reader of both these papers would have been confused about the name of the Bihar village: As to whether it was ‘Leningrad of Bihar’ or ‘Mini Moscow’!

Apart from Zee news, Times Now (both TV channels) and The Times of India (newspaper), most other news outlets refrained from directly accusing Kanhaiya and others as anti-nationals. However, what these three news outlets were able to do was to divert the attention of public and other news outlets from discussing issues that were central to the JNU event. And this was done in a very careful manner. They started the ‘discourse’ and became the part of what Foucault calls as ‘discursive formation’.

Discursive formation on Nationalism

What Foucault meant by discursive formation was ‘the group of statements which provide a way of representing a particular topic, concern or object. These statements might be produced across in a number of different texts and appear at more than one institutional site, but are connected by a regularity or underlying unity.’⁸⁷As we have discussed earlier, different historical epochs produce different knowledge through discursive formation in different historical periods. But no matter in which historical period, these discourses are always governed by power.

The explanation of the term ‘power’ by Foucault is more elaborative than that of the binaries of oppressor and the oppressed. He calls such kind of understanding of

⁸⁷ Nixon. Sean, ‘Exhibiting Masculinity’, Hall. Stuart (ed.), *Representation, Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, (Sage Publishing Ltd. The Open University, 1997), p. 302.

power as ‘juridico- discursive’. In Foucault’s conception power generates from everywhere including the oppressed. It is omnipresent. In his words:

The omnipresence of power: not because it has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere.⁸⁸

Foucault adds, ‘Power develops in the first instance in specific, local, individual choices, behaviours and interactions. These combine, in myriad ways, to constitute larger social patterns, and eventually yield macroforms, which one typically thinks of when one thinks about “power” (societies, states, kings) – just as everyday objects are constituted by atoms and molecules. We thus have a micro-level of individuals (disciplinary techniques of the body) and a macro-level of populations (biopolitics).’⁸⁹

The first question that arises is as to why Zee News and Times Now adopted different attitudes while reporting the anti-corruption movement and the JNU issue. To get the answer, we need to look at the Times of India report on the anti-corruption movement on 6th April 2011 under the headline ‘Hundreds join Anna Hazare-led campaign against corruption’⁹⁰ where it stated that ‘Several hundred activists from various parts of the city, who were part of Anna Hazare-led campaign against corruption, were prevented by the police from staging a road block outside Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus at 5.30 pm on Tuesday. The activists, *waving national flags*, shouted slogans against corruption’ (emphasis added). The first paragraph of the report not just informs that the activists were prevented by the police but also explains that these activists are the nationalists who, though protesting against the state, are carrying and waiving the national flag. The images of the anti-corruption

⁸⁸ Foucault. Michel, *The Will to Knowledge*, p. 92.

⁸⁹ Taylor. Dianna, *Michel Foucault: Key Concepts* (Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition) P- 22.

⁹⁰ D’Mello, Hundreds joins Anna Hazare led campaign against corruption.

activists sloganeering ‘Bharat Mata ke Jai’ (victory to mother India) and waiving national flags were all over the press. Whereas, those in JNU were protesting without any such nationalist symbols. Therefore, it was easy for the section of the media to label them as anti-national.

The next question that arises is as to why these media outlets were in hurry to label the JNU students as anti-nationals? To answer this question, we need to focus back to the history of Indian nationalism. In 1925, the foundation of the RSS also marked the articulation of the ideology of Hindutva or Hindu Nationalism. While the emergence of the RSS and its Hindu Nationalism will be discussed in detail later on in this thesis (Chapter II), it is relevant to say here that they introduced and carefully cultivated their own version of Indian nationalism which is based on the hatred and targeting the minority communities in India. And the BJP is the political wing of the RSS. Any discussion or debate on social inequalities based on caste or gender not only counters their version of nationalism but is also the threat to their political supremacy. Sukumar Muralidharan, while explaining the need for the BJP and the RSS to re-launch the Mandir (Ayodhya Temple) issue after the Mandal commission recommendations were implemented, states

The party of 'Hindu' revivalism-the Bharatiya Janata Party-had no choice but to relaunch 'Mandir' when it was threatened with a loss of political initiative on account of 'Mandal'. 'Mandir' as a metaphor seeks to bring the entirety of the undifferentiated 'Hindu' community within its ambience, keeping out only the Muslims, whose patriotism is allegedly suspect on account of their supposed extra-territorial loyalties.⁹¹

It may not be a mere coincidence, from the context of this thesis, that Subash Chandra, the owner of the Zee media, has had close links with the BJP and had even

⁹¹ Muralidharan. Sukumar, *Mandal, Mandir aur Masjid: 'Hindu' Communalism and the Crisis of the State*, Social Scientist, Vol. 18, No. 10, 1990, p. 28.

campaigned for the BJP in Hisar, Haryana in the elections to the state assembly.⁹² He later contested as an ‘independent’ candidate and became a Rajya Sabha member from Haryana, garnering votes from the BJP MLAs. It may be stressed here that the BJP had won a majority in the Haryana assembly from where Chandra gathered his votes.

In fact, the JNU students were protesting against the RSS version of nationalism and that is why media outlets like Zee News, whose political and economic ideology is closer to the Right wing, began the discourse on ‘national and anti-national’. These discourses were carefully crafted, monitored and knowledge was created in which anyone protesting against the State and the system becomes anti-national. Arguments like soldiers dying in the borders protecting the country and financing of public institutions through tax payers’ money were brought up to ‘govern the way’ this ‘topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned with’. Rules were set and lines were drawn on ‘defining an acceptable and intelligible way to talk, write, or conduct; and also to “limit” and “restrict” ways of talking, of conducting ourselves.’⁹³

Foucault also introduces the concept of ‘force relations’ or ‘power relations’. It is anything that pushes, urges or forces an individual to do something. What needs to be noted is that these power relations are both intentional and non-subjective.⁹⁴ There is a sense of paradox here. If it is intentional, in what sense is it non-subjective or vice versa? The point here is, though Foucault discards the understanding of ‘power’ in terms of binaries between the ‘sovereign power’ and ‘oppressed others,’ he accepts the

⁹² Zee News, Dr Subhash Chandra campaign for BJP in Hisar, http://zeenews.india.com/news/videos/top-stories/dr-subhash-chandra-campaigns-for-bjp-in-hisar_1480052.html (Accessed on 15th March, 2017).

⁹³ Hall, Stuart, *The Works of Representation*.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*

existence of the ‘sovereign power’ and discusses about the resistance towards the ‘sovereign power’ from an individual level.

In a 1984 interview, for example, Foucault reiterates that ‘in the relations of power, there is necessarily the possibility of resistance, for if there were no possibility of resistance – of violent resistance, of escape, of ruse, of strategies that reverse the situation – there would be no relations of power’⁹⁵ Therefore, when the JNU students were showcasing their discontent against the social issues and against capital punishment, they were resisting the RSS/BJP version of nationalism. In fact, student leaders like Kanhaiya and Khalid openly criticized the RSS version of nationalism. During colonial era, nationalist leaders like Tilak and Gandhi resisted the colonial oppression and were charged of sedition and became national heroes. But since independence, the connotation of being charged with sedition has changed to being an anti-national. And this is because the knowledge that was created during the freedom struggle was very different to that of today.

The discourse on the national and the anti-national was started by some media outlets and soon it occupied the imaginations of other media outlets and the public too. This is the reason why such news channels like Zee and Times now were directly labeling JNU students as anti-nationals while channels like India Today were enthusiastically discarding it. The point is that the discursive formation of this period is compelling and urging everyone to discuss about Indian nationalism in terms of the nationals and the anti-nationals. Civil liberties were the essence of the freedom struggle but the present discourse does not give space for discussion on it. More than Article 19 (1) (a) and the freedom of expression it guarantees, Article 19 (2) which discusses the

⁹⁵ Taylor. Dianna, *Michel Foucault: Key Concepts*, p. 24.

‘reasonable restrictions’ in specific terms were being given more emphasis in present discussion. By this, Indian nationalism which emerged on the basis of a protracted struggle against colonial oppression, which placed civil liberties in a sacrosanct position, is presently being represented in what Mridula Mukherjee calls as ‘hyper nationalism’.⁹⁶

By referring to ‘hyper nationalism,’ Professor Mridula Mukherjee meant the misuses of nationalism ‘to polarize, to divide, and to suppress individual freedoms’.⁹⁷

But, in a democracy, the space for debate and dissent is non-negotiable. Noam Chomsky discusses about the two conceptions of democracy. First, in which public has the means to participate in meaningful ways for the management of their own affairs and information are open and free. In the second conception of democracy, public is barred from managing their own affairs and the means of information is kept narrow and in rigid control.⁹⁸ An analogy can be made with the first conception of democracy with that of the democracy that our freedom struggle leaders were advocating and fought for. And also between the second form of democracy and the present nationalist discourse propagated by the state.

He also talks about the two groups, one which is the specialized class and another the big majority of the population, whom Walter Lipmann called “the bewildered herd”.⁹⁹ In the second conception of the term ‘democracy,’ this ‘bewildered herd’ is considered ‘too stupid to be able to understand things’. Therefore, the

⁹⁶ Mukherjee. Mirdula, What it means to be independent, The Hindu 15th August 2015 <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/What-it-means-to-be-independent/article14570147.ece> (Accessed on 15th March, 2017).

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Chomsky. Noam, *Media Control The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda*, (New York: An Open Media Book Seven Stories Press, Kindle Edition).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

‘specialized class’ has to be deeply indoctrinated in the values and interests of private power so that they can decide on the lives of the ‘bewildered herd’. It is important to indoctrinate this specialized class in certain values so that the propaganda of the private powers works successfully. And when there is ‘total control over media and the educational system and scholarship is conformist’ the interest of the private powers are served well.

Unfortunately for the RSS/BJP ideologues, scholarship in India refuses to be conformist and challenges its ideology. They continue to struggle against the privatization of educational institutions which is cherished by the advocates of neoliberal economic policies who back organisations like the RSS and the BJP. They organised and participated in the movements like ‘Occupy UGC’ against the decision of UGC (University Grants Commission) to end non-NET (National Eligibility Test) fellowship, etc. After coming to power in the centre, in 2014, the RSS/BJP duo took an offensive approach towards this educated class who were not willing to bow down. This class identifies themselves more with the ‘bewildered herd’ than with a ‘specialized class,’ particularly because those in this class have their roots in the so called ‘bewildered herd’.

The first such onslaught came in the form of de-recognition of a student group ‘the Ambedkar-Periyar Study Circle’ in the Indian Institute of Technology, Chennai on 22nd May 2015.¹⁰⁰ The group was de-recognized on the basis of a letter, dated 15th May 2015, from the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Department. Arundhati Roy explains why it was necessary for the state to take such an

¹⁰⁰ Yamunan. Sruthisagar, IIT-Madras derecognises student group, The Hindu 28th May 2015 <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/iitmadrads-derecognises-student-group/article7256712.ece> (Accessed on 15th March, 2017).

action against the group with merely few dozen as members ‘by making connections between caste, capitalism, and communalism, the APSC was straying into forbidden territory-the sort of territory into which the South African anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko and the US civil-rights leader Martin Luther King had strayed, and paid for with their lives.’¹⁰¹It led to the public protest and petition seeking revocation of the ban which compelled the authorities to rescind the decision.

When the strategy of derecognizing a group did not work, the state applied a new strategy in which the RSS/BJP cronies were appointed as the head of higher education institutions. Appointment of Gajendra Chauhan, an actor and BJP sympathizer, as the chairman of the Film and Television Institute of India was part of this strategy. This too faced serious agitations from students who went on for 140 days strike and were supported by civil-society groups, film makers, artists and intellectuals.

These offences were followed by the suspension of five Dalit students in the University of Hyderabad. They were the members of Ambedkar Students’ Association (ASA) who were branded as ‘anti-nationals’ by the RSS/BJP student wing, AVBP. The ABVP and the ASA had a scuffle on the matter of screening of the documentary film *Muzaffarnagar Baqi Hain* (Muzaffarnagar is not Over) by ASA. Due to this, the University of Hyderabad took a partisan decision and suspended all the five members of ASA. One among them was Rohith Vemula, a PhD scholar who committed suicide to highlight the discrimination that continues to exist even today. The death of Rohith Vemula quickly became the news and like we have already discussed some media outlets even tended to divert the issue.

¹⁰¹ Roy. Arundhati, My Seditious Heart An unfinished diary of nowadays, The Caravan 1st May 2016 <http://www.caravanmagazine.in/essay/seditious-heart-arundhati-roy> (Accessed on 16th March, 2017).

Till now, every attempt by the State to take control over the academic institutions had backfired and had, in fact, put the RSS/BJP in a quandary. All this attacks on higher educational institutions, rather than helping the dispensation, damaged the government's image in the eyes of citizens. It became important for the state to plan the next attack in such a way that would both be an attempt to control the academia and would also work as image building of the government. Therefore, attacking one of the most reputed universities in the country by labeling it as anti-national became the best available option for the state. By doing this, it not only tried to suppress the dissenting voices within the academic circle, but also tended to evince itself as the protector of the so called 'impending national threat'.

The JNU sedition case should be viewed in the larger context of representation of Indian nationalism and the media, by and large, played fiddle with this project. This will be done subsequently in this thesis. Meanwhile, the emergence of Hindutwa as an ideology and its various stages will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

Hindutva as Ideology and Politics

The thrust of this chapter is to draw the trajectory of the emergence of Hindutva as an ideological tool in the history of India and particularly since the Rebellion of 1857 (perhaps even before that) and to track the stages and instances when the media turned into an ideological state apparatus¹ in this process. Hence, it is pertinent here to elaborate the concept of ideology - as it has different connotations- in order to have a theoretical clarity. This is presented in a Marxist framework as the concept of ideology (for Marx, it was a debauched concept) and developed by Antonio Gramsci and by Louis Althusser subsequently in a major way. This will be dealt with details in the first section of the chapter.

It should be noted here that though the Hindutva ideology came into prominence since 1980s, it had remained there in the political domain as a parallel strand of Indian nationalism. However, the national liberation movement which was an inclusive movement which also had given space for all sorts of ideological elements - from the Right wing to all shades of the Left since the Socialists and communists parked themselves in the fold since the mid-1930s. However, when we discuss the parallel strand, it is necessary to hold that Hindutva as an ideology had a deeper past than the Indian National Congress. The second section of this chapter draws the historical trajectory of the evolution of Hindutva as an ideology and this is placed in the larger context of the political-economy of the nation since independence. This will also indicate the major differences between the *Indian Nationalism* and *Hindu Nationalism*.

¹ This concept is borrowed from Louis Althusser. This is the larger framework of this chapter.

Drawing from the Althusserian framework, section three looks into whether or not the media turned into one of the important Ideological State Apparatus, in the emergence of Hindutva in the country. There is a marked difference in its role in the post Nehru era and the emergency, was perhaps, a turning point and the Hindutva slant was on the accent since the 1980s, and pronounced in a substantial sense since the Ram Janambhumi issue came to play a pivotal role in the public realm. However, the Temple- Masjid issue and the role of the media will be discussed in the next chapter.

I

Understanding ‘Ideology’

For the theoretical understanding of the term ‘ideology’ one of the pre-eminent reference points is the concept of ideology enunciated by Karl Marx. This is not merely for the definition of ideology as ‘false consciousness’ presented by him but also from the premise of ideologies as contending forces, which is the main basis in his understanding of ideology.

For Marx, ideology in every historical epoch is the ideas of the ruling class. This ideology of the ruling class is referred to, by Marx, as ‘false consciousness’ which dominates the consciousness of the exploited groups and classes and also at the same time helps provide legitimacy to the persistence of their exploitation. This is because, it is the ruling class, in every historical period, that has the control over the material production, thus also has the control over the means of mental production. ‘The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationship which

make the one class the ruling one, therefore the ideas of its dominance.’² Marx further argued that:

In an age and in a country where royal power, aristocracy and bourgeoisie are contending for mastery and where, therefore, mastery is shared, the doctrine of the separation of powers proves to be the dominant ideas and is expressed as an “eternal law.”³

According to Marx, ideology is in such a significant position that it can build or destroy a given class. Though the dominant ideas are the ideas of the dominant classes, these ideas have the capabilities to destroy or at least stymie the dominant class itself which adheres to its principles. He explains this further with the notion of division of labour within the dominant classes into two parts. One part of it is the thinkers of their class and another appears to have passive and receptive attitude towards the ideas and illusions created by the thinkers because they are the active members of the class and have less time to create any such illusion or ideas for their class. The danger to the class occurs when there is ‘a certain opposition and hostility between the two parts, which, however, in the case of a practical collision, in which the class itself is endangered, automatically comes to nothing.’⁴ This is also the reason why Marx called the dominant ideology of a particular historical epoch as the ideology of the dominant class of that epoch because once there is crisis in praxis, there is the crisis of the existence of the class itself.

Similarly, he also emphasized on the need for universalization of the ideology of the class which challenges the dominant class. This is because of the two main reasons. First, the ideology of the dominant class represents a particular interest, the interest of its own class. Second, the class that is ‘making a revolution appears from the

² Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich, *The German Ideology Parts I & III* (New York International Publishers INC, Martino Publishing, 2011) p. 39.

³ *Ibid*, p. 39.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 39.

very start, merely because it is opposed to a class, not as a class but as the representative of the whole of society; it appears as the whole mass of society confronting the one ruling class.’⁵

As we can see, Marx presented the class character of the ideology. There is an ideology of the dominant class and the ideology of the new class that is revolting against it. In another sense, both these ideologies hold antagonistic attitude towards each other and are mutually distinct and exclusive in their totality. It was Gramsci, who, later on elaborated the concept of ideology, falsifying some of the notions about ideology generated in the Marx’s definition.

As Marx explained the dominant ideology in a particular historical epoch as the ideology of the dominant class, because it was this class that has the control over the means of production, in a sense it presents the view that ideology depends upon the ownership of the means of production and is not an independent entity. If the economy was the base, ideology was the superstructure, which means that superstructure (ideology) exclusively belongs to the class of which characteristics and rule the economy conveys. Gramsci explains that this is not the case. In his understanding ‘it was possible for there to be a “crossover” of classes at the ideological plane-i.e., in civil society.’⁶

Ideology, as conceptualized by Gramsci, can be better explained through his understanding of the term ‘Hegemony’. Hegemony, according to him, is essential not

⁵ The challenging class could do this because its interests are more connected with common interest of all other classes. And because of the condition under which it rises its interests are not yet developed as an interest of a particular class. *Ibid*, p. 39.

⁶ Ramos. Jr. Valeriano, *The Concept of Ideology, Hegemony, and Organic Intellectuals in Gramsci’s Marxism*, Theoretical Review No. 27, March-April 1982
<https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/periodicals/theoretical-review/1982301.htm> (Accessed on 23rd November 2017)

only just to gain political power but also to retain it. Use of coercion alone cannot sustain the power of one particular class over the other classes. To sustain and maintain their dominance over the subaltern classes the dominant class need their consent. And it is the hegemony as ‘a condition in which a fundamental class exercises a political, intellectual, and moral role of leadership within a hegemonic system cemented by a common world-view or “organic ideology,”⁷that guarantee this’. In simple words, hegemony is the combination of consent and coercion. ‘For Gramsci, hegemony is thus constructed through the power of attraction of the leading group and also through compromises and concessions aimed at the conscious rallying of auxiliary forces. The essential condition of hegemonic politics is the consent of the auxiliary groups.’⁸

One of the important elements in such hegemonisation is the ideology. It is important to stress here that ideology, for Gramsci, was not necessarily a preserve of the ruling classes alone. He rather discusses about the ideological discourses of different classes. And these different ideological discourses can comprise various ideological elements of the same ideology. Or, in other words, two or more classes can adhere to or advocate for the same ideological element. For instance, during the Eighteenth Century, when factory workers were expected to work for more than ten hours a day, individuals like Robert Owen argued for labour reforms with the slogans like ‘eight hours of labour, eight hours of recreation and eight hours of rest’. In response, the Ford Motor Company (FMC), in 1914, implemented the idea of eight hours work, soon others followed and it became the industrial norm. Ford Motor Company, a part of capitalist system, whose existence is based on the exploitation of labourers, accepting and adhering to the idea of eight hours work is an example of how

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Hoare. George and Sperber. Nathan, *An Introduction to Antonio Gramsci: His Life, Thought and Legacy* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015, Kindle Edition) p. 122

a dominant class or member of that class accepts and adheres to the ideology that was generated in the interest of the subaltern classes. This is also an example of how hegemony works. Factory owners, indeed, use coercive measures (like not paying wages when the workers go on strike) but also attempt to incorporate the views and ideas of the workers, not because the owners are intently concerned about the living condition of the workers but because it caters to their own interests. Gramsci describes this as Fordism and elaborates on this and its implications for the revolutionary movement. A further discussion into this, however, is beyond the scope of this chapter and thesis and hence not relevant here.

Meanwhile, what hegemony does, in the Gramscian sense, is that it organises all the ideological elements in a unified system, producing a set of universal norms or belief system. Yet another important point to be remembered is that, these norms and belief system, which is universalized through the hegemony does not belong to any particular class. They might be the amalgamation of norms and belief system of different classes. And this unified system of ideological elements is what Gramsci calls as ‘organic ideology’. In this sense, the example of the ‘eight hours labour per day’ is also a part of an organic ideology.

The question that arises now is how does hegemony work? And here comes the significant role of the intellectuals. Gramsci’s understanding of intellectuals is both similar and distinct from Marx’s division of labour in the dominant class. For Marx, it was a section among the dominant class that was assigned to create the ideas and illusions in the interest of their class. Similarly, Gramsci also pointed out that ‘every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function

not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields.⁹ Gramsci calls them the ‘organic intellectuals’.

The major differences between Marx and Gramsci was that while Marx holds responsibility of creation and dissemination of ideas to one particular section of the class and states that the other section appears to have a passive and receptive attitude towards the ideas and illusions created by the thinkers, because they are the producers and have less time to indulge in any such illusion or ideas; in a way, Marx differentiates these sections as intellectuals and non-intellectuals, the non-intellectuals having a passive and receptive attitude towards the ideas and illusions created by the thinkers. Gramsci, however, discards such distinctions between the ‘intellectuals’ and ‘non-intellectuals’ and such a binary, according to him, does not exist.¹⁰ He argued ‘all men are intellectuals, one could therefore say: but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals.’¹¹

Secondly, Marx pointed out that the universalization of the ideology of the class which challenges the dominant class is necessary; but Marx does not dwell upon the question about the role, if any, for the thinkers (or intellectuals) or their ideas, particularly those who are part of the dominant classes in the existing society. Do thinkers and ideas fade away as their class loses the dominant position? Marx leaves this question un-answered. According to Gramsci, though a class loses its dominant position, ideas and thinkers belonging to those classes may not necessarily disappear. He argues this by saying:

However, every “essential” social group which emerges into history out of the preceding economic structure, and as an expression of development if this structure, has found (at least in

⁹ Hoare. Quintin & Smith. N. Geoffrey, *Selection from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (India: Orient Blackswan, India, 2009), p. 5.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p.9.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p.9

all of history up to the present) categories of intellectuals already in existence and which seemed indeed to represent an historical continuity uninterrupted even by the *most complicated and radical changes in political and social forms*.¹²(Emphasis added).

Gramsci calls them as ‘traditional intellectuals’ as opposed to the organic intellectuals.

Therefore, hegemony is achieved through the organic intellectuals. It is the organic intellectuals who diffuse the ‘organic ideology’ throughout the civil society. They are the organizers of the masses of men and the ones who are involved in building confidence about their class among these masses. And there is also the possibility of the traditional intellectuals adhering to, maybe not in totality but in parts, some of the elements of the present organic ideology. This is because, though this traditional intellectuals ‘put themselves forward as autonomous and independent of the dominant social group’¹³they are the part of ‘civil society’¹⁴ which is already under the hegemonic ascendancy of the dominant class. For instance, the Enlightenment and the French Revolution brought in a new ideology which contained among others, the idea of nation and the nation state. However, the reordering of the world into various nations on the basis of national sovereignty orientated in the western concept of secularism did not put an end to the existence of religious places and the priests. These priests who put ‘themselves forward as autonomous and independent of the dominant social group’ are also required to follow the rules of the new ideology like constitutional law and order.

While Gramsci was concerned about the hegemony and its agents like the organic intellectuals, another Marxist thinker, Louis Althusser focused on institutions which

¹² *Ibid*, p.7.

¹³ *Ibid*.

¹⁴ Society’ (social institutions and structures such as the family, churches, the media, schools, the legal system, and other organizations such as the trade unions, chambers of commerce, and economic associations. Ramos. Jr. Valeriano, *The Concept of Ideology, Hegemony, and Organic Intellectuals in Gramsci’s Marxism*

Gramsci called as the 'civil society'. To understand Althusser's discussion on what he calls as 'Ideological State Apparatus' (ISA), we need to first briefly look into the Marxist theory of the State presented by Althusser:

It can be said that the Marxist classics have always claimed that (1) the State is the repressive State apparatus, (2) State power and State apparatus must be distinguished, (3) the objective of the class struggle concerns State power, and in consequence the use of the State apparatus by the classes (or alliance of classes or of fraction of class) holding State power as a function of their class objectives, and (4) the proletariat must seize State power in order to destroy the existing bourgeois State apparatus and, in a first phase, replace it with a quite different, proletarian, State apparatus, then in later phases set in motion a radical process, that of the destruction of the State (the end of State power, the end of every State apparatus).¹⁵

Following upon the Marxist theory of State, Althusser begins by saying that 'it is indispensable to take into account not only the distinction between State power and State apparatus'¹⁶ but also the distinction between the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) and the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA).

According to him, RSA constitutes the government, the army, the police, the courts, the prison and the ISA constitutes the religious institutions like the church, temples, monasteries, the educational institutions, the family, the law, the political parties and organisations, the trade unions, the communication media like the press, radio and television, the cultural elements like literature, arts and sports. A point to be noted here is that none of these apparatus purely functions as RSA or ISA; rather in RSA, force and violence is used and in ISA ideology is used predominantly. For instance, 'the Army and the Police also function by ideology both to ensure their own cohesion and reproduction, and in the 'values' they propound externally.'¹⁷ Similarly, churches and schools, which predominantly function on the basis of ideology, also use repressive methods like selection, punishment and expulsion.

¹⁵ Althusser, Louis, *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays* (India: Aakar Books Delhi, 2006), p. 95.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 96.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 97-98.

Althusser, in his own words, systematized the Gramscian concept of ‘civil society’. In his book, *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays*,¹⁸ he commented

To my knowledge, Gramsci is the only one who went any distance in the road I am taking. He had the ‘remarkable’ idea that the State could be reduced to the (Repressive) State Apparatus, but included, as he put it, a certain number of institutions from ‘civil society’: the Church, the Schools, the trade unions, etc. Unfortunately, Gramsci did not systematize his institutions¹⁹

But the difference is, Gramsci held responsibility of diffusing the organic ideology throughout the civil society to organic intellectuals, whereas Althusser rightly realized that the organic intellectuals are immanent in civil society (ISA); in other words, the organic intellectuals are civil society in itself according to Althusser.

By this, the term ‘ideology’ could not be understood without a discussion on the agents or the organic intellectuals or civil society or the ISA which diffuses it. The following section will discuss about the emergence of the Hindutva ideology and also about the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which will be seen as the ISA of the project.

II

Hindutva as an Ideology and Politics

In the previous chapter we discussed the history and the context of the emergence and the evolution of Indian nationalism. However, an important aspect -- that Indian nationalism did not have a singular character and there were many attempts at nationalism – was not discussed there. In fact, what we discussed was the dominant form of Indian nationalism, which Mridula Mukherjee calls, ‘progressive and

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 95.

revolutionary'²⁰ and Prabhat Patnaik calls 'inclusive'²¹. Apart from the 'progressive' or the 'inclusive' nationalism, there existed an exclusive nationalism rooted in religious revivalism transmitted in terms of religious idioms and symbols and so on. Thus emerges Hindu nationalism and Muslim nationalism; cultural nationalism as its proponents themselves called it. However, the essence of communal Muslim nationalism was neutralized with the formation of the new state of Pakistan. The communal Hindu nationalism remained in the Indian political sphere and has become a powerful force in contemporary India; and the solution, as it was held, to the problem of Muslim nationalism continued to feed the Hindu variant of it.

Hindu nationalism which remained idyllic in the beginning, manifested into an aggressive format since the formation of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in 1925. The catchword, India is a 'Hindu *Rashtra*' (Hindu Nation) and it belongs to the Hindus surfaced for the first time openly when Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar wrote about it in his booklet *We or Our Nationhood Defined* in 1939.²² Not surprisingly, this book was published from Nagpur the domain of the Chitpawan Brahmin community. For Golwalkar, 'a nation, does profess and maintain a National Religion and Culture, these being necessary to complete the Nation idea.'²³

Historian Bipan Chandra discusses about the three basic elements or stages, one following the other, of communalism or communal ideology. In the first stage, according to him, a belief emerged that considered political, social and cultural interests are common interest within the members of same religion. In other words, this was the

²⁰ Mukherjee. Mirdula, What it means to be independent, The Hindu 15th August 2015 <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/What-it-means-to-be-independent/article14570147.ece> (Accessed on 17th March, 2017).

²¹ Patnaik. Prabhat, 'Two Concepts of Nationalism', Azad. Rohit et al., (ed), *What The Nation Really Needs To Know, The JNU Nationalism Lectures* (India: Harper Collins Publishers India, 2016).

²² Golwalkar. M. S, *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (Nagpur: Bharat Publication, 1939).

²³ *Ibid*, p. 23.

basic understanding of one being in terms of his religious identity. This led to the emergence of notion of socio-political communities based on religion. In the words of Bipan Chandra:

It is these religion-based communities, and not classes, nationalities, linguistic-cultural groups, nations or such politico-territorial units as provinces or states, that are seen as fundamental units of Indian society. Indian people, it is believed, can act socially and politically and protect their collective or corporate or non-individual interests only as members of these religion-based communities.²⁴

This explains as to why it was comfortable for many then to express their nationalism by identifying themselves as Nationalist Hindus, Nationalist Muslims and Nationalist Sikhs rather than just simple Indian nationalists.

The second stage of communalism, which is also known as liberal communalism or moderate communalism, is when the believer of communal politics upheld certain liberal, democratic, humanist and nationalist values. The foundation of the Brahmo Samaj by Raja Ram Mohun Roy in 1828 was the beginning of this phase or trend. This was followed by the foundation of the Prarthana Samaj by Atmaram Pandurang in 1867 and the Arya Samaj by Swami Dayananda Swaraswathi in 1875 among the Hindus. The main objectives of these organisations was to modernize the Hindu religion and they stood for social and religious reforms; education of women, widow remarriage, fight against child marriage and so on were advocated along with monotheism and fighting against superstitions in the Hindu religion. It was more or less an Indian adaptation of the European liberalism. It was the time when Jyotiba Phule in Maharashtra and Sri Narayana Guru in Kerala were trying to bring about changes in the lower caste communities within the Hindu fold.

²⁴ Chandra. Bipan, 'The Rise and Growth of Communalism', in Chandra. Bipan et al., *India's Struggle for Independence 1857- 1947* (India: Penguin Books, 1989) p. 398.

The Aligarh movement among Muslims started by Syed Ahmad Khan, the Singh Sabha among the Sikhs formed during the 1870s, could be categorized as part of this stage of communalism in India. These movements could be stated as the response towards the emergence of Christian missionaries and Hindu organisations. However, these organisations also attempted to reform the religion. This was the necessity of the time.

In a broader sense of the term, ‘most of the communalists before 1937-the Hindu Mahasabha, the Muslim league, the Ali Brothers after 1925, M.A. Jinnah, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Lajpat Rai, and N.C. Kelkar after 1922- functioned within a liberal communal framework.’²⁵

It is important to note here that the liberal values which was the predominant characteristic of the second stage was cast off in the third stage of communalism. In the third stage, communal assertion takes extreme forms and functions broadly falling in the fascist framework. Communalism now is based on fear and hatred of the ‘other’. Use of violence in language, deed or behavior, the language of war and enmity against political opponents were marked tendencies of this phase.

The roots of the third stage of communalism could be located in the events, particularly after the revolt of 1857, and the British colonial policies contributed to this immensely. One of the important features of the 1857 revolt was that the Hindus and the Muslims participated in it collectively. However, as much as did the 1857 revolt ‘widen(ed) the chasm between the Indians and the Europeans, its aftermath created a divide between Hindus and Muslims.’²⁶This was because, by then, the colonial rulers

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 399.

²⁶ Noorani. A. G, *Savarkar and Hindutva: The Godse Connection*, (New Delhi: Leftword Books, 2002) p. 37.

knew that to sustain their rule in India it had to create divisions between the Hindus and the Muslims. For this, they started treating these two communities separately and differently.

Ashok Mehta rightly pointed out this partial attitude of the colonial rulers while punishing Indians for the revolt. He stated:

The hand of repression fell heavily on the Muslims- they were as it were tattooed with terror. Many of their leading men-such as the Nawabs of Jhajjar, Ballabgrah, Faruknagar and Farukabad-were hanged or exiled.....Muslim property was widely confiscated. After the reoccupation of Delhi, Hindus were allowed to return within a few months, but the Mohammedan population was altogether excluded and the attachment on their houses was lifted only in 1859. In real property while the fine levied on the Hindus was just ten per cent.²⁷

This differential treatment by the British, indeed, was enough to create dissatisfaction and mistrust among the Muslim community. However, it will be erroneous to say that the situation of Hindus was improved, in any sense, thanks to the British colonial policies of discrimination. The argument here is that at this point of history, the Muslims faced the colonial wrath to a greater extent than their Hindu counterparts.²⁸

Yet another event that contributed to the communal polarization and thus contributed to the formation of religious identities was the first population survey which was undertaken by the British in 1872. It is true that the intentions behind conducting it in India was vastly different from the intentions of conducting it in western nations; the intention behind conducting population census in several European countries 'was

²⁷ Mehta. Ashok, 1857: A Great Rebellion, Hind Kitab, Bombay 1946. Cited in Noorani. A.G, *Savarkar and Hindutva: The Godse Connection*, p. 37.

²⁸ This, in fact, was not just the case with the Muslim community in India. The 19th Century, in fact, witnessed the unfolding of Orientalism as the guiding force of colonial powers from Western Europe and this in turn had a huge impact on the remaking of Asia. See, Pankaj Mishra (2012), *From the Ruins of Empire: The Revolt Against the West and the Remaking of Asia* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2012) for an excellent account of this. Also see, Said. W. Edward, *Orientalism: Western Conception of the Orient* (India: Penguin Books, 2001).

the concern over the extent of poverty and resultant poor relief necessitated by it'²⁹ while the 'census taking in colonial India had a different purpose altogether. The desire of the colonial government to learn all it could about the people and the land under its control was the reason behind the census taking exercises during colonial India.'³⁰ The census, thus, also became an important tool for the colonizers to create divisions among the Hindus and Muslims who collectively revolted against it in 1857. For this purpose, the Indian population were classified into different religions, castes and sects. 'The census made all efforts to reconstruct religious categories designed according to the notion of race and religion of the colonialists.'³¹ Moreover, 'the census data on religion not only brought to the fore the majority-minority cleavage, but also sparked off a communal debate on the size and growth of population of different religious communities.'³²

It should be remembered here that the population census was followed by the partition of Bengal on communal lines in 1905. The attempt of Partition of Bengal in 1905 was one of the options adopted by the colonial masters to divide the communities on religious lines. It was evident in the statement of Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy made during his speech at Dacca; Curzon argued that, Dacca could become the capital of the new Muslim majority province 'which would invest the Mohammedans in Eastern Bengal with a unity which they have not enjoyed since the days of the old Mussulman Viceroys and kings.'³³

²⁹ Bhagat. R. B, *Census and the Construction of Communalism in India*, Economic and Political Weekly Vol. 36, No. 46/47, 24th November 2001.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ S. Gopal, *British Policy in India, 1858-1905*, Cambridge 1965, pp. 270-71. Cited in Mukherjee. Aditya, 'The Swadeshi Movement-1903-1908', in Chandra. Bipan et al., *India's Struggle for Independence 1857-1947* (Indian: Penguin Books, 1989) p. 125.

While this move was strongly opposed by the people in the region, the Montague- Chelmsford reforms, also known as Government of India Act of 1919, was brought about. This appealed to the demands of the articulate sections among the minorities and accepted the demands for separate representation of Muslims and Sikhs in the provincial councils. These events in history had far reaching implications in the consolidation of religious communities on identity basis for political purposes.

Soon, the presupposition of the declining proportion of the Hindu population surfaced in the socio-political sphere. For instance, U. N. Mookerjee wrote a series of articles titled ‘A Dying Race’ in the newspaper *Bengalee* in 1909. His articles were based on the compilation of the census data of 1872 to 1901. He argued the case stating (extremely) that the Hindus were on the verge of extinction³⁴ Similarly, the Muslims also saw a grave danger for the Muslim community.³⁵ Therefore, both the Hindus and the Muslims started their own programs for proselytizing and militant mobilization. It should be noted here that among the Hindus, the proselytizing activities existed since Dayanand Sarawati founded the Arya Samaj in 1875. Meanwhile Swami Shradhanand, who was greatly influenced by the U. N. Mookerjee’s ‘Dying Race,’ took the ‘*shuddhi*’ (Purification) programme³⁶ to extreme levels. Corresponding to this, the Muslims also organised their own proselytizing campaigns called as *tabligh*.³⁷

³⁴ Datta. K. Pradip, Dying Hindus: Production of Hindu Communal Common Sense in Early 20th Century Bengal, Economic and Political Weekly Vol. 28, No. 25, 19th June 1993.

³⁵ Kanungo, Pralay, *RSS's Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan* (Delhi: Manohar, 2002) p. 35.

³⁶ ‘*Shuddhi*’ literally means purification. The usage of the term ‘*Shuddhi*’ for the proselytizing mission aimed at those Hindus who converted to Islam showcase how the orthodox Hindus viewed those Hindus who converted to Islam. For them, those converted to Islam were ‘impure’ and needed to be purified through reconverting them to Hindu. *Shuddhi* mission also targeted outcasts and those groups of borderline Muslims who had retained Hindu customs.

³⁷ ‘*Tabligh*’ as a response to *Shuddhi* was initiated by *ulemas* (body of Muslim scholars) and *sufis* (Muslim ascetics). The main target of *tabligh* were the former Muslims who were converted to Hinduism through *Shuddhi*. This, needless to say led to the communal confrontation between Hindus and Muslims.

This was the one of the main reasons behind the beginning of a violent phase of communalism between the Hindus and Muslims during this time.

Together with the *shuddhi* and the *tabligh*, both the communities started campaigns for strengthening their own communities through the consolidation of their community members. This campaign among the Hindus was known as *sangathan* and among the Muslims it was known as *tanzim*. This opened a can of worms of communal strife, particularly in the regions like Punjab. It was in this foundation of communal polarization that the RSS was born in 1925. But before dwelling upon the RSS and its role in Hindutva ideology, it is relevant to discuss briefly about Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, one of the pioneers of Hindutva, who had shot to *fame* with his book titled ‘Hindutva’ in 1923; this was just two years before the RSS came into existence.

In his book, *Hindutva*, which was published under the pseudonym ‘A Mahratta’ then, Savarkar emphasized the need for differentiating between Hinduism and Hindutva. For him, Hindutva was ‘not a word but a history’³⁸ and ‘Hinduism is only a derivative, a fraction, a part of Hindutva.’³⁹ By this he was making it clear that the Hindus have to profess *Hindutva* rather than Hinduism as the first defining characteristics of themselves.⁴⁰

Savarkar also prescribed a threefold criteria for a person to be a Hindu. He, in all sense, was defining the basic nature of Hindutva which were geographical, racial and cultural. By geographical, he meant the boundary of the Hindutva—a common nation (*Rashtra*) defined by race that defined the people belonging to a common Jati (race) and by cultural he means these common jati living within a boundary wedded by

³⁸ Savarkar, V. D, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* Veer Savarkar (Mumbai, Prakashan, 1969).

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Kanungo, Pralay, *RSS's Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*, p. 109.

a common Sanskriti (civilization).⁴¹ Thus, for him, a person is a Hindu if ‘*Sindhusthan*’ (India) is not only his/her ‘*Pitribhumi*’ (fatherland) but also a ‘*Punyabhumi*’ (holyland). ‘For the first two essentials of Hindutva—nation and Jati—are clearly denoted and connoted by the word Pitrubhumi while the third essential of Sanskriti is, pre-eminently implied by the word Punyabhumi, as it is precisely Sanskriti including sanskaras i. e. rites and rituals, ceremonies and sacraments, that makes a land a Holyland.’⁴² In simple terms, what Savarkar meant was those whose *holyland* and *fatherland* were not identical were not Indians. In other words, the Muslims and Christians do not belong to Savarkar’s ‘*Sindhusthan*’. He did not stumble upon words but was clear about his concepts and this is evident in his statement that:

That is why in the case of some of our Mohammedan or Christian countrymen who had originally been forcibly converted to a non-Hindu religion and who consequently have inherited along with Hindus, a common Fatherland and a greater part of the wealth of a common culture—language, law, customs, folklore and history—are not and cannot be recognized as Hindus. For though Hindusthan to them is Fatherland as to any other Hindu yet it is not to them a Holyland too. Their holyland is far off in Arabia or Palestine.⁴³

It is clear that what Savarkar was attempting to do was to redefine the term ‘Hindu’ in cultural and racial sense rather than a religious unit. By doing this, he was departing from the earlier Hindu nationalists like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee or Aurobindo who elevated nationalism to the status of a religion but considered ‘Hindu’ as a religious unit.⁴⁴

Giving the benefit of doubt, one may argue that Savarkar misunderstood the Hinduism or at least was unaware of it, due to which he concluded that a Hindu is a person whose *holyland* and *fatherland* ought to be in the geographical territory of India.

⁴¹Savarkar. V. D, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Kanungo, Pralay, *RSS’s Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*, p. 110.

And hence he interpreted it as a cultural and racial unit rather than a religious unit. However, according to A. G. Noorani ‘Savarkar did not *misinterpret* Hinduism. He ignored it. He perverted history for use in the service of his politics, a politics based on manufactured ancient wrongs for the spread of hatred and the spirit of revenge.’⁴⁵

The most important feature that comes out of Noorani’s statement is that the Hindutva ideology propagated by Savarkar and his ilk was nothing but a distortion of history for the political ends. But the question that arises now is why it was necessary for Savarkar to *pervert* history for using it in the service of his politics. This is where Gramsci’s argument on ideology is relevant. It is because every ideology needs historical backings to become an ‘organic ideology’ and when there are no historical events to substantiate, or to lend legitimacy to a certain political agenda of the present, the only way out is distortion of history to present it as truth. As Romila Thapar pointed out that ‘the notion of the religious community claims a historical basis and takes the identity of the community as far back in time as possible, so as to add legitimacy to their politics. Such legitimacy is aimed at drawing in a number of people.’⁴⁶ Therefore, historical distortion had become a necessity for Savarkar to gather legitimacy for his interpretation of the term the ‘Hindu’ and ‘Hindutva’ and to draw in a number of people to his views.

No matter how much distortion of history they do, Savarkar and his fellow Hindutva ideologues knew that their version of nationalism could not gain mass character, particularly at that historical juncture, because the Indian National Congress, with the arrival of Gandhi in the scene, by now had already hegemonised the Indian nationalist discourse by drawing in the masses to it with its inclusive approach. Gandhi

⁴⁵ Noorani. A. G, *Savarkar and Hindutva: The Godse Connection*, p. 60.

⁴⁶ Thapar. Romila, *Indian Society and the Secular*, (India: Three Essays Collective, 2016) p. 166.

and the Indian National Congress, again in 1920, through the Non- Cooperation Movement proved that the Indian masses were in support of a non-violent, liberal, inclusive form of Indian nationalism.

While the Hindutva ideologues were being overshadowed by liberal ideologues, there was another kind of challenge that the Hindutva ideologues were facing. And that challenge came from the non-Brahmins of Maharashtra. It was a greater threat to the Hindutva ideologues than the Indian National Congress and Gandhi at that historical juncture. This is because the threat was from within the ‘Hindus’ themselves whom the Hindutva ideologues were trying to appropriate for their political ends. The non-Brahmins consolidation questioned the Hindu caste system which oppressed them for centuries and treated them as dirt with a vigor that disturbed the Hindutva forces. This tendency was predominantly seen in those part of the country such as Maharashtra, where the Muslim population was insignificant in number. As Pralay Kanungo puts it:

Unlike Punjab and Bengal, the Muslim population in Maharashtra was not significant and its immediate political past was free of Muslim domination. Here the Brahmin-non-Brahmin dichotomy was crucial. The emergence of non-Brahmin consciousness posed a challenge to the supremacy of Brahmins.⁴⁷

This realization led to the establishment of a structured cadre based organisation, by the Hindutva forces, which would work as an ISA to influence the Hindus and bring them together into a Hindu fold. Thus, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, under the tutelage of B. S. Moonje, founded the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in 1925. It should be noted here that Hedgewar was influenced by Savarkar in a great way and subscribed to his idea of *Hindu Rashtra* unquestioningly. Not surprisingly, both of them spent a few days together before the foundation of the RSS.

⁴⁷ Kanungo, Pralay, *RSS's Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*, p. 39.

The RSS was founded as an ISA and in the times when the campaign known as *sangathan* was at its heights. The basic motives were:

1. To indoctrinate the Hindus for which they followed ‘the policy of ‘Catch them young’ - targeting the school boys from twelve to fifteen years age group, as it would be easy to mould their mind.’⁴⁸
2. It was also meant to impart them physical training.

These were basically, according to the precept, for ensuring discipline. Similar examples could be drawn from history such as the Black Shirts under Benito Mussolini’s Italy which was founded in 1919, a few years before the formation of RSS. What is interesting to note here is that Hedgewar had differences with his gurus and the Hindu Mahasabha leaders like Savarkar and Monje on the matter of the RSS’s participation in the political institutions of the time, both the struggle for independence and in the institutions introduced by the colonial rulers for participation/representation of the Indians such as the Montague-Chelmsford reforms of 1919. Whereas the Hindu Mahasabha was trying to project itself as a full-fledged political party, both Hedgewar and his successor, M.S. Golwalkar, stayed clear of the Mahasabha’s political activities.

Another interesting point to note here is that though the Hindutva nationalist ideology was at variance with the liberal nationalist ideology in its core, Hedgewar continued his association with the Indian National Congress despite his total involvement with his new organisation (RSS). In fact, his association with the Indian National Congress helped him to expand the RSS in the later years.⁴⁹ He also participated in the Salt Satyagraha launched by Gandhi in 1930 and even went to jail

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 44.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 46-47.

for nine months. These facts suggest that though the Hindu Mahasabha was its fraternal organisation, Hedgewar realized that the best option for the RSS was to go with the Indian National Congress.

When M. S. Golwalkar became the *sarsanghchalak* after the death of Hedgewar, on 21 June 1940, he took a neutral approach towards the colonial government and about involvement in politics. Under his leadership, the RSS withdrew from the political arena. It did not support the Hindu Mahasabha's call to the Hindus to get enrolled in the British army. Golwalkar also refused Moonje's invitation to the Sangh volunteers to attend guerilla warfare classes at the Bhonsle Military School, Nasik.⁵⁰ It is from here that the true form of Hindutva nationalist ideology that we know of today emerges. The reason behind discussing this brief history of the emergence of the RSS is due to the fact that in the period after 1980s and till date, it has been the RSS which has emerged as the utmost bearer of the Hindutva ideology.

As mentioned earlier, since Golwakar became its chief, the RSS completely refrained from participating in any of the anti-British struggles. Thus, there was a marked departure in the RSS's approach towards the freedom struggle from the Salt Satyagraha (where the stalwarts like Hedgewar actively participated and even courted imprisonment) and the sangh stayed out of the individual satyagraha campaign of 1940 and the Quit India Movement of 1942. On both these occasions, they maintained distance from the National movement. Now the major focus of the RSS was to expand itself for which it was necessary not to annoy the colonial rulers. At this point, it is

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 51.

important to discuss the main differences between the Hindutva (Hindu nationalism) and the Hind Swaraj⁵¹ (Indian nationalism).

The most important distinction between Hindu nationalism and Indian nationalism can be found in their ideological lineage. It is difficult to attach any specific ideology with Indian National Congress which was leading Indian nationalism, particularly because its leaders followed an amalgam of ideologies. There existed a Right wing and Left wing within the Congress; while Patel and his ilk belonged to the former category, leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose and so on belonged to the latter. Socialists of all shades like Jayapraksh Narayan, Minoo Masani, Ashok Mehta parked themselves in the Congress. The communists also joined the INC after the formation of Congress Socialist Party in 1934. Not to mention that INC even gave space to the then Hindutva ideologues like Hedgewar (who was the member of Executive Committee of the Central Province Congress Committee) and B. S. Moonje. For this, many criticize the INC for being a citadel for Hindutva ideologues. But what needs to be noted here is that the INC had assigned to itself the mighty responsibility of nationalizing the common masses. 'The arousal, training, organisation and consolidation of public opinion was seen as a major task by the Congress leaders. All initial activity of the early nationalism was geared towards this end.'⁵²And this could not have been achieved if INC had organized itself on the basis of a particular ideology and by ignoring those who did not adhere to that ideology.

This also was one of the main reasons why the Indian nationalist struggle led by INC was inclusive. But it does not mean that all the leaders in INC agreed with Hedgewar's or Savarkar's Hindutva. Nehru's disagreement with them can be found in

⁵¹ I am not referring to M.K.Gandhi's 1909 work, Hind Swaraj.

⁵² Chandra. Bipan, 'Foundation of the Indian National Congress: The Reality', Chandra. Bipan et al., *India's Struggle for Independence 1857-1947* (India: Penguin Books, 1989) p. 76.

various sections of *The Discovery of India*.⁵³ Therefore, Indian nationalism, led by INC always upheld democratic principles. They envisioned India as democratic nation after independence.

Hindutva nationalism, on the other hand, had its ideological lineage with fascism. Though, according to scholars like Christophe Jaffrelot, the Hindutva ideology is distinct and different from Fascism and Nazism. Jaffrelot argues:

As distinct from Nazism, the RSS's ideology treats society as an organism with a secular spirit, which is implanted not so much in the race as in a socio-cultural system ... Finally, in contrast to both Italian fascism and Nazism the RSS does not rely on the central figure of the leader.⁵⁴

After discussing about the B. S. Moonje's meeting with Hitler and Mussolini in 1930s he argued that,

But the main Hindu movement generally perceived as stemming from European inter-war fascism is the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. In fact, its foundation took place in 1925 before the first contacts of Hindu nationalist leaders with European fascists.⁵⁵

Jaffrelot may be right about his point that the RSS was formed before the Hindu nationalist leaders established their first contacts with their European counterparts in the 1930s. But this does not mean that the RSS's ideology was far too different from that of Hitler in Germany and Mussolini in Italy. It should be remembered that though the RSS and the Hindu Maha Sabha had some differences, they always had remained close allies. As discussed earlier, the RSS was founded and always held the view of *Hindu Rashtriya* propagated by Savarkar as sacrosanct. Because of this, when Hedgewar died in 1940, V. D. Savarkar, as the president of Hindu Mahasabha,

⁵³ In this book Nehru did not counter the claims of Hindutva directly but the chapters like 'Bharat Mata', What is Hinduism? The Vedas to name the few does indeed presents opposing narratives. For instance, he argued 'Hinduism, as a faith, is vague, amorphous, many-sided, all things to all man. It is hardly possible to define it, or indeed to say definitely whether it is a religion or not, in the usual sense of the world.' Nehru. Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985) p. 75.

⁵⁴ Jaffrelot. Christophe, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*, (New Delhi: Viking, 1996) pp. 63-64.

⁵⁵ Jaffrelot. Christophe, *Religion Caste and Politics in India* (London: Hurst & Company, 2011) p. 128.

instructed the Hindu Maha Sabha units throughout India to observe 30 June as a day of mourning.⁵⁶

Marzia Casolari, through field research and observations in India (from 1991 to 1993) and through archival evidence, establishes the similarities between the Nazis, the fascists and the RSS.⁵⁷ She argues:

The interest of Indian Hindu nationalists in fascism and Mussolini must not be considered as dictated by an occasional curiosity, confined to a few individuals, rather, it should be considered as the culminating result of the attention that Hindu nationalists, especially in Maharashtra, focused on Italian dictatorship and its leader. To them, fascism appeared to be an example of conservative revolution.⁵⁸

This gets clearer if we look at what the Hindutva ideologues themselves have had to say. Golwalkar not only glorified Hitler's Nazism but also considered it to be a good lesson for *Hindusthan*:

The German Race pride has now become the topic of the day. To keep up the purity of the Race and its culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the Semitic Races-the Jews. Race pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well-nigh impossible it is for Races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindusthan to learn and profit by it.⁵⁹

Shamsul Islam argued that 'the RSS as great champion of Hindutva want to deprive minority of all their civil and human rights shamelessly and openly adhering to the totalitarian models of Hitler.'⁶⁰

The second difference between the Hindu nationalists and Indian nationalists was their views on the nature of the constitution that India should adopt after independence. As discussed in the previous chapter, civil liberties had become one of

⁵⁶ Kanungo, Pralay, *RSS's Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*, p. 48

⁵⁷ For more on this, read Casolari, Marzia, *Hindutva's Foreign Tie-up in the 1930s: Archival Evidence*, Economic and Political Weekly, 22nd January 2000.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 219.

⁵⁹ Islam, Shamsul, *Golwalkar. M. S, We or Our Nationhood Defined: A Critique by Shamsul Islam with the full text of the book* (India: Pharos Media & Publishing Pvt Ltd, 2015) p. 171.

⁶⁰ Islam, Shamsul, *Know the RSS: Based on Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh Documents* (New Delhi: Pharos Media & Publishing Pvt Ltd, 2015) p. 7.

the main features of the Indian constitution. Golwalkar, however, desired the Indian constitution to be based on *Manusmriti*⁶¹ in accordance to which the women and the oppressed castes should be subjugated. It was because of the subjugation of women and the oppressed castes and its legitimisation by the *Manusmriti* that Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, one of the prominent campaigners against such oppression, burnt the *Manusmriti* on December 25th 1927 during the Mahad *satyagraha*⁶² in Maharashtra.

The third and the most important difference between Hindutva nationalism and Indian nationalism was the nature of their mobilization and consolidation. As Indian nationalism was inclusive and hence attempts were made, constantly and consistently, to include and encourage the participation of every section of the society. Whereas, Hindu nationalist mobilization was based on the exclusion of non-Hindu communities. In fact, initially the RSS only focused on the Brahmins, due to which it was accused of being an organisation of Maharashtrian Brahmins.

During the freedom struggle, the liberal and democratic values in Indian nationalism propagated by the INC became the 'organic ideology' because of which INC was able to hegemonise the Indian nationalist discourse. On the other hand Hindutva nationalist ideology remained as counter-hegemonic ideology. Because of its several drawbacks, particularly its minority Brahmin character, Hindutva could never emerge to become an organic ideology at that point of time when the anti-imperialist struggle called for a united front of all the people. However, the Hindutva forces always engaged in what Gramsci called a 'war of position'.

⁶¹ According to Hindu mythology, the contents in Manusmriti is the words of Brahma (Hindu God). It consist 2690 verses, divided into 12 chapters.

⁶² The Mahad *satyagraha* was a peaceful agitation and protest organized because the Brahmins of the village Mahad in Konkan in Maharashtra were restricting the Dalits from using the water from village water tank.

Gramsci's concept of 'war of position' means the efforts of mobilization in civil society. Unlike the 'war of movement' which is direct frontal assault on the ruling authority or the State, 'war of position' in a sense, is the preparation for the 'war of movement'. This is because in many societies like in the West, the ruling class or the State had already gained consent through hegemony from the civil societies and therefore, to counter the ruling authority, it is necessary for the revolting classes to create its own hegemony in the civil society. For instance, 'In Russia, in 1917, a frontal assault on the state was able to succeed because there 'the state was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous'. In the West, the state is 'only an outer ditch' behind which is a sturdy civil society. Hence in the West there must be a transition from the war of movement to a 'war of position' as held by Gramsci.⁶³

As the civil society was not in support of the colonial state in India, the question that arise now is why was it not possible for the Hindutva ideologues, then, to directly go on the assault against the colonial state? Here we need to remember that civil society might not have been in support of the colonial state but this, indeed, was the outcome of the hegemonisation of the idea of nationalism as envisaged by the Indian National Congress. This is the reason why the Hindu Maha Sabha could never gain prominence and its marginalization was evident ever since the Indian National Congress decided to contest the elections to the Provincial Assemblies after the 1935 Act. Golwalkar knew that the RSS was not strong enough to penetrate into the National liberation movement and hegemonise it. It was in a precarious position and hence could not counter the colonial state. And it was because of this reason that the RSS, particularly under his leadership, began to refrain from participating in any ant-British agitations; it must, however be stressed here that the RSS, unlike the Hindu Maha Sabha, did not cooperate

⁶³ Forgacs. David, *A Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935*, (India: Aakar Books, 2014) p. 222.

with the colonial dispensation overtly even while it refrained from any active association with the struggle for independence.

A major transformation for the Hindutva ideology came after independence. It needs to be mentioned here that in our analysis since 1947 we need to locate Hindutva ideology in the larger context of democracy. This is because the Indian masses mobilized themselves behind the INC in the anti-imperial struggle to establish an egalitarian socio-economic structure and this was based on a categorical realization that it could only be built upon on a democratic foundation. Till 1947 we discussed Hindutva ideology broadly in comparison with the inclusive Indian nationalist ideology. And because the INC, during the anti-colonial struggle, was catering the inclusive nationalist ideology among the masses, we also discussed Hindutva and its apparatus, the RSS, in comparison to INC. But the developments that occurred in the post-independence period changed this socio-political setting.

To start with, the INC for instance, which based its mobilization during the nationalist struggle, promising an egalitarian set up in post-colonial India, on the basis of citizenship, rather than Hindus or Muslims, started to cater to the class interest of the emerging bourgeoisie. In other words,

The material changes undergone in the reality when it became clear that the British were all set to quit (an important fallout of the World War II when a whole lot of nations were liberated from imperialist clutches) also witnessed the transition of the Indian National Congress from being a platform of struggle to just another political party - the Congress party – and this forced its leaders to *embark upon a conscious effort to formulate a different basis to nationalism.* (Emphasis added)⁶⁴

The different basis of nationalism which the Congress party formulated in the immediate aftermath of independence was ‘on the lines prescribed by Golwalkar and

⁶⁴ Ananth. V. Krishna, *The Political Economy of Communalism: Some Observations on the Contemporary Political Discourse in India*, Social Scientist, Vol. 29, No. 7/8, July- August 2001, p. 53.

Hedgewar'.⁶⁵ This was done so that issues like hunger, poverty and other manifestations of an unequal economic order did not stay on as part of the national political discourse.⁶⁶ This, in fact, substantiates Gramsci's view on ideology; that ideology does not have any class character and any class or members of any class can adhere to any ideology, if it fits their class interest.

For the Hindutva ideologues, the post-independence period turned out to be rather difficult than they expected. There were broadly two main reasons for this. First, its opponent, the INC, with which it used to compete on ideological grounds now started to appropriate its ideology, even if it was in small measures. This made it difficult for the Hindutva ideologues to demonstrate themselves as distinct members of the society who were concerned with the good of the Hindu population in the country. Second, but the most important factor, was the fact that one of the associates of the Hindutva platform, Nathuram Vinayak Godse, was found involved in the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi on January 30th 1948. This changed the political map of the Hindutva.

In fact, the RSS was gaining a momentum in the last stage of the freedom struggle. The intermittent communal violence also assisted the process. The demand for a separate state of Pakistan by Mohammed Ali Jinnah and the Muslim Leagues gave the much needed boost to the RSS for their expansion drive. Infamous events like the Great Calcutta Killings in August 1946 in direct response to Jinnah's call for Direct Action were stimulants for the RSS. In such a tumultuous situation, the RSS was successful in convincing a large number of Hindus that it is the only organisation which can defend the Hindus against the Muslim aggression. It also succeeded in causing a

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p.54

⁶⁶ For more on this discussion see Ananth. V. Krishna, *The Political Economy of Communalism: Some Observations on the Contemporary Political Discourse in India*.

condition where violence against the Muslims was justified as necessary to protect the dignity of the Hindus. The INC leader and sympathizer of the RSS, Sardar Patel in his letter to Golwalkar mentioned that ‘organizing the Hindus and helping them is one thing, but going in for revenge for suffering on innocent and helpless men, women and children is another thing’.⁶⁷ The RSS was also involved in a big way in organising the evacuation of the Hindus from West Punjab, which had gone to Pakistan. A committee known as the Punjab Relief Committee under the RSS’s tutelage was established which undertook relief work among the Hindu refugees coming from Pakistan.

The demonstrative dedication, sacrifice and organizational capacity during the riots enabled the RSS to establish its image as the ‘Saviour of the Hindus’. This image helped the RSS to expand rapidly in Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir, Delhi and other places of north India.⁶⁸

As the RSS was gaining momentum, on the basis of violence and taking advantage of the situation, Gandhi started visiting refugee camps and convince people not to indulge in violence. The consolidation of communal organisations on both sides worsened the situation which continued after the independence. When violence broke out against the Muslims in Delhi, Gandhi started a fast on 12 January 1948 and he laid down certain conditions to give up his fast.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Patel’s letter to Golwalkar, dated the 11 September 1948, reproduced in Justice on Trial: Historic Document of Guruji- Government Correspondence (Banglore: Sharada Press, 1968), pp- 26-8. Cited in Kanungo, Pralay, *RSS’s Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*, p. 55.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 55.

⁶⁹ The conditions were:

1. Hindus and Sikhs must forthwith stop all attacks against Muslims and must reassure Muslims that they would live together as brothers.
2. Hindus and Sikhs would make every effort to ensure that not one Muslim should leave India because of insecurity of life and property.
3. Attacks which were taking place on Muslims in moving trains must forthwith stop and Hindus and Sikhs who were taking part in such attacks must be prevented from doing so.
4. Muslims who lived near the shrines and dargahs like Nizamuddin Aulia, Khwaja Qutubuddin Bakhtiar Kaki and Nasiruddin Chiragh Dehlvi had left their homes in distress. They must be brought back to their own locality and re-settled.

Hindus and Sikhs must participate in restoration and repair work of the Dargah Qutubuddin Bakhtiar. For more details see, Azad. A. K. Maulana, *India Wins Freedom: The Complete Version* (New Delhi: Orient Blackswam, 2015).

What Gandhi did was that he put the responsibility of maintaining peace and security of the Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims on the shoulders of the Hindus and the Sikhs. In contrast, the RSS and the Hindutva ideologues were suggesting that the Hindu's reputation lay in the violence against Muslims. Gandhi's existence, then, was damaging for the Hindutva propaganda, as his emphasis was on the sense of security for Muslims. Many Hindutva ideologues like Nathuram Godse saw Gandhi's existence as inimical to their interests and soon the attacks on Gandhi began. On 20th January 1948, a bomb was thrown at him during a prayer meeting in the Birla House. And then the fatal attempt was made by Godse on Gandhi's life on 30 January 1948. This was Godse's third attempt on Gandhi's life.⁷⁰

The most important point here is that with the assassination of Gandhi, the RSS and the Hindutva forces lost their ground which was gained during the partition. It created a sort of stigma against these forces. 'After Gandhi's murder, the RSS faced wrath from the public as well as the government. On 4 February 1948, it was declared unlawful. There was a large scale arrest of RSS functionaries including Golwalkar.'⁷¹ Another Hindutva ideologue, Savarkar, was detained under the Bombay Public Safety Measures Act, 1947. This was because Godse was in close relationship with Savarkar and had both RSS and Hindu Mahasabha background.

However, the most important part was the reaction of these leaders to their arrests. Savarkar, for instance, wrote to the Commissioner of Police offering to give an undertaking to the Government that he 'shall refrain from taking part in any communal or political activity for any period the Government may require in case I am released

⁷⁰ Vaidya. Chunibhai, Assassination of Gandhi- The Facts Behind, <http://www.mkgandhi.org/assassin.htm> (Accessed on 10th November 2017).

⁷¹ Kanungo, Pralay, *RSS's Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*, p. 55-56.

on that condition.⁷² Similarly, Golwalkar started a correspondence with Nehru and Patel, after his release on August 1948, to get the ban on the RSS lifted.⁷³ Alongside, the RSS started pressurizing the government through signature campaigns and *satyagraha*. Ultimately, the ban was lifted on 12 July 1949 on the agreement that the RSS would adopt a written constitution and would function only in the cultural field.

The experience after Gandhi's murder made the RSS realize that now it has to indulge in politics. Though it promised to function only in the cultural field, individuals from the outfit were formally deputed to join the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) party when it was founded on October 21, 1951. In fact, the BJS was founded on the Hindutva ideological plank which considered 'India is an ancient nation.'⁷⁴ Thus, begins the Hindutva 'war of movement,' in the Gramscian sense of the term.

The Politics of Hindutva and the War of Movement

As discussed earlier, in Gramscian sense, the 'war of movement' is the direct assault on the ruling class, or in a Parliamentary democracy, a direct assault on the ruling party. Hindutva ideologues were already engaged in a war of position in independent India. To get out of the social stigma that afflicted them after the assassination of Gandhi and to make a strong hold among the civil society, new organisations under the tutelage of the RSS were founded; these were such as the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) in 1948 to focus on students and the academic domains, the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), founded in 1954, for organising the workers under the Hindutva fold. They utilised all the possible avenues to reach the people. For instance, the RSS and its arms have been participating in social activities and relief activities since then. Like in

⁷² Noorani. A. G, *Savarkar and Hindutva: The Godse Connection*, p. 95-96.

⁷³ Kanungo, Pralay, *RSS's Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*, p. 56.

⁷⁴ Bharatiya Jana Sangh, *Party Documents 1951-1972: Principles and Policies Manifestos Constitution* (New Delhi, 1973) p. 17.

1950, the RSS worked for the relief of Assam earthquake victims. It started campaigns against cow slaughter in 1952. It joined the *satyagraha* to liberate the Portuguese enclaves of Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

The next instance when opportunity knocked at the doors of the Hindutva forces was the Sino- Indian Border conflict in the early 1960s. . The 1962 war provided an opportunity to the RSS to demonstrate its patriotic credentials to the public. Surprisingly, even the Nehru government allowed the RSS to participate, as a separate contingent, in the Republic Day parade of 1963. Later, in 1965, when India and Pakistan went for war, its traditional anti-Muslim propaganda got a boost and it was able to further consolidate its patriotic image. Prior to this, the, Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) was founded in 1964.⁷⁵

The expansion of the Sangh Parivar (family of the RSS) and the propaganda machinery reached the civil society and gathered strength to the BJS as a party in successive elections since 1962. For instance, the BJS registered an impressive performance in the 1967 Lok Sabha election, polling 9.35 per cent of votes and winning 35 seats. This was a giant leap from the three seats the party had won in the first general elections in 1951-52. This marked a watershed for the Hindutva political platform and can be held as the beginnings of the emergence of a political challenge against the monopoly of the Congress since independence. But the credit for the success of Hindutva propaganda in the post 1950s cannot be only given to the Sangh Parivar. The Congress party equally contributed to it. The rightward shift of the polity began in the mid-1960s and the emergence of the Bharathiya Jan Sangh as a force in the electoral sense was only a manifestation of that shift. The Bharathiya Jan Sangh, along with those

⁷⁵ Kanungo, Pralay, *RSS's Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*, p. 58.

who made the Swatantra Party in the early 1960s (the Swatantra had registered an impressive performance in the general elections in 1962 winning 16 Lok Sabha seats had tired itself by 1967 and a number of its leaders soon ended up in the BJS) was able to fill a vacuum.

Indira Gandhi's emergence as Prime Minister, after the sudden death of Lal Bahadur Shastri in January 1966, created internal problems within the Congress and that ultimately led to the split of Congress in 1969 into Congress (O) and Congress (R). Soon came the allegations of corruption and scandals against Indira's government. First among these was the Maruti scam.⁷⁶ It should also be noted that the Congress lost in half of the States in the 1967 elections and the Congress government at the Centre had to take outside help to remain in power since the party split in December 1969. The Right wing's expectations increased due to this chaotic situation.

However, this was short-lived. Indira Gandhi bagged 342 out of the 518 Lok Sabha seats in the 1971 general elections. Thereafter the victory against Pakistan and the Liberation of Bangladesh on December 16th 1971 raised Indira's reputation to higher position.⁷⁷

However, the military victory over Pakistan had an adverse impact on economy. Like any other war, 1971 war also 'meant larger spending on defence, particularly on import of arms and ammunitions. The expenditures incurred on this account (and most of this were diverted from out of fund meant for development needs) caused its own

⁷⁶ Indira's son Sanjay Gandhi was given the license to manufacture small cars that would cost only rupees six thousand and would run 90 km per liter of petrol. However, 'not a single car rolled out of the factory for at least a decade after it was set up in 1970 by the prime minister's son who secured the license- even when automobile giants from across the world had applied-and managed to collect money from anywhere and everywhere he could.. Ananth. V. Krishna, *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics* (New Delhi: Dorling Kindersley (India) Pvt. Ltd, 2011) p. 98.

⁷⁷ Atal Behari Vajpayee, who would become the prime minister in February 1998, lauded her as 'the incarnation of the Goddess Durga' *Ibid*, p.108-109.

problem.’⁷⁸ To make matters worse, in 1972-73 there was a general monsoon failure. ‘As a consequence, food grain output came down by 8 per cent in that year alone. This sharp fall in grain output and that too in a situation where a large chunk of the surplus stocks were exhausted, on account of feeding the refugees from East Pakistan, was a bad enough cause for a crisis.’⁷⁹ In addition to all these, the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) increased oil prices fourfold in 1973. This meant that India had to spend a billion dollars more to keep its import of oil at the same level. It resulted in rise of prices by 23 percent in 1973 which went up to 30 percent in 1974. Indians faced double trouble, as food grains were already in shortage they now had to deal with inflation.

Indira went to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. They provided aid to India but on condition that economic reforms were initiated to contain government expenditure. This resulted in the impounding of Dearness Allowance (DA) by government of India, which directly affected the salariat who were already facing the problems of price rise and shortage of essentials. Together with this, more cases of corruption and favouritism surfaced in public sphere.

The mid 1970s was also the time when major post-independence anti-state movements emerged like The Gujarat Movement (the Navnirman Andolan) started by students of the L. D. Engineering College against high mess bill, the Bihar Movement (The Total Revolution) carried out by ABVP and Samajwadi Yujan Sabha (SYS) under JP’s leadership and the Railway General Strike of May 1974. The last nail on the coffin

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 115.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 116.

came from the Allahabad High Court on June 12, 1975, when Justice Jagmohan Lal Sinha decided on an election petition against Indira Gandhi.

This came as a boost to the opposition leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan and Morarji Desai, who had by this time also rallied the BJS alongside and demanding that Indira should resign. In response to this, with no other option in sight, Indira Gandhi decided to impose National Emergency.

The Emergency, indeed, provided the much needed break for the Hindutva forces. With the declaration of emergency came the banning of political and quasi political organisations and detention of opposition leaders. Among others, RSS was also banned and its chief Balasaheb Deoras was put in jail. The emergency is significant in the analysis of the rise of the Hindutva ideology and RSS in democratic India. Arvind Rajagopal argues:

The importance of the Emergency in the growth of the RSS needs to be emphasised because it helps to periodise Hindutva's active involvement in national politics, rather than seeing such involvement as a bolt from the blue. With the opposition leaders in jail (and a section of the parliamentary left supporting the Emergency), the RSS had, besides the CPI (M), one of the major grass roots organisations with national reach.⁸⁰

It is to be noted that both the RSS and its ideology remained pariah in Indian's political scene since the assassination of Gandhi in 1948. But after emergency the RSS emerged as an important organisation in the Indian political scene. The RSS and its Hindutva ideologues took credit for their brave resistance against emergency. It is a common consensus that the declaration of the emergency was an undemocratic act and was an abuse of power by the Indira Gandhi government.

⁸⁰ Rajagopal. Arvind, *Sangh's Role in the Emergency*, Economic and Political Weekly, 5th July, 2003, p. 2798.

The point is, the emergency and the political developments which led to the emergency made the common masses realize that Indira was not the person they wanted to see leading the country. One could easily discern why her party lost the general election in March 1977. But, for the RSS, it was an opportunity to bestow itself as the defender of democracy. The struggle against the emergency was declared as the ‘second freedom struggle’. And the RSS participated in it. Hundreds of its cadres were arrested because of the anti-emergency slogans they raised on the streets. They also played an important role in the production and distribution of underground literature. However, while its cadres were arrested, for coming out in the streets, we also need to see what their leaders did. When *sarsanghchalak* Balasaheb Deoras was arrested, he wrote letters to Indira Gandhi from the Yeravada jail in Poona promising that ‘his organisation would be at the disposal of the government “for national uplift” if the ban on the RSS were lifted and its members freed from jail.’⁸¹

While the role of the RSS and its contribution in the anti-emergency struggle is a matter of debate (at least until the Intelligence Reports of the period and correspondence between leaders and the government are de-classified and given the fact that newspapers, another important source for any study of that nature cannot serve because of the censorship that prevailed), what is clear is that the RSS and its political wing, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), came into prominence and gathered much legitimacy in the democratic political space because of the emergency.

⁸¹ Letters dated August 22 and November 10, 1975 in Justice Demands: Letters of RSS Chief, nd, pp 1-10. Cited in Rajagopal. Arvind, *Sangh's Role in the emergency*.

In other words, the RSS, the BJS and the Hindutva ideology emerged due to what Sumantra Bose calls as ‘organic crisis’⁸² of the Indian state. Her definition of ‘organic crisis’ is interesting and useful in understanding the emergence of Hindutva ideology in post-independence India. According to her, organic crisis has two major dimensions. One at the level of democratic regime and another in the sphere of the multi-party system.

At the level of democratic regime, there is the crisis of ‘legitimacy’. This crisis, in turn has two dimensions which are ‘efficacy’ and regime ‘effectiveness’. And in the sphere of multi-party system, there is the ‘crisis of hegemony’. ‘Efficacy’ refers to ‘the capacity of a regime to find solutions to the basic problems facing the political system and those that become salient in any historical moment’. And ‘effectiveness’ is ‘the capacity to actually implement the policies formulated, with the desired results’.⁸³

By putting Bose’s idea in our perspective, we can see that the Congress party lost its ‘efficacy’ and ‘effectiveness’ and created a ‘crisis of legitimacy’ for itself which resulted in its ‘crisis of hegemony’ over civil society. To put it in her own words:

In the sphere of competitive party-politics, there is a ‘crisis of hegemony’ for the Congress Party, the pivot and principal beneficiary of post-independence India’s one-party-dominant system. This in turn has generated a situation of unprecedented instability, unpredictability and flux in the multi-party system. It is this overall crisis, I contend, that has provided the context and opportunity for the Hindutva movement, through its political affiliate, the BJP, to mount a serious bid to capture state power.⁸⁴

⁸² Bose. Sumantra, ‘Hindu Nationalism’ and the Crisis of the Indian State: A Theoretical Perspective’, Bose. Sugata and Jalal. Ayesha, *Nationalism, Democracy & Development: State and Politics in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014) pp. 104- 164.

⁸³ Linz, *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Crisis, Breakdown and Re-equilibration*, Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978. Cited in Bose. Sumantra, ‘Hindu Nationalism’ and the Crisis of the Indian State: A Theoretical Perspective’, p. 110.

⁸⁴ Bose. Sumantra, ‘Hindu Nationalism’ and the Crisis of the Indian State: A Theoretical Perspective’, p. 109.

Till now, we traced the historical trajectory of Hindutva ideology and its apparatus, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, from their foundation to the transformations they went through, in democratic India till the mid-1970s. The next significant phase in the trajectory of Hindutva occurred during the Ram Janmabhumi movement of the 1980s. While this aspect -- the Ram Janmabhumi movement and the treatment of that by the media will be done in detail in the next chapter, let us now deal with the media's treatment of the emergence of Hindutva during colonial period.

III

Media and Hindutva in Colonial India

It is difficult to answer whether or not the media as a homogenous institution was an ISA of Hindutva ideology during the colonial times. This is because of two reasons. First, if we look at the history of newspapers in India, we can see that different newspapers functioned for different interests. For instance, The Times of India, started in 1861, supported the British policies. The Madras Mail, started in 1868, represented the interests of the European commercial community. *Amrita Bazar Patrika* propagated nationalist feelings. Secondly, as discussed earlier, the Hindutva ideology never occupied as much space during the colonial period. It also did not achieve hegemony over the civil society. Therefore, Althusser's concept of Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) cannot be applied while we analyze the role of the media in the emergence of Hindutva. Having said this, we also need to remember that Hindutva ideology, like any other ideology, used the media, at least in post-colonial India, for its proliferation. And it is, hence, relevant to analyze media's role to understand any ideology. Therefore, this section will analyze the media simply as Ideological Apparatus (IA), rather than Ideological State Apparatus, of Hindutva. What could be done is to identify the medium, both newspapers and books, which were used as its IA.

The significance of the media⁸⁵ permeates in the history of Hindutva. Books have been one of the major tools for the Hindutva ideologues. Many believe Bankim Chandra Chatterji's well-known fiction, *Anandamath*⁸⁶ of 1882 to be the earliest manifestation of Hindutva. This is particularly because major slogans and concepts on which the twentieth century Hindutva was based on, could be found in this novel.

In *Anandamath*, Bankim Chandra defined nationalism in a religious sense. Nation, in his novel, is not just the mother land but also the Goddesses 'Durga' and 'Kali'. This concept was later developed by Hindutva ideologue Savarkar for whom 'Sindhusthan' (India) was not only 'Pitribhumi' (fatherland) but also a 'Punjabhumi' (holyland). Bankim's *Anandamath* also gave the slogan 'Bande Mataram' (Hail to the Mother), which became the 'virtual anthem for the contemporary Hindutva movement.'⁸⁷As discussed earlier, Hindutva ideologues like Savarkar and Golwalkar also wrote books to proliferate their respective versions of Hindutva.

In the previous chapter, we have discussed about the emergence of print media like *Sambad Kaumidi* in Bengali, *Mirat ul Akbhar* in Persian and *Brahmunical Magazine* in English during 1821. It is significant to note that these papers were started by Rammohun Roy, broadly, for two reasons. First was to educate the Indians on the need for social reforms. The second objective was to counter the tirades against regional religion, particularly in the Hinduism, by newspapers like the Serampore Journals printed by the missionaries. While defending Hinduism against the attacks of the Christian missionaries of Serampore, he also agitated for the abolition of *sati*. For this,

⁸⁵ 'Media' here is being used as the nomenclature for whole range of mass media like books and newspapers.

⁸⁶ Chatterji. C. Bankim, *Anandamath: Translated From Bengali*, Koomar Roy. K. Basanta (New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks).

⁸⁷ Bhatt. Chetan, *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologues and Modern Myths*, Berg Publisher, 2001. Cited in Noorani. A.G., 'Nationalism and Its Contemporary Discontents in India', in Thapar. Romila et. al, *On Nationalism* (New Delhi: Aleph Book Company, 2016) pp. 98-99.

he had to face opposition of orthodox Hindus. One among them was Bhowani Charan Banerjee.

Banerjee was the founding editor of *Sambad Kaumidi*. He belonged to that category of Hindus who thought it was necessary to counter the spread the western education and culture in traditional Indian society but did not internalize their own culture and religion. And even defended social evils like *sati* against which the paper was actually campaigning. Naturally due to the ideological differences with Roy, on the matter of religious reforms, he left the paper after its thirteenth issue.

Soon after, he started his own paper *Samachar Chandrika* which opposed English education but also ‘defended *sati* and opposed the social and religious reform measures advocated by Rammohun Roy.’⁸⁸

It will be a mistake to situate individuals like Bhowani Charan Banerjee among the pantheon of the Hindutva ideologues like Savarkar and Golwalkar. This is because Banerjee’s approach towards religion had nothing to do with the nationalism and as a political weapon. He was basically an orthodox Hindu. However, the only connection that could be established is that the orthodoxy of Banerjee is similar to the orthodoxy of Hindutva ideologues. If we apply Bipan Chandra’s three stages of communalism to this discussion, then individuals like Banerjee will fit in the first stage of communalism. The point here is that the media and media-persons, much before the time of Savarkar, were already familiar with the assertion of orthodox Hinduism, the first stage of Hindutva.

⁸⁸ Rau. M. Chalapathi, *The Press* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, India, 1974) pp.30-31.

The differences between Roy and Banerjee and their papers indicates that there can be no complete hegemony of one ideology over all the Ideological Apparatuses. *Samachar Chandrika* indeed was the IA of orthodox Hinduism but *Sambad Kaumidi* was just opposite of it. Gramsci, while discussing about the hegemony of an ideology of one class, discuss about the existence of the opposition or counter-ideology -- ideology of the revolting classes within the same civil society -- which is needed to create 'counter- hegemony'.

Another newspaper that should be mentioned here is *Kesari*. While *Kesari* in 1881 was started by Tilak to raise the discontent among the people against the oppressive colonial rule, it also functioned as the IA of Hindutva. In fact,

From 1924 to 1935 *Kesari* regularly published editorials and articles about Italy, fascism and Mussolini. What impressed the Marathi journalists was the socialist origin of fascism and the fact that the new regime seemed to have transformed Italy from a backward country to a first class power.⁸⁹

Mention should also be made here about the newspaper *Bengalee* which, as discussed earlier, was the medium for U. N. Mookerjee to inject the fear among the Hindus through his series of articles entitled 'A Dying Race'. That was in 1909.

Therefore, it is safe to conclude that in the mid-19th century, there were indeed some sections of the media which supported and propagated Hindutva ideology. In the early parts of the 20th century, it was a liberal nationalist ideology that dominated the mainstream political scene in India and therefore, most of the media, particularly newspapers, focused on nationalist leaders like Gandhi, Nehru and the national movement. And after Gandhi's assassination and due to the social stigma that was

⁸⁹ Casolari. Marzia, *Hindutva's Foreign Tie-up in the 1930s: Archival Evidence*, p. 219.

attached to the RSS, the Hindutva propaganda remained dormant till the early 1960s, which then got life with the chaos within the INC.

The resurgence of the RSS and Hindutva occurred after the mid-1970s, especially during the Emergency and after. In a substantive sense, Hindutva was resurrected irreducibly during the Ram Janmabhumi movement. Further discussion on Hindutva during the Ram Janmabhumi where the media played a major role in creating a favourable situation to the Hindutva ideology to grow and then hegominise the polity will be the focus in the next chapter (Chapter III).

CHAPTER III

The Ram Janmabhumi Movement and the Role of the Press

The demolition of the Babri Masjid on 6th December 1992 was a moment of historical transition for the Hindutva politics in particular and politics in India in general. While it was the pivotal imprint of an irreducible resurgence of the communal ideology for the former, it was a point of stark departure from the secular trajectory in India that evolved through the anti-imperialist struggle in the case of the latter. The demolition was the result of the movement that came to be described, in all quarters, as the ‘Ram Janmabhumi Movement’ which emerged from the sediments of a dispute regarding the construction of Ram *chabutra*¹ close to the Babri Masjid, a Sixteenth Century mosque, in November 1857. At that time, Maulvi Muhammad Asghar of the Babri Masjid, preferred a complaint with the District Magistrate of Faizabad, against the construction of the *chabutra*. Consequently, the British government erected a fence separating the Mosque and the *chabutra* in 1859. Later in 1885, the *mahant*² of Hanumangarhi³ filed a suit, seeking legal title over the land on which the *chabutra* stood and for the construction of a temple on that portion of the land. However, this demand was rejected by the Judicial Commissioner first and later by the higher court in the United Provinces⁴ on 1st November 1886. It needs to be noted here that during the disputes and litigations in 19th century, nowhere the site had been referred to as Ram Janmabhumi. However,

¹ The chabutra is a raised platform of 17 ft x 21 ft about a 100 paces away from the mosque proper. It was constructed as the Hindu worshipping place.

² A chief priest.

³ Hanumangarhi is a temple in Ayodhya dedicated to Hindu lord and ally of Ram, Hanuman

⁴ United Province now known as Uttar Pradesh.

later on, events led to make Ram Janmabhumi *the referring* point of the resurgence of Hindutva forces in India.

The first section of this chapter will discuss the political context in which the Ram Janmabhumi Movement (RJM) emerged during 1980s that altered the secular fabric of the nation in an unconceivable manner in the days to come. Followed by this, the second section will narrate the trajectory of the Ram Janmabhumi Movement, its evolution and its expansion and finally the events that led to the demolition of the Babri Masjid. And the third section will elaborate on the role of media/press in this course.

I

The Political context

The decade that preceded the actual act of demolition of the Babri Masjid, on 6th December 1992, was a period of political crisis in India. The coalition of the anti-Congress parties and forces against Indira Gandhi's Congress (R) that took the form of the Janata Party⁵ during the post emergency period was short-lived. The Janata Party itself collapsed in less than a couple of years since its formation in March 1977. The collapse of the Janata Party in July 1979, caused disillusionment for many; this paved the way for the comeback of Indira Gandhi to power. Indira, then, just had come out of an internal crisis within her party which ultimately led to the split with herself heading the Congress (I) and those who opposed her now forming the Congress (U); this was in January 1978. A host of established Congress leaders like Y. B. Chavan and Brahmanand Reddy went with the Congress (U), the inspiration being Devraj Urs, who had, interestingly managed Indira's return to the Lok Sabha in 1978 through a by-

⁵ Janata Party was the coalition party which comprised Congress (O), The Bharatiya Jana Sangh, Bharatiya Lok Dal, and the Socialist party.

election. After the split, Indira Gandhi's belligerent political maneuvering led to the victory of the Congress (I) that ultimately ensured her return as Prime Minister. The splintered opposition set the stage for this.

The turmoil within the Janata Party began in mid-July 1979. Charan Singh, the Finance Minister from the Bharatiya Lok Dal (BLD) faction in the Janata Party (the Janata, though described as one party was indeed a conglomerate of several factions with distinct lineages and the BLD was only one of them), resigned from the Morarji Desai led government raising the matter of dual membership of the Jana Sangh members of the Janata Party and the RSS. Charan Singh was only voicing what Madhu Limaye, a socialist party veteran in the Janata Party, had formulated with a view to give an ideological gloss to a fight among personalities. Both Morarji Desai and Charan Singh were claimants for the Prime Ministers' berth even in March 1977, when the Janata Party strode to power; the dispute was just pushed under the carpet then. But Indira Gandhi lent life to Charan Singh's aspiration and declared her support his Janata (Secular). Charan Singh after securing the support from the Y. B. Chavan led Congress (U) together with socialists, had the outside support of Congress (I) and the Communist Party of India (CPI), and formed the government. However, Indira Gandhi had her own intentions behind supporting Charan Singh, among which, the top priority was the scrapping of the special courts that were set up to prosecute her for emergency excesses. Charan Singh refused to succumb and Indira Gandhi withdrew her support and Charan Singh had to submit his resignation to the President Sanjiva Reddy on 20 August 1979.

The 1980s had begun with the Lok Sabha elections on 3 - 6 January 1980. The Congress (I) won a massive mandate with 353 seats in the House of 529 seats in the Lok Sabha and Indira Gandhi once again emerged as the Prime Minister of the country.

Though the electoral victory of 1980 absolved her from the Emergency excesses and gave a chance to her to rejoice in power, the subsequent developments were fatal that led to her tragic end in the hands of her bodyguards on October, 31, 1984. The enormous victory of the Congress could not save it from the infectious of factionalism at the center as well as among the State leadership of the Party. Neither she could handle the factionalism in the Party nor strengthen the organisational structure during her third (and incomplete) term as Prime Minister. The situation was:

One result of this infighting and the consequent frequent rise and fall of chief ministers was that party organizational elections were repeatedly postponed and, in the end, not held. Another result was the erosion of the feeling that Congress could provide state governments that worked. Organizational weakness also began to erode the party's support and adversely affect its electoral performance, with dissidents often sabotaging the prospects of the official party candidates.⁶

The conditions only worsened after Rajiv Gandhi was brought into prominence, after the death of Sanjay Gandhi⁷ on 23 June 1980, by his mother. Rajiv won the by-election from the Amethi and became an MP on 17th August 1981. Subsequently, he was appointed as the general secretary of the Congress (I) on 2nd February 1983. Then, it looked like a widely accepted decision and everybody in the party, except for Maneka Gandhi (the widow of Sanjay Gandhi and who was in Congress then and later on joined the BJP and became a minister) and few Sanjay loyalists, started singing in praise of Rajiv's. Soon, he became a key player in the party. Prior to his appointment as general secretary of the party, during 1982, Rajiv humiliated a senior leader of his party and then the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh T. Anjaiah, who actually organised a massive reception for him in Hyderabad. This incident had far reaching implications in

⁶ Chandra. Bipan et al, 'The Janata Interregnum and Indira Gandhi's Second Coming, 1977- 1984', in Chandra. Bipan et al., *India Since Independence*, (India: Penguin Books, 2008) p. 338.

⁷Indira Gandhi's second son, who was also her point man in politics, Sanjay Gandhi died on a plane crash. He was responsible for a large number of enormities during emergency.

the political scene. Rajiv could influence his mother to ask for the resignation of the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister.

After Rajiv Gandhi returned to Delhi, Anjaiah was told by Indira Gandhi to resign as the chief minister. He was told about this on 13 February 1982 and he put in his papers on 20 February 1982. Bhavanam Venkatrama Reddy replaced him as the chief minister and he too was asked to vacate the chair for K. Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy in September 1982. Between March 1978 and January 1983, Andhra Pradesh had four chief ministers.⁸

This was indeed a showcase of its control over the state level politics by central high command of the Congress (I). However, the scene was to change soon and Indira and her son could not anticipate the repercussions of their move in Andhra. The rise of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) led by N. T. Rama Rao in Andhra Pradesh ‘reflected a strong sense of revulsion among the people against the tendency to centralise powers with the high command and its vulgar manifestation in the manner in which the chief minister were shuffled.’⁹ The immediate impact was that in the state assembly election in Andhra Pradesh which was held in January 1983, the newly formed TDP won 202 seats out of the 294 Assembly seats. The Congress won only 60 seats and this was in one of the states where Indira Gandhi’s party had swept the elections even in 1977, when it was swept aside elsewhere in Northern India. Similarly, the Congress lost in Karnataka state assembly election which was held in the same year. In Karnataka state assembly election, the Janata Party secured 95 seats and formed the government with the support of 14 independent MLAs. It is to be noted that the Congress, till then, ruled these two states since their formation and the voters of these states supported Indira Gandhi during 1977 election. In December 1978, Indira had even got elected from the Chickmagalur Lok Sabha constituency, in Karnataka, in a by-election. However, the 1983 state assemblies’ election in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka indicated that the

⁸ Ananth. V. Krishna, *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics* (New Delhi: Dorling Kindersley (India) Pvt. Ltd, 2011) p. 259.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

days of national parties' domination over state politics was shrinking considerably. In a connected realm, it was the beginning of the dependency of national parties on regional parties to win the power at the centre.

Meanwhile, other political developments elsewhere were of the nature that challenged the very foundation of Indian Union; the separatist movements of the 1980s shook the country at its roots. The challenges predominantly came from Assam and Punjab (political crisis in these two states and the role of media will be discussed in the next chapter) and also from Kashmir. As Sumantra Bose puts it, integrating the nation became a major task that the nation faced. She says:

While a sense of 'Indianness' is by no means absent among the citizenry, the project of integrating the 'nation' seems to have been a very partial success. This is manifested most graphically in the growth of powerful and popular secessionist insurgencies during the eighties and nineties in Kashmir, Assam, Punjab and elsewhere.¹⁰

The discussion on the role of the Indian state will be carried out in the next chapter in detail, but it is significant to state here that, among others, the *centralising drive* of the Indian state was also the reason behind the intensification of these crises. Of relevance to the concerns of this chapter is that, this was the political background of the country in which the Ram Janmabhumi issue emerged as an important element of the political discourse and this had huge implications for the Indian political scene. These political developments will be discussed, in some detail, simultaneously, with the rise of the Ram Janmabhumi Movement in the next section.

¹⁰ Bose. Sumantra, 'Hindu Nationalism' and the Crisis of the Indian State: A Theoretical Perspective'. In Bose. Sugata, Jalal. Ayesha, *Nationalism, Democracy & Development: State and Politics in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014) p. 112.

II

Ram Janmabhumi Movement and the Demolition of the Babri Masjid

The rationale behind laying the political developments of late 1970s and until the first half of the 1980s is that, both the politics and the Ram Janmabhumi Movement, during this time had functioned as a stimulant for each other. Any discussion on the Ram Janmabhumi Movement should be made apropos to the political development of the 1970s and 1980s to understand why and how the dispute, which had its origins during the colonial period, was subsumed in the course of the national liberation movement was sought to be resurrected in 1949 in post-independent India, turned into a mass movement impacting the political discourse so decisively and leading to the demolition of the Babri Masjid, on 6th December 1992. This section will place the Ram Janmabhumi Movement in its historical context; emphasis will be on the developments that occurred in the domain of Indian politics since independence.

As has already been discussed, the judicial disputes regarding the construction of Ram *chabuttra* close to the Mosque in November 1857 and the consequent action of the British government – erection of a fence separating the Mosque and *chabuttra* in 1859 – resulted in the conflict being put to rest in a sense. A suit filed in 1885, seeking legal title over the land on which *chabuttra* stood and for the construction of temple on that, was dismissed by the high court in the United Province¹¹ on 1st November 1886. The matter ended there temporarily.

Reiterating the secular tradition of the freedom struggle, the interim Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, while speaking in the Constituent Assembly on 3rd April

¹¹ United Province now known as Uttar Pradesh.

1948, expressed the danger of the alliance between religion and politics and its potential for ignitions. He said:

The alliance of religion and politics in the shape of communalism is a most dangerous alliance, and it yields the most abnormal kind of illegitimate brood.¹²

The reason behind such an agonising statement from the newly independent country's Prime Minister was the political developments in the country's most populated state, Uttar Pradesh, at that time. It is also historically significant, as Nehru tried to highlight, the alliance of religion and politics in the shape of communalism was witnessed, for the first time in post-independence period, during the Assembly by-election in Faizabad¹³ in June 1948.

The events that led to this development began with the Congress Socialist Party (CSP), a factional group inside the Congress since 1934, decided to move away from the Congress and in the process had its member resign from the UP legislative Assembly and Council, in March 1948¹⁴ and fresh by-elections were to be held in June 1948. There were two candidates in the Faizabad constituency: Narendra Dev representing the CSP and Siddheshwari Prasad from the Congress. The Provincial UP government then was headed by the Congress Chief Minister, Govind Ballabh Pant. And it should be noted here that Pant belonged to the group of Hindu conservatives within the Congress Party. He was well aware about the fact that the consolidation on the basis of religious identities could accomplish mobilisation of votes for his side. Dev

¹² Nehru. Jawaharlal, *Independence and After*, John Day Company, New York, 1948, p. 47. Cited in Jha. Krishna & Jha. K. Dharendra, *Ayodhya The Dark Night: The Secret History of Rama's Appearance in Babri Masjid*, (New Delhi: HarperCollins Publishers, 2012) p. 43.

¹³ Jha. Krishna & Jha. K. Dharendra, *Ayodhya The Dark Night: The Secret History of Rama's Appearance in Babri Masjid*

¹⁴ 'The parting was the result of many factors, including rampant competition among various groups for domination over the party unit in the United Provinces as well as differences over the form nation building should take and the set of individuals who should act as its chief architects.' *Ibid* Jha. Krishna & Jha. K. Dharendra, *Ayodhya The Dark Night: The Secret History of Rama's Appearance in Babri Masjid*, (New Delhi: HarperCollins Publishers, 2012) p. 38.

was an atheist and belonged to the Nehru faction. Highlighting Dev's non-religious credentials, Pant could successfully exploit the religious sensibilities of the Hindus in UP in general and Faizabad in particular. Pant also replaced Siddheshwari Prasad with Baba Raghav Das to exploit the religious sentiments. Das was from Deoria in Eastern UP who was known as a saintly politician for his ascetic dedication to Hinduism.

Pant's decision to hurl him into the fray was aimed at arousing Hindu conservatism against the alleged atheism and materialism of Acharya Narendra Dev, particularly in Ayodhya, the home town of the socialist leader. It was thought that Baba Raghav Das would prove overwhelmingly popular in a place whose inhabitants were preoccupied with religion and where scores of vairagis could be counted on to votes in favour of the Congress candidate.¹⁵

Pant played his Hindu card very well, in form of Das and it turned out to be a campaign where 'the tension between the Hindus and Muslims that had remained dormant for quite some time began to mount in Ayodhya.'¹⁶ In this sense, it was the Hindu communal sediments within the INC that was responsible for the resurgence of the communal feelings in UP, especially in Faizabad (which include the location of disputed structure- Babri Masjid) which became the hotbed of communal flareups later on.

In other words, the Assembly by-election in Faizabad in June 1948 became a point of reference as it evinced three major facts about the Ram Janmabhumi Movement. First, it was not the leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha or its ideological ally Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), though they were indeed functioning from the backstage, who resurrected Hindutva in post-independence period. Rather, it was the section of leaders within the Congress who subscribed to the idea of Hindu India, who for their political benefit, found Ram Janmabhumi demand as a conducive ground to play their political games. Secondly, this also exposed the changing colours of the

¹⁵*Ibid*, p. 42.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 43.

Indian National Congress as it “marked the end of the grand old party as a representative of the national movement and the beginning of the Congress as an electioneering machine, fuelled no longer by the idealism of the freedom struggle but by pragmatism in politics, with the sole purpose of grabbing power and holding on to it at any cost.”¹⁷ Thirdly, and most importantly, this provided a virtual platform for the Hindu Mahasabha to resume its political activities. As Jha points out,

One may wonder if the Mahasabhaites would still have gone ahead with their Ayodhya strategy had the ground conducive for Hindu communalists not been prepared by the Congress in the UP, particularly by its chief minister, Govind Ballabh Pant, in the course of the campaign for the Assembly by-election in Faizabad towards the middle of 1948.¹⁸

Analyzing these events and the facts, one can deduce the context for the sudden appearance of Ram’s idol inside the Babri Masjid on 23 December 1949. The appearance of Ram’s idol was soon interpreted by Hindutva ideologues to be a supernatural event where Lord Ram ‘manifested’ himself inside the Babri Masjid. The propaganda machinery took over. The crux of the matter was that the idol was installed by the Hindutva ideologues¹⁹ and even an FIR was logged in the Ayodhya Police Station regarding this. This was also the time when, within the Congress, the apparent disagreements between the secular, liberal Nehru and his ilk and the conservative elements were taking the shape of an irreconcilable conflict. However, the charisma of Nehru could help overcome the situation and for the time being, the Hindu revivalist elements were contained and the secular fabric of the Indian nation remained intact. Hence, the incident of 23rd December 1949, did not have any immediate repercussions. The matter was just ignored by locking up the gate of the Babri Masjid on January 1951. However, this issue would only be resurrected and taken to a mass campaign raising

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 38.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 37.

¹⁹ For more on this, see *Ibid*, Jha. Krishna & Jha. K. Dharendra, *Ayodhya The Dark Night: The Secret History of Rama’s Appearance in Babri Masjid*

passions and leading to riots, killing and looting in some four decades since 1949. That is why the 1949 move was important in historical terms. The unlocking of the locked-up Babri Masjid in 1986, which will be discussed later in this section, also unraveled the reality of the Indian state and how it contributed in furthering the communalisation of Indian politics during the 1980s.

In the first section, we discussed about the political crisis, from the Congress party's point of view, during the post-emergency period till the first half of 1980s. This period was also the period of transformation for the Bharathiya Jan Sangh (BJS). After the Janata party disintegrated in 1979, it was a matter of political survival for the BJS, which had merged into the Janata Party in 1977. And to survive, the Jana Sangh completely transformed itself into a new avatar- the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on 6th April 1980.

In 1980, the formation of the BJP was at best a defensive act of a group that was trying to fight political marginalisation and attract the attention of its parent body. But at the same time, the group was keen to project itself as a formation that had learnt lesson from the Janata experience. A fresh outlook was being explored after realizing that there was little use of clinging to the beliefs of the Jana Sangh.²⁰

Meanwhile, the resistance to the excesses of the National Emergency and thus the image of the saviors of the democratic polity helped the RSS to grow considerably. By 1980, it could significantly expand itself.

By the early 1980s, the number of *shakhas*²¹ had nearly doubled from the 1977 mark of 11,000. A report of the Union Home Minister of 1981 estimated the number of regular RSS activists to be close to one million, and assessed the financial contribution from them and other sympathisers to more than 10 million rupees every year.²²

A year later, a very significant (as far as the resurgence of right wing politics) event took place in a remote in southern Tamil Nadu village called Meenakshipuram

²⁰ Mukhopadhyay. Nilanjan, *The Demolition: India At The Crossroads*, (New Delhi: HarperCollins Publisher India, 1994) p. 120.

²¹ The Shakhas are grassroot level platform where RSS volunteers are imparted with physical training and 'character building'. It is from Shakhas that RSS cadre are produced.

²² Mukhopadhyay. Nilanjan, *The Demolition: India At The Crossroads*, p. 125.

on 19th February 1981. 4,000 people who belonged to the Scheduled caste in this village, converted to Islam at a public function. It was not an unprecedented move by the oppressed castes to resort to conversion as a symbol of protest against the oppression unleashed upon them since times immemorial. It should be recalled that, Ambedkar with a large group of Dalit followers, embraced Buddhism to evince that the abolition of untouchability within Hindu fold was impossible at a public function on 14th October 1956. But then, the 1980s were not the 1950s; similarly, if the conversion in 1956 was to Buddhism, the 1981 event was to Islam, a religion that was considered un-Indian by the RSS and central to its approach to nationalism as cultural and distinct and opposed to the inclusive core of Indian Nationalism, as we have seen in Chapter I earlier.. The RSS did not consider raising its voice against this in 1956; but in 1981 it quickly realised that the event of Meenakshipuram could be used to provide a new impetus to its programmes. To exploit the emerging possibilities of a mobilization on the issue of Meenakshipuram, the RSS turned its attention towards the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)²³, an organisation founded in 1964. ‘In the RSS strategy for the coming years, it was going to be the torchbearer.’²⁴

‘The VHP, promptly, raised the spectre of Hinduism-in-danger and took this slogan to the urban areas.’²⁵ A Hindu Unity conference in Delhi was organised in September 1981 in which representatives from different Hindu organisations were invited. The issue of Meenakshipuram was raised and the society called ‘Virat Hindu

²³ VHP till then was restricted to the tribal pockets where it was actively running various missionary programmes. By 1980s, it had 3000 units spread over 437 of a total of 534 administrative districts in India. The organisation was being managed by 150 full time workers drawn from the RSS, and the organisation was also engaged in running hostels, orphanages, medical centers and publishing journals that constantly raised fears of Hindus being swamped by ‘non- Hindu foreigners’. Mukhopadhyay. Nilanjan, *The Demolition: India At The Crossroads*, p. 126.

²⁴ Kanungo. Pralay, *RSS's Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*, (Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2002) p. 191.

²⁵ Ananth. V. Krishna, *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*, p. 242.

Samaj' (VHS)²⁶ was founded in the conference. A law banning conversion was also demanded at the convention.²⁷

After this successful event of VHS, the VHP organised another conference known as Virat Hindu Sammelan on 18th October 1981, once again at New Delhi. This event was successful in mobilising 8 lakh attendees. The conference decided to adopt a five-point programme which were Unite Hindus, Abolish Untouchability, Ban on Conversions, Ban Foreign Money for Conversions and Bring people back to their ancestral faith.

As the *Sangh Parivar* showcasing their ability of mobilising the people on communal lines, as already discussed, Indira Gandhi was facing a political crisis of her own despite her party's enormous victory in 1980. In such a situation, she did not want the *Sangh Parivar* to be the sole exploiter of the opportunities emerging from the communalisation of the Indian society. This was also because 'the post-Emergency Indira government was a different one from her pre-Emergency regime.'²⁸ Her socialist face was successfully given up and the Emergency had shown to what extent she could be an autocrat too. Pralay Kanungo describes the transition of Mrs. Gandhi in the following words:

Though once again the prime minister and the only Indian leader with a national appeal, Indira Gandhi was no longer the same person she had been from 1969 to 1977. She no longer had a firm grasp over politics and administration. Despite enjoying unchallenged power, she dithered in taking significant new policy initiatives or dealing effectively with a number of disturbing problems.²⁹

²⁶ Interestingly, the presidentship of VHS was given to Karan Singh, a non-RSS leader. He was in fact, health minister in Indira Gandhi's cabinet during the Emergency and had his contribution towards Sanjay Gandhi's forced sterilisation programme. Later, in 1978 he joined the revolt against the leadership of Indira Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi.

²⁷ As a matter of fact, Article 25 of Indian constitution though allows conversion to any religion as a fundamental right, conversion by way of inducements, financial or otherwise is prohibited and is a punishable offence. Therefore, VHP's demand for law banning the conversion was superfluous which was raised to rake up the Hindu sentiments.

²⁸ Kanungo. Pralay, *RSS's Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*, p. 192.

²⁹ Chandra. Bipan et al., *India Since Independence*, p. 337.

It was by this time that she began to talk a different language, obviously very different from the one her father spoke. With no option in sight, Indira decided to seek ‘a more participatory language of politics, the symbol and images of religious faith seemed to offer an easy solution.’³⁰ It was indeed a strong make over. She made pilgrimages to sacred rivers, shrines and temples across the country and spoke of ‘Hindu hegemony’ in the Hindi heartland.³¹ This could also be seen as a significant marker in the course of moving away from the secular fabric which was evolved during anti-imperialist struggle; a legacy that was inherited by the Nehruvian government fighting the communal elements within his party. This certainly was in sharp contrast with the response of Nehru towards the communalisation of UP politics during 1948-9. Now, the question was not about the nourishment of democratic principles through inclusivity. Rather it was about, who was going to exploit the opportunities created from the communalisation of Indian society to the maximum. In simple words, Indian politics became the domain where both Hindutva ideologues and their ‘secular’ opponents competed with each other for the maximum political gains through communal politics.

As for the RSS and its fellow Hindutva forces, they saw an open goal post for their ideological project in the history of modern India. They launched the *Ekatmata Yatra* (Pilgrimage for Unity) in November- December 1983. The aim of these tenacious *yatras*³² were analogous- to appeal the unity among the Hindus. More importantly, these *yatras* turned out to be a successful campaign; a social construing was building up. The obvious success achieved by the RSS-VHP combine during the campaigns launched in

³⁰ Rajagopal. Arvind, *Politics after Television: Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India* (Cambridge University Press, 2001) p. 57.

³¹ Kanungo. Pralay, *RSS's Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*, p. 192.

³² Under Ekatmata Yatra programme, *yatras* were organised from Haridwar to Rameshwaram, Gangasagar in West Bengal to Somnath in Gujarat, and Pashupatinath in Nepal to Kanyakumari.

early 1980s elated the VHP to announce its *holy* intentions to ‘liberate’ the Ram Janmabhumi in Ayodhya to regain the ‘dignity’ of the Hindus . Thus begins the Ram Janmabhumi Movement in April 1984

The Babri Masjid, which was locked in January 1950, once again came into prominence. According to the interpretations of RSS-VHP combine, Ayodhya was the birth place of Lord Ram and Babri Masjid, a sixteenth century mosque was built on the ruins of a Ram Temple. The ancient Ram Temple was destroyed and the mosque was built by Mir Baqi under the tutelage of Mughal Emperor, Babur.

The VHP employed new mobilising tactics, one among them was the *Dharma Sansad*. It made a call for the unity of Hindus for the liberation of Lord Ram. The Dharma Sansad was followed by the *Ram Janmabhoomi Mukti Yajna*. After this, another yatra was organised starting from Bihar to Ayodhya from 25th September to 6th October 1984. During this yatra, a truck had been converted into a Chariot (religious symbol) and it exhibited the images of Lord Ram being behind the bars. ‘These images and slogans, needless to say, were employed as to invoke the Hindu pride and further to instigate the Hindus to partake in the movement enmasse. While the RSS-VHP back to back campaigns were facilitating the proliferation of the Hindutva ideology, the assassination of Indira Gandhi on 31st October 1984 by her Sikh bodyguards, cordoned the Hindutva progress for a short span of time.

The much awaited opportunity for the Hindutva ideology to resurge came soon in 1985 in the form of the Shah Bano Controversy. 70 year old Shah Bano was divorced in accordance with the Muslim *Shariat* legal requirements for a lawful divorce. According to the Muslim *Shariat*, Ahmed Khan, her ex-husband, was willing to restore the ‘bride price’ originally paid by her parents to him at the time of their marriage; and

also pay the maintenance for three months. Shah Bano, an uneducated and unemployed woman, filed a petition in the Judicial First Class Magistrate's Court at Indore under Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code for maintenance of Rs.500/- per month; Ahmed Khan, instead, was ordered to pay a monthly maintenance of a "princely sum" of Rs.25/- in 1979 by the Magistrate. Shah Bano then appealed to the Madhya Pradesh High Court and got it increased to Rs.179.20. Ahmed Khan approached the Supreme Court but this amount was upheld by the highest court too.

The decision of the Supreme Court invited severe criticism from the Muslim clergy. This was projected as a serious interference into the centuries old tradition of the Muslim community. There were wide protests, mostly orchestrated by the clergy and involving members of the community themselves. The then Congress government, with Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister, resorted to a policy of Muslim (read clergy) appeasement.

This created an uproar in the Parliament too. Many Muslim MPs demanded for a law to annul the Supreme Court verdict. Though, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi initially stood by the court's verdict, later, when the protest became more vociferous, did a volte-face. And in May 1986, the Parliament passed the most reactionary Bill, hitherto, in its history - the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986. This Act gave a legal sanction to the denial of maintenance for divorced Muslim Women, which the apex court had held as a right under Section 125 of Cr.P.C. In specific terms, the apex court's judgment on the Shah Bano stood annulled.

There were broadly two main reasons behind Rajiv Gandhi's change of stance on the Shah Bano case. Firstly, "the Congress, since before Independence, has had a political alliance with orthodox Muslims, and specifically with those associated with

the Jamiyyatt-ul-Ulama, an organisation of Muslim clerics associated with the famous orthodox Islamic university at Deoband in western U.P.”³³

And this alliance was based on the bargain that the Muslim Personal Law, among others, would be allowed to hold sway over civil law in that domain. In addition, it should also be noted that in the general election of 1967, Muslim support for the Congress declined and this was due to a number of reasons; ‘in the aftermath of rising Muslim discontent over the issue of Urdu, the status of the Aligarh Muslim University, and the increased level of communal violence especially in the north.’³⁴ And it is also believed that after the emergency, most of the Muslims voted for the Janata Coalition; this, indeed, was a reaction to such drives as slum clearance and the compulsory sterilization programme that marked one aspect of the Emergency. It may be noted here that the Shahi Imam of the Juma Masjid, a high priest of the community, had called his people to vote the Janata Party in the March 1977 elections and had even marched along with Atal Behari Vajpayee, a prominent face of the Jan Sangh in the Janata Party then. Therefore, the enactment of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act of 1986 by the Rajiv government was an attempt to wrest the Muslim constituency. By enacting such a law, it reassured the orthodox Muslim leaders that the Congress government would not interfere in matters of Muslim culture in exchange for their political support.

³³ Brass. R. Paul, *The Politics of India Since Independence*, (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2013) p. 231.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 237.

Secondly, the immediate reason was the unlocking of Babri Masjid, which was locked in 1951 after the Ram idol was installed in 1949 inside the mosque by Abhiram Das, a militant ascetic of the Ramanandi sect and his associates.³⁵

The sequence of events and the pace at which they unfolded in a few weeks before February 1986 in this regard warrants attention. A young lawyer practicing in the Faizabad district court, Umesh Chandra, filed a petition³⁶ seeking unrestricted rights for Hindus to offer prayers and worship the idol, placed during 1949, inside the Babri Masjid, on 31st January 1986. In response to the petition, Judge Krishna Mohan Pandey ordered unrestricted rights for the petitioner and others to worship at the Babri Masjid on February 6, 1986. Such a process in just a week's time by a lower court, where delays are phenomenal, was certainly a pointer that the process here was orchestrated.

The unlocking of Babri Masjid needs to be seen in a political context. The VHP has been propagating that locking of the gate 'P'³⁷ of the mosque was an administrative measure, not a judicial decision, therefore unlocking it would not invite a case of contempt of court. The Congress, who since Indira's second tenure, was in the process of appropriating Hindutva politics agreed to it and offered help, which the VHP accepted.

The Congress (I) government in Uttar Pradesh, headed at that time by Vir Bahadur Singh, had instructed the concerned civil servant (district magistrate I.K. Pande and police chief Karam Veer Singh), to convince district judge, K. M. Pandey, that the locks could be opened. City magistrate Sabhajit Shukla too was under instruction to implement the judge's order without losing time.³⁸

Following the order, city magistrate Shukla rushed to the premises and opened the gate 'P' and let in the devotees. No time was wasted to even think about an appeal

³⁵ For details on Abhiram Das and installment of Ram idol in Babri Masjid see, Jha. Krishna & Jha. K. Dharendra, *Ayodhya The Dark Night: The Secret History of Rama's Appearance in Babri Masjid*.

³⁶ His first appeal was turned down by local munsiff court in Faizabad on the grounds that case was still pending before the Allahabad High Court.

³⁷ There were two gates fixed to the grills, gate 'O' and 'P' while gate 'O' was open for the priests to enter and worship, gate 'P' was locked in January 1951.

³⁸ Ananth. V. Krishna, *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*, p. 317.

against the district judge's order. 'This clearly established the intention of the State machinery to accede to the VHP demand.'³⁹

Rajiv Gandhi's Congress (I), on the one hand, through the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act of 1986 played the Muslim card and on the other hand, tried to play the Hindu card by unlocking the Babri Masjid. However, in politics things do not work that way. In fact the Shah Bano controversy opened up an opportunity for the *Sangh Parivar* as it allowed to intensify their anti-Muslim campaign. This was done under the pretext that Rajiv Gandhi government was inclined to appease the minorities.

Thereafter, VHP started to rally behind its youngsters to lend muscle to the Ram Janmabhoomi agitation in July 1989. For this, the Bajrang *diksha* (monkey initiation) was organised. Those youngsters were given the responsibility of overseeing the arrival of the thousands of specially consecrated bricks which were religiously gathered from different parts of the country for the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya. The collection of the bricks was not a mere exercise but it was a strong move for instilling Hindutva in the minds of people. The group of youngsters were called Bajrang Dal, named after Hanuman. Meanwhile, the RSS at this time was stronger than ever with 10 to 18 lakh *Swayamsevaks* (RSS volunteers) and 25 thousand *Shakhas* in over 18 thousand cities and villages. With such a strength in the interiors of Indian society, the VHP launched a campaign of carrying consecrated bricks, called *Ramshilas* from every village that had a population of over two thousand people on 30th September 1989. This campaign was called *shila yatra*. A minimum contribution of Rs. 1.25 per head was also collected. *Kirtans*, prayers, discourses, musical concerts and symposia were

³⁹ Mukhopadhyay, Nilanjan, *The Demolition: India At The Crossroads*, p. 143.

organized in the villages across the country. These were being done for the *Shilanyas* (foundation stone laying ceremony) which the VHP promised to conduct at Ayodhya on 9th November 1989.

After the *Shilanyas* came the general elections of November 1989. With the elections approaching and evolving from the success of RSS-VHP combine campaign, the BJP which was initially unsure about its stand on Ayodhya and Babri Masjid decided to adopt a militant Hindu line. It should be noted that the early party document of the BJP recognised the existence of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya without any qualms. This was because of the same political logic that Congress earlier had i.e. support of Muslim vote as a determining factor. As it was the Congress that was quick enough to realise the political implications for not supporting Ram Janmabhoomi agitation, the BJP was late to join only in 1989. In June 1989 the national executive of the BJP adopted the Palampur (Himachal Pradesh) resolution in which it synchronized, for the first time, with the VHP's version of Babri Masjid's history. The Palampur resolution blamed Babur for destroying the temple and constructing a mosque at Ram *Janmasthan* (Ram's birthplace) at Ayodhya.

However, it was the Janata Dal⁴⁰ led National Front that formed a minority government. Despite its high pitched campaign and the heightened pitch of Hindutva in the past few years, the BJP could secure only 85 seats in the 1989 elections; this, no doubt was still a huge increase compared to its two seats in the 1984 Lok Sabha elections. The National Front government that came to power, however, was dependent for survival on support from the BJP on its right side and the left parties on the left side. Vishwanath Pratap Singh, a Congress dissident and the leader from the Janata Dal

⁴⁰ Janata Dal won 142 Lok Sabha seats in 1989.

was sworn in as the prime minister on 2nd December 1989. The National Front government did not last long. Lewis P. Fickett, Jr pointed out to two broad reasons for its short term in power:

First, the Dal was itself an unstable coalition party comprising several different factions. Second, the JD was a minority political coalition of 145 members dependent simultaneously upon the support of the BJP on its right and the Left Front on its left.⁴¹

One the major reasons for the fall of V. P Singh's government was that like any other political party, it was trying to strengthen its hold among the Muslims and backward castes. To consolidate the Muslim support, Singh met with the Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid and expressed his gratitude. He, for the first time in the political history of India, appointed a Muslim as the Home Minister of India. He also ordered to open all protected mosques which were under the supervision of the Archeological Survey of India for prayers during the *Ramzan*. These, among others, Singh did to appease the Muslims, which gave another opportunity to the *Sangh Parivar* to accentuate its anti-Muslim campaign and instigate the Hindus.

Similarly, to consolidate the vote base among the backward castes, the government decided to implement the Mandal Commission Report which made an additional reservation of 27 percent for the backward castes in central governmental jobs. This threatened the Hindutva outfits like the BJP and the RSS more than anything else because it was seen an attempt to split the BJP base which *Sangh Parivar* created through its ideology of Hindu nationalism. In response to this, the *Sangh Parivar* re-launched the Ram Janmabhoomi movement.

⁴¹ Jr. Fickett. P. Lewis, *The Rise and Fall of the Janata Dal*, University of California Press, Asian Survey, Vol. 33, No. 12 December, 1993, p. 1152.

It needs to be pointed out that V. P. Singh opposed the destruction of Babri Masjid even at the cost of his government. “Once V. P. Singh had forcefully opposed the destruction of the Babri Masjid and ordered the arrest of L. K. Advani on his pilgrimage through northern India to the site of the mosque, the fate of the JD minority government was sealed.”⁴²

The BJP leader, L.K.Advani was arrested at Samastipur, Bihar, while he was on his *Rath Yatra* to Ayodhya from the Somnath temple in Verawal in Gujarat. The *Sangh Parivar* led *Rath Yatra* raised hate slogans against the Muslim community and that led to a spate of anti-Muslim communal violence in various parts of the country.

With the fall of the National Front government in 1990, there came the time for yet another general election and Hindutva assertion not just continued but gathered strength too. The assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, half way through the polling process on May 21, 1991, garnered the sympathy wave for the Congress party hence, it was the Congress (I) which emerged victorious in the Tenth Lok Sabha election and P. V. Narashima Rao was sworn in as prime minister on 21st June 1991.

However, it was very significant that the BJP had won the UP assembly election, held alongside the general election in May-June 1991 and it declared that it was a “mandate to build the Ram temple”. In a symbolic act, Kalyan Singh, the designated Chief Minister, went to Ayodhya with party president Murli Manohar Joshi for a *darshan* of the idols in the Babri Masjid before proceeding to Lucknow to take oath of office. During his *darshan* he assured the construction of the temple.

Soon, with the BJP government now in power in the state, the VHP by use of appeasement and threats started to acquire lands and buildings adjoining the Babri

⁴² *Ibid.*

Masjid from the owners. According to the government, they were doing this to promote tourism and to provide amenities to pilgrims. The real intention was to build the temple because it was believed that once it was started, it could not be prevented even by the court verdict.

The VHP soon organised the *shaurya divas* (Valor Day) where religious rituals conducted in memory of the kar sevaks⁴³ who died in the clash with the police on 30th October 1991.⁴⁴ The VHP activists also hosted saffron flags over the Babri Masjid. Later on, in May 1992, religious leaders associated with the VHP met in Ujjain, in Madhya Pradesh, during the Kumbh Mela and announced that kar seva⁴⁵ will resume from July 9, 1992. Meanwhile, Kalyan Singh kept on giving false assurances of protecting the premises. However, on 6th December 1992, the Babri Masjid was demolished while a Congress government at the Centre could not prevent it. The following section will discuss about the role of media during the Ram Janmabhumi movement.

III

Understanding the Role of the Media during Ram Janmabhoomi Movement

This section will present a theoretical explanation, along with empirical details culled out from newspaper reports, of the role of the media during the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. It will be argued that media has functioned as the Ideological State Apparatus and has participated in the discursive formation of Hindutva ideology. It will look into how the press had contributed towards the emergence of Hindutva ideology as an organic ideology. For this both secondary and primary media analysis will be

⁴³ Kar Sevaks are the volunteers participating in kar seva.

⁴⁴ This clash between the Kar sevaks and police occurred after the arrest of Advani Samastipur, Bihar.

⁴⁵ Voluntary service for the construction of religious buildings.

employed. For the primary media analysis, reportage of the major events from 4th November 1989 (news of Congress (I) campaign launched) to the aftermath of demolition of Babri Masjid has been analysed and presented. But first few theoretical questions need to be answered.

The first question that arises at this point is, can we designate media/press as an ISA? If so, do we need to concede Hindutva as the State ideology? It should be recalled here that since 1980, when Indira Gandhi started to appropriate the Hindutva ideology, the segregation between the communal politics and the existing *mainstream politics* blurred considerably. The propensity was reiterated by her son and successor, Rajiv Gandhi since November 1984. It was evident from the fact that his party's campaign for the 1989 general elections, was launched from Faizabad, Uttar Pradesh on 3rd November 1989. During Nehru's tenure, or perhaps even till the time of the emergency, the central leadership of Indian National Congress was refraining from openly demonstrating their inclination towards the Hindutva. And this was because, as we have discussed earlier in the first chapter, Hindutva propagates a sort of hyper nationalism which is fundamentally antithetical to the inclusive nationalism on which basis the INC was founded. The core of the Hindu nationalism, thrives on fascistic tendencies and hate and violence are the twin facets on which it has been built. It is needless to state that these are inimical to any nation which treats the democratic principles sacrosanct. In this sense, Hindutva becoming an organic ideology and hegemonising the Indian political sphere is a matter of concern.

Naturally, the press, the fourth pillar of democracy, was expected to act differently to protect the secular fabric of the country. However, for the press in India this does not seem to be the case. For instance, when The Hindu reported on the launching of election campaign by Rajiv Gandhi in Faizabad, it failed to raise some

major issues. A PTI dispatch, carried by The Hindu in its issue on November 4, 1989, on the election campaign launch by Rajiv Gandhi, under the headline *PM lashes out at BJP*⁴⁶ informed that ‘Mr. Gandhi lashed out at certain communal and divisive forces, who he said, were responsible for the partition of the country in 1947 and later for the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi and Indira Gandhi.’ But what the paper failed to ask was if Mr. Gandhi was so much wary of the communal forces, then why did he chose to start his campaign from Faizabad. Faizabad, as we have discussed already, had been the hotbed of communal politics as early as in 1948-49. The paper was not ignorant of Gandhi’s intentions; as the report also stated that ‘Mr. Gandhi said launching the campaign from Faizabad, where Lord Rama lived, gave him immense satisfaction’. In fact, the report was one of the early examples of how the press, particularly The Hindu, tried to project the innocence of the Congress (I) on the Ram Janmabhoomi issue. This will be discussed in detail later on in this section.

Coming back to the concept of Hindutva as State Ideology, it became more apparent when the Rajiv Gandhi government sponsored cultural extravaganzas like *Apna Utsav* (Our Festival) and the Festival of India in USA and France. Not to mention the fact that it was the Congress (I) government that facilitated the unlocking of Babri Masjid in 1986 and thus committed the original sin.

Now the next question that arises is the media an ISA of the Hindutva? To answer this we need to categorise media into entertainment and news media. Arvind Rajagopal,⁴⁷ has done a comprehensive study on the impact of the Ramayan epic serialized on national television in India from January 1987 to August 1989. He pointed out that:

⁴⁶ The Hindu, PM lashes out at BJP, 4th November, 1989.

⁴⁷ Rajagopal, Arvind, *Politics after Television: Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India*.

During the [telecast], the Ram Janmabhumi (Birthplace of Ram) movement, which aimed to demolish a mosque, Babri Masjid (Babur's mosque) in Ayodhya and build a Ram temple in its place, grew in importance. The Ramayan serial overlapped with the most crucial phase of the Janmabhumi movement, when it changed from an ominous but still relatively obscure campaign into the dominant issue before the country, one that made and unmade prime ministers and ruling parties.⁴⁸

The impact of the Ramayan epic was such that during one of the processions which was being held from Delhi to Ayodhya, volunteers dressed up to look like the television versions of Ram and his brother Lakshman. To put things in perspective, we need to accept the fact that the entertainment media, then, was the State controlled media.

Communalisation and State-owned media

Unlike the print media, to begin with, the electronic media, except the internet, in India has been under the control of the State. No matter whatever pretexts have been used, the advent of the electronic media was not for empowering the masses. When the telegraph lines were established during the mid-nineteenth century for the first time, it was for facilitating the colonial commerce and the colonial masters ensured that the telegraph lines were beyond the reach of monkeys and men.⁴⁹ Not surprisingly, the Telegraph Act of 1885 stated that "the Central Government shall have the exclusive privilege of establishing, maintaining and working telegraphs." The intention was to keep the general public away from the telegraph.

With the Telegraph Act 1885, radio was also brought under the control of the State. With radio, the state control on broadcasting started.⁵⁰ When the colonial government enacted the Government of India Act in 1935, broadcasting business was

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 30.

⁴⁹ For history of the telegraph in India see, Kanta. Deep, Choudhury. Lahiri, '*Beyond the Reach of Monkeys and Men*?' : *O' Shaughnessy and the Telegraph in India, c. 1836-1856*, University of Cambridge, 2000.

made a central government's enterprise. Unfortunately, this did not change even after independence. Naturally, when the television entered for the first time in India, it was also kept under the control of the central government.

Television initially was regarded as a tool for empowering the general masses and the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) was conducted in 1975-76 for the first time. However, television grew in expanse in terms of the coverage area, both geographically and demographically in India with the telecast of the Ninth Asian Games in 1982; the emancipatory intentions were replaced by the commercial orientation and also as a tool for political persuasion soon.

The India state's control over the electronic media together with the state's responsibility of promoting the spread of Hindi language under article 351 of the Constitution,⁵¹ led to the use of heavily Sanskritised Hindi by the Doordarshan. As Article 351 emphasised on the use of Sanskrit for vocabulary, Durga Das Basu, eminent jurist and author presents the rationale by saying that:

The reason for this primacy given to Sanskrit is that Sanskrit is the oldest language not only in India but also in the world, having been the language of the Vedas. All the other Indian languages have sprung from this source. It is also the fountain source of Indian culture inasmuch as besides offering the scriptures of the Hindu religion, the highest of poetry, philosophy, science, astronomy and mathematics have been contributed to human civilization by this language.....Maybe, it is not a popular dialect today but it is *the store-house of immeasurable wealth which is an indispensable asset for regaining India's status in the World.*⁵²(Emphasis Added)

The above statement from a jurist and one considered an eminent constitution analyst evinces how Sanskrit is positioned as sacrosanct and is considered to be the *store-house of immeasurable wealth which is an indispensable asset for regaining*

⁵¹ Article 351 of Indian constitution states "It shall be the duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language, to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India and to secure its enrichment by assimilating without interfering with its genius, the forms, style and expressions used in Hindustani and in the other languages of India specified in the Eighth Schedule, and by drawing, wherever necessary or desirable, for its vocabulary, primarily on Sanskrit and secondarily on other languages"

⁵² Basu. Das. Durga, *Shorter Constitution of India*, (India: Wadhwa and Company Law Publishers, 2006) p. 1578.

India's status in the World. Even if Sanskrit has offered the highest form of poetry, philosophy, science, astronomy and mathematics to the human civilisation, the question that needs to be asked is whether it should be promoted at the cost of other languages. The imposition attempt had led to major political unrest and violence in parts of the country, particularly in the Southern States, where the Dravidian culture flourished in ancient times and where Sanskrit and also Hindi were considered Aryan influences. Throughout since its inception, the Doordarshan persistently promoted Sanskritised Hindi vocabulary over other languages. The process of promoting Sanskrit over other languages, particularly Urdu was also present in All India Radio broadcasting.⁵³

The intention here is not to argue against the promotion of Hindi with Sanskritised vocabulary, rather to present a fact that the overemphasis of Hindi has actually facilitated the communalisation of Indian society. The best ever example of it can be drawn from the telecast of Ramayan and Mahabharata⁵⁴ in Doordarshan and its implications in the society at large; intended or unintended. The images presented by the programme came very handy for the forces of the Hindu Right for their *Hinduvisation* project.

Victoria L. Farmer presents this fact:

Though communal violence and civic unrest were certainly not an intended goal of these programming decision, the broadcast of the Ramayana, in particular, inadvertently promoted Rama-related imagery that was easily appropriated by Hindu nationalist leaders of the Sangh Parivar, especially by L. K. Advani.⁵⁵

⁵³ For more on this see, Lelyveld. David, *Transmitters and Culture: the Colonial Roots of Indian Broadcasting*, Sage Publication, 1990.

⁵⁴ Ramanandsagar.

⁵⁵ Farmer. L. Victoria, 'Mass Media: Images, Mobilization, and Communalism,' in Ludden. David (ed), *Making India Hindu: Religion, Community, and the Politics of Democracy in India*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996) p. 102.

Therefore, it won't be erroneous to conclude that the entertainment media has indeed functioned as the ISA of Hindutva ideology which was/is State ideology. Now let's see how far the press functioned as ISA.

Peaceful Shilanyas?

On 9th November 1989, the VHP, in collaboration with its militant ally, the Bajrang Dal conducted the *Shilanyas* (foundation laying ceremony for the proposed temple). The site chosen for the *Shilanyas* was a six-hectare plot adjacent to the Babri Masjid. This plot was donated to the *Ram Janmabhoomi* Trust by a person called Dharma Das. Interestingly, but not incidentally, the date for the *Shilanyas* coincided with the festival of *Devuththan Ekadashi*, an annual festival when thousands of devotees visited Ayodhya. Obviously, choosing this date was a deliberate action to ensure that the VHP had a large crowd of onlookers if not active participants, for their programme.

Coming to the reportage of the *Shilanyas* in the print media, the Times of India (TOI) reported the event in such a way that made the readers believe that it was a simple and peaceful foundation laying ceremony organised by the VHP. The headline in its issue dated November 10, 1989, for instance was '*Shilanyas* begins peacefully'⁵⁶ and the report essentially was how peaceful it was. The message that the paper intended to convey was reached to the readers. The lead of the report stated 'Ceremonies tonight for laying the foundation of a Ram Mandir proceeded smoothly and peacefully just outside the disputed Ram- Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid premises amid tight security.'⁵⁷ It is interesting to see how words are placed in this single line lead of the story. By stating that the ceremonies were 'proceeding smoothly and peacefully' 'just outside the disputed Ram-Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid premises' the paper sought to present that

⁵⁶ Times of India, 'Shilanyas' begins peacefully, 10th November, 1989.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*

the event was held peacefully because it was conducted outside the disputed area. Though there was ‘tight security’ the reason for culmination of the programme in peaceful manner was the decision of the organisers to conduct the events in the undisputed area. In simple sense, the paper acknowledged the VHP for being sensible enough to organise the programme ‘outside’ the disputed area and it conveyed the *goodwill* of the VHP to its readers.

The question here is that whether the *Shilanyas* was performed outside the ‘disputed’ area? The judicial disputes about the area, well before the *Shilanyas*, show the contrary. On 3rd February 1989, two suits were filed by Mohammed Hashim Ansari and the Sunni Wakf Board, for the settlement of the dispute over the title over the land where the Babri Masjid stood and also the land adjacent to it. Later on, in July 1989, Deoki Nandan Aggarwal, a former judge of the Allahabad High Court and then the VHP vice-president filed a petition before the Faizabad District Court ‘seeking perpetual injunction against anyone interfering with or placing objection to the construction of a new temple building after demolishing the existing buildings and structures.’⁵⁸ During this time, the Uttar Pradesh state government pleaded before the High Court to transfer all the suits pending before the various courts to a Special Bench of the High Court. On August 14, 1989, the High Court then ordered transfer of all the pending cases on the title to the properties in and around the Babri Masjid. Therefore, the land which was *undisputed* according to the Times of India, where the *Shilanyas* was performed, was actually disputed land and the matter was subjudice. This is why the High Court also ordered to maintain the status quo in the disputed area. The paper

⁵⁸ Ananth. V. Krishna, *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*, p. 324.

just ignored or concealed this important fact and even called it un-disputed and thus constructed a specious image of the matter.

On the same day, the Times of India had made a reference to the VHP in its editorial. The editorial was titled *Good Sense on Ayodhya*.⁵⁹ It resonated the report and stated: ‘By agreeing to shift the site of the foundation stone of the Ram temple a good 100 meters away from the disputed area, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the organisations allied to it, have contributed greatly to defusing the tension that had built up over Thursday’s ceremony’.⁶⁰ Moreover, the editorial also commended the Congress government for ensuring the law and order. The most surprising fact about the *Shilanyas* was that even the BJP, while criticizing the then Congress government, accepted the fact that the area was disputed. A White Paper brought out by the BJP, after the demolition of the mosque, stated: ‘Despite the Allahabad High Court ruling on August 14 and November 7, declaring status quo on the disputed site, the Uttar Pradesh government and the Central government caved in, under mass pressure and could not stop the *Shilanyas*.’⁶¹

The Hindustan Times (HT), another prominent paper, also adopted a similar approach while reporting the event. *Shilanyas begins in Ayodhya, Peace prevails in area*⁶² was the headline given to the report which stated that ‘The controversial “shilanyas” was going on near the Masjid-temple complex without any disturbance and in accordance with the dictates of the scriptures.’⁶³ Though the paper agreed that the *Shilanyas* was controversial, it informed its readers that it was organised ‘near’ and not

⁵⁹ Times of India, Good Sense on Ayodhya, 10th November, 1989.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ BJP’s White Paper on Ayodhya & The Rama Temple Movement, Bharatiya Janata Party, April 1993.

⁶² The Hindustan Times, *Shilanyas begins in Ayodhya, Peace prevails in area*, 10th November, 1989

⁶³ *Ibid.*

in the Masjid-temple complex. In a sense, HT also tried to evince that *Shilanyas* was not performed in the disputed site.

The paper, in its editorial, *Good sense prevails*⁶⁴ rightly pointed out that ‘the problem with us as a nation is that the differences along communal lines at times make the people lose their sense of balance’ and ‘the Ayodhya dispute took an almost explosive turn with the approach of the elections.’ However, it also stated that ‘It is now immaterial where exactly the foundation-stone of the temple has been laid. But the fact that the ceremony has taken place outside the boundary of the disputed area should help in finding a long-term solution of the problem.’ Needless to say, the editorial asked readers and citizens to forget about the place where the foundation stone was laid because now it was ‘immaterial’ in its view. The usage of the word ‘immaterial’ is significant to discuss here. According to the Oxford Dictionary & Thesaurus 2001, the word ‘immaterial’ denotes unimportant or irrelevant. So in the literal sense, what the paper was basically saying was that the ceremony which ignored the (14th August 1989) ruling of (Allahabad) a High Court was not important and should not come under scrutiny. The editorial itself said that the ‘discord and discontent arise only when the manifestation of religious fervour of one community is at the cost of another’. And the paper acknowledged that the *Shilanyas* ceremony was the manifestation of religious fervour of one (majority Hindu) community at the cost of another (Minority Muslim) community because it also pointed out that ‘that is why all sensible people, irrespective of the communities to which they belong, have been hoping that the Ramajanam bhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute will be resolved amicably.’ Therefore, in what sense the question of place where foundation stone was laid, becomes ‘immaterial’?

⁶⁴ The Hindustan Times, Good Sense Prevails, 10th November, 1989

Moreover, the *Shilanyas* was not as 'peaceful' as it was reported in the newspapers. There were attempts to instigate violence during the programme. For instance, Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay, in his book '*The Demolition: India At The Crossroads*,' narrates an incident that took place on the day of Shilanyas before the Kameshwar Chopal, where a low-caste Harijan from Bihar placed the first brick in the small pit. He writes:

The small pit was dug up and as the land was a part of the graveyard where the Muslims killed in the clash of 1855 were buried, several pieces of bones surfaced during the digging. Watched by a several-thousand-strong cheering crowd, the frenzied VHP activists did an impromptu delirious dance waving the bones in the air. These VHP activists, a large number of them members of the Bajrang Dal and all neo-converts to the RSS clan's, fold later declared that they would take the bones away to be kept and shown as evidence for having "started the process of undoing the historical wrongs by the Islamic invaders."⁶⁵

It will not be erroneous to say that activities like this, during such intense moments, could have led to a communal violence. But none of the mainstream newspapers reported this incident. Instead, the TOI reported that 'sounds of conch shells and chanting of hymns rent the air as heads of three mutts symbolically dug the ground at 9. 08 a.m. today marking the beginning of ceremonies which will continue non-stop till tomorrow afternoon when the foundation will be laid.'⁶⁶ And HT reported that 'as the chanting of "mantras" reached a crescendo, one Bajrang Dal volunteer camouflaged as Hanuman with the new popular mace (Gaddha) lunged forward..... jumping from branch to branch.'⁶⁷ The reports not only highlight the 'non-controversial' nature of the ceremony but also present a vivid picture of the holy ceremony to the reader to consume.

Unlike what these two newspapers reported, it was not the VHP or its allies that maintained the peace in the area during the ceremony. Rather, it was the gagging of

⁶⁵ Mukhopadhyay. Nilanjan, *The Demolition: India At The Crossroads*, p. 263.

⁶⁶ Times of India, 'Shilanyas' begins peacefully, 10th November, 1989.

⁶⁷ The Hindustan Times, Shilanyas begins in Ayodhya, Peace prevails in area, 10th November, 1989.

Muslim voices and others who opposed it that made sure that no untoward incidents occurred. By now, it became a well-known fact that these Hindutva goons can go even to the extent of ignoring the High Court's ruling and they have the support of the political circles. In such a situation, it is inconceivable to hope that those who were against the ceremony would have visited the place and raised their concerns, which may have disturbed the 'peace' during the ceremony. Needless to say there was no mention about this aspect in any of the news-reports; nor was this taken up in the editorials.

Another interesting point to note on the coverage of the event by these two papers is the amount of similarities between them. It was not just the headlines of news reports and editorials that were near identical but also the way the reports and editorials were written. Apart from some minor variations, both reports while giving a brief description of the event, stressed that event was peaceful. One reason might be that both the reports came from the same source United News of India (UNI). However, there was no credit given for UNI in HT while the TOI had done that. Even if we put the source of the reports out of our discussion, it is difficult to discern how the editorials of these two papers, one from Bombay (Times of India) and the other from New Delhi (The Hindustan times) was based on exactly three premises. First, both discussed about the peace and gave due credit to the VHP for that. Second, they commended the governments (Centre and State), political parties and leaders involved with their 'political wisdom' and 'administrative acumen'. And thirdly, argued for measures to prevent violence. A sense of pre-planned coverage could be felt if one reads these editorials closely.

The Hindu reportage on this issue, to some extent, was different from the TOI and the HT. Its report on November 4, 1989, titled *Shilanyas amid tight security*⁶⁸ tried to maintain a tad of objectivity and broadly described the events that unfolded during the ceremony and informed:

The VHP programme passed off peacefully and a threat from the Babri-Masjid Action Committee did not materialise. According to authorities, about 500 BMAC volunteers had entered Faizabad and were staying with local people. The deployment of paramilitary forces apparently deterred them from even venturing out.⁶⁹

However, the report was suffixed by another feed from UNI and PTI under the sub heading '*Credit should go to Govt*'⁷⁰ where it informed that 'Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, said the credit for today's peaceful passage of the foundation-laying ceremony at Ayodhya goes to his party and its Government.' Suffixing this PTI and UNI report, which otherwise could have been published as a separate report, with the report on *Shilanyas*, highlights that the paper was taking the side of the Congress (I) and wanted to give credit for the 'peaceful passage of the foundation-laying ceremony at Ayodhya' to the Congress party like Rajiv Gandhi made that day. The critical aspect – that the event was held on a piece of land whose ownership title was disputed and that the event as such was indeed a part of a communalization project was conspicuous by its absence in any case even in The Hindu. Similarly, the paper did not point out that the large posse of para-military forces, while deterring the BMAC activists from registering their protest did nothing to prevent the shilanyas as such.

The Demolition and the Blame game

The demolition of Babri masjid in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992, does not symbolise the extinction or abridgment of the right of the Muslims to freedom of worship, which they have continued to enjoy before, during and after the event even in Ayodhya. The event rather exposed the fragile state of rule of law in the country, wherein the majoritarian composition and attitudes

⁶⁸ The Hindu, *Shilanyas amid tight security*, 10th November, 1989.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

of the police and security forces, and whose subservience to the political executive made it function as a partisan force in the service of 'kar sevaks'.⁷¹

In addition to the above statement, the demolition of Babri Masjid also exposed the press which is considered to be the fourth pillar of the democracy because of its responsibility in sustaining the democratic principles by unraveling the wrongs of the other three pillars. However, the reportage of the press during the Ram Janmabhoomi movement and particularly after the demolition of the Babri Masjid on 7th December 1992, was not particularly reassuring, at least from the point of view that its prescribed role as the fourth pillar of the democracy. Rather than disclosing those involved in the demolition and the violence that preceded the act in the few days before December 6, 1992 and on that day, particularly of the VHP, the RSS, the BJP, the Congress and holding them accountable for the events, the newspapers handled the issue in such a manner and by and large functioned as the mere stenographers to those in power.

The Hindu on 7 December 1992, carried an editorial on its front page, indicating the importance of the event and the occasion. The editorial *Unforgivable*⁷² stated that the paper 'shares the nation's sense of deep anguish at this painful moment.' Then it went on to blame the State government in Uttar Pradesh and said:

The BJP Government in Uttar Pradesh has forfeited its right to rule in the State by its brazen and shameless abdication of its constitutional responsibility. Its assurances to the Centre that it would not violate the court order and that it would discharge its constitutional obligations proved insincere as it appeared to actively collude with the savage and destructive attitude of the kar sevaks surging forward to capture the disputed structure.⁷³

The editorial also held the BJP, the RSS and their allies accountable for the destruction by saying that, "the BJP and its militant allies, the RSS, the VHP and the Bajrang Dal stand exposed as having brought on this horrific denouncement even as the

⁷¹ Ansari. A. Iqbal, *Babri Masjid Dispute: Rule of Law and Building confidence*, Economic and Political Weekly, 22nd December, 2001, p. 4698.

⁷² The Hindu, *Unforgivable*, 7th December, 1992.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

essentially destructive and fascist nature of its strategy and tactics cannot be in doubt anymore.’⁷⁴

However, the editorial did not hold the Narasimha Rao led Congress, which was also accountable for the demolition. It held the BJP responsible for ‘having whipped up passions to the extent that it reflected in the blind mob hysteria which culminated in the attack on the Babri Masjid’, but when it came to Congress it restricted itself to saying that:

The Narasimha Rao administration will face the criticism that it did not adequately forestall Sunday's development. In retrospect, it was a mistake to have put any faith in the sincerity of the Uttar Pradesh Government's assurances that it would uphold the rule of law. Thereby the Centre had jeopardised the safety of the Babri Masjid.⁷⁵

It is clear that the paper neither absolved nor held the Congress responsible for the demolition directly. The only mistake that the central government did, according to the paper, was to trust the state government, headed at that time by Kalyan Singh of the BJP.

The Times of India went further in this direction, in apportioning all the blame to the act on a frenzied mob. Its report on December 7, 1992, with the headline *Kar Sevaks Demolish Babri Masjid*⁷⁶ put the complete responsibility for the demolition, as the headline suggests, on the kar sevaks. It informed how the kar Sevaks prevented the security forces from reaching the spot. The report tried to evoke the image that the Kar Sevaks acted independently without listening to their leaders to ‘maintain discipline and restraint’ due to which trouble started in an otherwise peaceful Kar Seva. ‘The trouble started minutes before the symbolic kar seva was to start when, throwing the entire security arrangements awry kar sevaks damaged a major portion of the disputed

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Times of India, *Kar Sevaks Demolish Babri Masjid*, 7th December, 1992.

shrine despite the warning by the BJP and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) leaders to maintain discipline and restraint.⁷⁷ An urge to absolve the leaders of the Hindutva outfits seemed to have got the paper to put all the blame on the Kar Sevaks. The demolition was sought to be presented as an act of the actions of uncontrollable Kar Sevaks. It informed ‘even VHP and RSS volunteers and saints and dharmacharyas overseeing the entire kar seva programme were helpless as they were forced to flee.’

According to the report *poor* Sadhvi Rithambhara and Uma Bharati⁷⁸ tried to pacify the mob through their speeches ‘but they could not stop the mob from marching towards the disputed shrine.’ The report made special mention about Mr. Advani who was ‘visibly upset’ and refused to comment. The report, by and large, tried to project that the incident as the result of an unexpected outburst of the kar sevaks and hence the efforts of the leaders to pacify the unruly crowd did not materialize.

Similarly, The Hindustan Times also held- the Kar Sevaks responsible for the demolition and informed that their leaders were trying to control them. In the report under the headline *All domes collapse under kar sevaks’ onslaught*⁷⁹ the paper informed that several leaders of the BJP including L.K. Advani, Vijayaraje Scindia and Dr. M.M. Joshi appealed those kar sevaks who were already over the mosque’s domes to descend ‘but this was ignored by hundreds of others who first unfurled saffron flags on the domes and then began to break them.’⁸⁰ However, the report showcased a bit of objectivity and stated that to encourage the *Kar Sevaks*, Sadhvi Rithambhara and Uma Bharati chanted *Ek Dhakka aur do/Babri Masjid tod do* (give one more push to destroy Babri Masjid).⁸¹

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ The Hindustan Times, All domes collapse under Kar sevaks’ onslaught, 7th December, 1992.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Were these ‘helpless’ leaders innocent and were kar sevaks an uncontrollable mob? There is no doubt that the Hindutva outfits like RSS, VHP and BJP played a major part in making the demolition possible and it has been discussed already in this chapter that how this agenda was persistently built up through various campaigns and *yatras* by these very leaders. What is important here is that to discuss the role of the media and how did they project the individual leaders from these organizations like L. K. Advani, whom newspapers said were ‘upset’, thus trying to construct an image of *virtuousness*. In other words, the press, circuitously declared them innocent while reporting on the demolition.

It should be recalled that to resurge the Hindutva sentiments, it was L.K. Advani, among others, who started the *Rath Yatra* from Somnath to Ayodhya on 25th September 1990, just two years before the act of the demolition. Befittingly, his yatra was called *dharmayuddha* (holy war). Though Advani insisted on the point that the yatra was for national integration rather than the construction of the temple, two important elements of his yatra said it all. First of all, the decoration on his chariot was telling. The DCM-Toyota converted Rath was decorated to resemble Arjun’s chariot from the epic *Mahabharata*. It should be pointed out that in the epic Arjun rides this chariot while going for war against the kauravas.

The Chariot also symbolises an offensive move for a good cause and it had been used on several occasions in Indian politics most notably by N. T. Rama Rao when he launched his Chaitanya Ratham, after being displaced from power in Andhra Pradesh by Indira Gandhi. Later, it was also used by Devi Lal during his pre-election campaign who called his modified coach the Vijay Rath.⁸²

Therefore, it won’t be erroneous to say that Advani’s *Rath Yatra* presented the impression of offense by the Hindutva forces to build Ram temple in the Ayodhya. The

⁸² Mukhopadhyay. Nilanjan, *The Demolition: India At The Crossroads*, p. 287.

expressions of these images from the glorious past were intentional as these were invoked in any battle to inspire the stakeholders, the RSS-BJP-VHP trio, who were well aware about the perceived impact of such yatras, as they have organised them in the past also. Not surprisingly, the most common offerings in the yatra was traditional weaponry like arrows, dices, maces, swords, *trishuls* and *kripans* which were offensive otherwise.

The second important element of this yatra was about the starting and end point of this yatra -- from Somnath to Ayodhya. This had a powerful symbolic value in the minds of the Hindus. It is a historical fact the Somnath temple was plundered and destroyed by Mahmud of Ghazni, repeatedly from 1000 to 1026. And this has been an emotional matter for the Hindus. No wonder, Vallabhbhai Patel, the first Home Minister of India, stated his intention for reconstruction of the Somnath temple when he visited to Junagadh on 13th November 1947. Subsequently, the temple was restored to its glory and none other than the President of the Republic, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, inaugurated the temple on 11 May 1951. Since then Somnath has been the reference point for the Hindutva outfits to invoke *Hindu pride* while demanding the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya. One, can easily discern from this fact that why Somnath was chosen as the starting point and Ayodhya as the final destination of Advani's *rath yatra*. Through this symbolism, Advani was not only able to arouse the religious sentiments among the people but also could turn the followers into combative mode. A demonstration of this was exhibited when 101 Kshyatriya youths offered him a bowl containing their blood at Jetpur in Gujarat.⁸³ Not to mention that his yatra was also accompanied by anti-Muslims slogans. Even the Liberhan Commission which wanted

⁸³ Kanungo. Pralay, *RSS's Tryst with Politics: From Hedgewar to Sudarshan*, p. 203.

to acquit⁸⁴ Advani, stated in its report, that ‘in order to mobilize the *Karsevaks* for construction of the temple, L. K, Advani took out a *Rath Yatra* from Somnath.’⁸⁵

Therefore, the argument is that, L. K. Advani, not in any sense, was innocent in the act of demolition of Babri Masjid. He had contributed enough to instigate the people to adopt an aggressive approach which culminated in their action on 6th December 1992 on the mosque. However, the press tended to hide this fact from the readers and thus failed to perform its duty as the fourth pillar of democracy.

Similarly, the media created image of the Kar Sevaks – as an uncontrollable mob -- was wrong indeed. On the contrary, evidences show that they were well trained and well versed followers of their masters. At least two important factors defy the logic that the Kar Sevaks were an uncontrollable mob and that the demolition was an impulsive act of mob fury. And it is amusing that the press certainly knew about these facts. The first fact was that two days before the demolition, i.e. on 4th December 1992, the Kar Sevaks rehearsed for the programme. The Times of India in its edition of The Sunday Times (December 6, 1992) under the headline, *Sadhus calls for kar seva*⁸⁶ reported that ‘kar sevaks today rehearsed for tomorrow’s programme. Standing in serpentine queues they marched in a procession through the disputed land.’⁸⁷Newstrack, a video news magazine at that time (and this was some years before Sattelite TV began to beam news 24 X 7) showed Kar Sevaks practicing the demolition.⁸⁸ It is beyond any logic then that the *Kar Sevaks* who were acceding to their

⁸⁴ For detail on how Liberhan Commission tried to acquit L. K. Advani from Babri Masjid demolition see, Noorani. A.G., *Destruction of the Babri Masjid: A National Dishonour* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2014) p. 151-158.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 181.

⁸⁶ The Times of India, The Sunday Times, *Sadhus calls for kar seva*, 6th December, 1992.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*.

⁸⁸ Jha. K. Mrityunjoy, Newstrack December 1992, Youtube, (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cxVxFS81EKU&t=1889s>) accessed on 21/04/2017.

master just two days ago became an uncontrollable mob on the day the mosque was pulled down. The second fact was that the *Kar Sevaks*, while demolishing the mosque, cautiously removed the idol and cash box from the central dome and kept it in a safe place.⁸⁹ Surely, these acts could not have been done by the ‘uncontrollable mob’. It was also reported by the Hindustan Times, under the headline *Idols back in place*.⁹⁰

However, on 9th December 1992, these same newspapers shifted from their earlier position on the *Sangh Parivar*. The Times of India, in its editorial, *Reassuring Steps*⁹¹ stated that the Central government’s decision to ban communal organisations was a reassuring step. The Hindustan Times, in its editorial, *Beyond the ban*⁹² stated that ‘even those who question the wisdom in banning these organisations cannot dispute the fact that the Government has been driven to this action on account of the national disaster brought about by communal forces.’⁹³ It seems that the spread of communal violence across the nation and the Central Government’s decision to ban the communal forces made these newspaper change their views on the Hindutva outfits and their leaders.

Congress’s Role

As we have already discussed, the Congress party had equally contributed in whipping up the Hindutva sentiment to its extreme. Since the 1980s, the Congress politics was centred on playing the Hindu card on and off for their benefit. In its 1989 election manifesto, the Congress stated on the Ayodhya issue that ‘the sensitive issue needs to be looked at from the broader perspective of communal harmony and goodwill.....The

⁸⁹ Both the idol and cash box were place at their original place after the demolition at around 7 pm.

⁹⁰ The Hindustan Times, *Idols back in place*, 7th December, 1992.

⁹¹ Times of India, *Reassuring Steps*, 9th December, 1992.

⁹² The Hindustan Times, *Beyond the ban*, 12th December, 1992.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

Congress is committed to maintaining communal peace and harmony'.⁹⁴The noncommittal and ambiguous stand of the Congress on Ayodhya changed further in 1991. Its election manifesto, in 1991, unequivocally stated that 'the Congress is for the construction of the (Ram) temple without dismantling the mosque.'⁹⁵ The vacillation of Congress was aptly described by Madhav Godbole, Union Home Secretary and in his words:

The Congress continued to play either the Hindu card -- approaching the court for opening the lock on the door of the temple in March 1986, and permitting shilanyas, the laying of a foundation stone for the proposed temple in November 1989; or the Muslim card--passing of the Muslim Women's (Protection of Rights on Divorce Bill) in 1986, and enacting the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991.⁹⁶

It should also be recalled here that it was the Congress government under Rajiv Gandhi that allowed the *Shilanyas* despite the Allahabad High Court's ruling for maintaining status quo.

As discussed earlier in this section, there was an initial hesitation by the major newspapers like Times of India, The Hindustan Times and The Hindu to point fingers towards the Congress in the whole incident. However, the TOI became critical of the party soon after. Its editorial on 8th December 1992, titled *Signs of Impotency*⁹⁷ criticised the Rao led Congress government for not taking adequate action in the aftermath of the mosque's demolition. The paper also carried Rajdeep Sardesai's article *Rao's 'betrayal' rankles most*.⁹⁸ The article brought out the resentment of Muslims in Bombay against the government and its apparatus. The same day, the third page of the paper carried a report on the Muslim leaders demanding Prime Minister Rao's resignation.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Godbole. Madhav, *Unfinished Innings: Recollections and Reflection of a Civil Servant* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1996) p. 334.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 334.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 334.

⁹⁷ The Times of India, Signs of Impotency, 8th December, 1992

⁹⁸ The Times of India, Rao's 'betrayal' rankles most, 9th December, 1992.

⁹⁹ The Times of India, Muslims leaders call for Rao's resignation, 9th December, 1992.

The Prime minister was again criticised in yet another report titled *Anger in Bihar shifts to PM*.¹⁰⁰

The Hindustan Times continued with its stand and refrained from criticising the government. The Hindu, which had adopted a non-critical approach towards the Congress since the time of *Shilanyas*, continued to do so.

Discursive formation of Ram Janmabhoomi Movement and the Press

The Press Council of India constituted a five member committee to look into the role of the press during the *Kar Seva* of 30th October and 2nd November 1990. The committee produced two sets of reports. The majority report was produced by N K Trikha, N R Chandran and Satish Khurana. It dealt with the censorship enforced by the government of Uttar Pradesh on the Press. The minority report produced by K Vikram Rao and P Raman looked at the communal role played by the vernacular press during this period. The minority report indeed confirmed the fact that the press, particularly the regional language press, played the communal card in an unabashed manner. Discussing the role of the press during and after 30th October 1990, Radhika Ramaseshan wrote:

Press has achieved three objectives: it has whipped up emotional fervour for the 'cause' of the Ram temple even among a large section of disinterested and apolitical Hindus, and as a corollary, completely polarised the Hindus and the Muslims, since the shrine ultimately symbolises Hindu animosity against Muslims. Lastly, it has seriously undermined the moral authority of Mulayam Singh Yadav, who by steadfastly maintaining that he adhered to the letter of law in this dispute¹⁰¹

So the fine question will be did the press turn communal? The minority report of the Press Council clearly suggested this and particularly so about the vernacular press and our analysis of English language (national) press too evince, how the press did

¹⁰⁰ The Times of India, *Anger in Bihar shifts to PM*, 9th December, 1992.

¹⁰¹ Ramaseshan. Radhika, *The Press on Ayodhya*, Economic and Political Weekly, 15th December 1990, p. 2709.

ignore its democratic responsibilities and tilted towards the Hindutva assertion. However, this is not to state that the English language press played the communal cards per se. The above analysis of the press shows that the press more than adhering to the Hindutva ideology, functioned as an Ideological Apparatus of State. It should be understood that the reporting began to synchronize with the Hindutva sentiments only when the State started adhering to that ideology. It should be noted that the press played a decisive role in creating a stigma against the RSS and other Hindutva outfits after the assassination of M.K Gandhi on January 30, 1948. On the contrary, in case of the demolition, the Press was initially putting the blame on the 'uncontrolled' karsevaks for the demolition and not on the government or the leaders of the movement. It was quick to change the position and blamed the Hindutva outfits for the demolition as soon as the State started apprehending Hindutva leaders and organisations. This creates a paradox while we try to understand the role of press during the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. In this situation, it will be appropriate to first theoretically discuss the Ram Janmabhoomi movement and try to locate the role of English language press in it.

As the discursive formation of any other phenomenon, the discursive formation of Ram Janmabhoomi movement is also not amorphous. Ram Janmabhoomi movement constitutes very well structured discourses which generally starts from 1528 when, according to the interpretation of the Hindu revivalists, Mir Baqi Tashqandi, Governor of Awadh, under the tutelage of Babar, destroyed the Ram temple and built the Babri Masjid in its place. Hindutva leaders insist to start the discourse from this year because it gives them the space to evince the Hindutva assertion as the counter to the Muslim oppression. They successfully created the myth that Ayodhya had been the birth place of Lord Rama and an important place of worship since the start of the millennia. But this selective memory hides the fact that 'the several Brahminical treatises that were

compiled on pilgrimages do not mention Ayodhya as an important holy place for the Hindus until the seventeenth century.¹⁰² In this way Hindutva is presented in a manner that it is not an oppressive phenomenon but rather a response to oppressive phenomenon of the past. In this framework it becomes a struggle for justice rather than committing an injustice upon the minorities.

In Foucault's view, discursive formation in different historical periods creates different knowledge. The power which controls discursive formation also guides the way in which the topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned with. Together with limiting and restricting, it also defines an acceptable and intelligible way to talk, write, or conduct.

Hindutva ideologues have been able to tactfully create and proliferate statements and create events and also the meanings of those statements and events because of which, even those who are opposed to the oppression or violence against other communities, those who in normal circumstances do not even think in terms of their religious identities, those who in fact cherish a liberating theology, are also devoured by Hindutva assertion. They are able to do so because it is based on 'a combination of received tradition and active refashioning of this tradition.'¹⁰³

They are able to create different statements in different discursive formations of the same Hindutva assertion. After identifying which section of the society they want to cater, Hindutva ideologues modify, alter and improvise the statements so that they are able to attract each and every segment of the society. This is necessary because Hindutva assertion is religious in form but political in content and intent. The discursive

¹⁰² Srivastava. Sushil, *The Abuse of History: A Study of the White Papers on Ayodhya*, Social Scientist, Vol. 22, No. 5/6 (May - Jun., 1994), pp. 39-51

¹⁰³ Banerjee. Sumanta, 'Hindutva' - *Ideology and Social Psychology*, Economic and Political Weekly, 19th January 1991, p. 97.

formation of Hindutva which tends to mobilise poor Hindus is different from the discursive formation of Hindutva which tends to mobilise urban middle classes. The iconography of Ram may be effective in mobilising the general Hindu population but to specifically target a particular class or a caste, discourse on Hindutva revolves around the issue that are specific to those classes or castes. For instance, to mobilise the upper caste Hindus, Hindutva ideologues agitate against anything that challenges the Brahminical hegemony and any 'attempts at mobilisation of peasants, tribals and 'dalits' in certain parts of north and central India represent to them an attack on bastions of political authority traditionally controlled by the upper caste Hindus.'¹⁰⁴ And to mobilise the castes which are considered to be lower in status, the unity of the Hindus and the threat from Muslims becomes the main element of the Hindutva discourse. Interestingly, in many of the cases the same event is argued against or in favour with contrasting opinions. The Anti-Mandal agitation, for instance, was the prime example of this. At one level, implementation of the Mandal commission's recommendations was agitated against because it was challenging the Brahmin hegemony and at another level it was agitated against because it was considered to be disintegrating the Hindus.

Another example of this was the Shah Bano case. Hindu revivalists were able to highlight the Shah Bano case at different levels. At the first level, this was used to strengthen the innate anti-Muslim prejudices by highlighting how oppressive the Muslim community is, even to its own members. At the second level, after the enactment of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act of 1986, they were able to convince a major portion of the Hindu population of what they described as the Indian state's 'pseudo-secularism'¹⁰⁵ face: it was shown as appeasement of the

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ The term 'pseudo-secularism' was coined by Vallabhbhai Patel during his visit to Junagadh on 13th November 1947.

minority community, rather than equality for all. A new phrase ‘positive-secularism’ was thus introduced in the Hindutva discourse. Ostensibly, ‘positive-secularism’ seemed to be an egalitarian concept, particularly because the ‘secularism’ or ‘pseudo-secularism’ before it did nothing but ‘encouraging co-existence of all forms of religious superstitions and obscurantist customs among all the communities, instead of trying to develop a scientific temper, which should be the cornerstone of secular states.’¹⁰⁶ Manifestations of the ‘positive-secularism’ is found in the demand for uniform civil code and repeal of Article 370 of the Constitution of India and such other demands. It needs to be mentioned here that a Hindu uniform civil code existed in India since 1955-56.¹⁰⁷ For the Hindu middle class liberals, uniform civil code has always been a democratic solution to the communal issues. But what they fail to realise is that:

Given the religious orientation of the BJP-RSS-VHP nexus, a uniform code based on their so-called 'positive secularism' will be invariably heavily weighted in favour of the Hindu concepts of rights and responsibilities. The distinct identity of other minorities-whether religious or cultural-is bound to be submerged in the larger, hegemonistic code determined by the majority community. What needs to be realised is that the play of forces in Hindu Muslim relations is taking place today in a society which is marked by sheer inequalities of power. The dominant Hindus have more power to define the terms in which society should be organised and administration should be run.¹⁰⁸

The present attempt by Hindutva forces to appropriate Ambedkar to mobilise ‘Dalits’ behind it is also the example how different statements and events are interpreted differently to cater the interest of particular class or caste. The point that is being made here is that Hindutva ideology does not depend upon a singular statement or event and the singular interpretation of those statements or events. In different periods, different statements and events and their interpretations are added or reintroduced. And the

¹⁰⁶ Banerjee. Sumanta, *‘Hindutva’- Ideology and Social Psychology*.

¹⁰⁷ The Hindu Code Bill was passed into four Acts, The Hindu Marriage Act 1955, The Hindu Succession Act 1956, The Minority and Guardianship Among Hindus Act 1956 and the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act 1956. For the discussion on the Hindu Code Bill see, Shina. Chitra, *Debating Patriarchy: The Hindu Code Bill Controversy in India (1941-1956)* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012)

¹⁰⁸ Banerjee. Sumanta, *‘Hindutva’- Ideology and Social Psychology*, p. 99.

media/press actually gets proselytised by some of those statements, events or interpretations. It may not necessarily subscribe to the Hindutva ideology in totality but at times it also gets difficult for the press to keep itself apart from some of the Hindutva interpretations of the events and incidents. In fact, one of the main reasons for the successful hegemonisation of the discourse by the Hindutva ideology is that some interpretations of history provided by it are able to captivate individuals and when it shares a common past/tradition/belief, it influences the individuals or institutions despite the fact that it misrepresents the past. This is the reason why even, at times, the judiciary in India has fallen for it. The interpretation of history such as the Babri Masjid was built after the demolition of Ram temple, without any archeological evidence, has made the judiciary incapable of seeing reality. In fact, in some cases it was the judiciary, by refusing to spell out its position, contributed to the upsurge the Ram Janmabhoomi movement.

In 1986, for instance, when the Faizabad District Court ordered the unlocking of the Babri Masjid, it judicially sanctioned the conversion of a mosque into a temple which was attempted earlier in 1949. Surprisingly, the court never held those people who installed the idol inside the mosque guilty of violating Section 295¹⁰⁹ and 297¹¹⁰ of Indian Penal Code. Later, on 30th September 2010, the three judges of the Special Full Bench at Lucknow of the High Court of Allahabad gave the verdict for the partition

¹⁰⁹ Section 295 of IPC states ‘Whoever destroys, damages or defiles any place of worship, or any object held sacred by any class of persons with the intention of thereby insulting the religion of any class of persons or with the knowledge that any class of persons is likely to consider such destruction, damage or defilement as an insult to their religion, shall be punishable with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.’

¹¹⁰ Section 297 of IPC states ‘Whoever, with the intention of wounding the feelings of any person, or of insulting the religion of any person, or with the knowledge that the feelings of any person are likely to be wounded, or that the religion of any person is likely to be insulted thereby, commits any trespass in any place of worship or on any place of sepulcher, or any place set apart from the performance of funeral rites or as a depository for the remains of the dead, or offers any indignity to any human corpse, or causes disturbance to any persons assembled for the performance of funeral ceremonies, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine, or with both.’

of the disputed area into three parts, one part for the Hindu groups (who were litigants in the case on behalf of the revered deity's idol), another part to the Sunni Waqf Board and the third portion to the Nirmohi Akhara. This judgment again gave judicial sanction to the Hindutva interpretation of history that the Babri Masjid was built after demolishing the Ram temple. The tripartite partition was more in favour of the *Sangh Parivar* and was a senseless judgment, not only because it was based on 'faith over facts'¹¹¹ but also because none of the parties had prayed for it. For this reason, the Supreme Court stayed this judgment in May 2011. The opinion expressed by V. R. Krishna Iyer, a former Supreme Court judge and Mr. Soli Sorabji, senior advocate on the judiciary and its role on the Ram Janmabhoomi movement on 10th November 1989 seemed valid even today. While Justice Krishna Iyer said that 'the judiciary will be described as the villain of the piece', advocate Soli Sorabjee, stated that 'judiciary has let us down in preventing this madness from building up'.¹¹²

It is not to say that the judiciary adheres to the Hindutva ideology. Rather the point is that the resilient discursive formations of Hindutva has even penetrated the judicial process of the country. We need to see the role of English language press in a similar context.

After the analysis of the major English language newspapers' reporting during the Shah Bano case, Ammu Joseph and Kalpana Sharma pointed out that:

While the overall coverage of the issue was not overtly communal, there was an underlying bias in some of the editorial comment. For instance, the insistence that a uniform civil code was the best solution, a line pushed by all the five newspapers, reflected an unquestioning belief that what was acceptable to the majority community, that is Hindus, should also be accepted by all minorities, especially Muslims.¹¹³

¹¹¹ For the discussion on this see, Menon. Nivedita, *The Ayodhya Judgment: What Next*, Economic and Political Weekly, vol. xlvi no 31, 30th July 2011.

¹¹² Times of India, Judiciary Blames over Babri issue, 11th November, 1989.

¹¹³ Joseph. Ammu & Sharma. Kalpana, *Whose News? The Media and Women's Issues* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006) p. 135.

Sukumar Muralidharan in his comparative analysis of the English language press during the anti-Mandal agitation and Babri Masjid demolition pointed out:

The scale of values of the national English- language press, as reflected in its allocation of print and visual space, and the tone and content of its coverage, amply shows that it has derived inspiration from the ideological fount of undifferentiated Hinduism. In its coverage of the anti-reservation agitation, the press chose to cast a destructive rampage in the role of a crusade for nothing less than the principles on which Indian nationhood is founded.¹¹⁴

He also pointed out the fact that 'Within the terms of the 'nationalist' discourse that is today seeking dominance, 'Mandir' is synonymous with patriotism, while 'Mandal' is the metaphor for a variety of divisiveness.'¹¹⁵

To conclude, from the analysis of the English language press on the events that ensued from the Ram Janmabhumi movement's start to the demolition of the Babri Masjid, points out the fact that the Hindutva ideology was able to wield its influence on the functioning of the 'liberal' English language press. These were achieved through distinct and attractive interpretations of the past and persistent campaigns over a period of time. This explains why the press, during Shah Bano, largely got torpor by the rhetoric of 'positive secularism' and 'equality' in form of uniform civil code. Whereas during the anti-Mandal agitation, the press' torpidity has to do with the fact that Hindutva ideologues were able to bring 'nationalism' in the Hindutva discourse. As Muralidharan argued, 'Hinduism' as an internally undifferentiated entity is becoming a powerful ideological prop of a nation-state in crisis.'¹¹⁶

Hindutva politics is also manifested in the riots and massacres in India. The next Chapter will discuss about the politics of riots and the role of media in it.

¹¹⁴ Muralidharan. Sukumar, *Mandal, Mandir aur Masjid: 'Hindu' Communalism and the Crisis of the State*, Social Scientist, Vol. 18, No. 10, Oct 1990, pp. 27-49.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 27-49.

¹¹⁶*Ibid*, pp. 27-49.

Chapter IV

Politics of Riots and the Media

The demolition of the Babri Masjid on 6th December 1992, for many, was the vile manifestation of the communalisation of Indian society. Unfortunately, it was neither the beginning nor the end of such manifestations. Still worse forms of such manifestation are the recurring riots and communal violence that occur in different parts of the country on a regular basis. This chapter will attempt to analyse the politics behind such riots and communal violence and the role of the press in them.

Though the intention here is not to dwell upon the definition of riots and communal violence per se, it is pertinent to discuss some of the concepts and ideas on riots and collective violence propounded by different scholars. It is necessary to do this to exhibit the theoretical framework which we intend to use in this thesis to view the riots or collective communal violence in India.

It will be relevant to start with Ashutosh Varshney¹. Why some cities are riot-prone while others are not? This is the question that Varshney's study on ethnic conflict between Hindus and Muslims tries to answer. The question, in his words is:

Why is it that in the same state, let us say Uttar Pradesh, Aligarh is riot-prone but Lucknow is not; or in Gujarat, Ahmedabad repeatedly goes up in communal flames (it did again in 2002), whereas Surat rarely does (it remained peaceful-yet again- in 2002)?²

To explain this, he discusses about two types of civil engagements that occurs in the level of civil society namely *Interethnic* or *intercommunal* and *intraethnic* or *intracommunal* engagements. *Interethnic* engagements, according to him, can be divided into two parts i.e. *associational* and *quotidian*. Associational (interethnic)

¹ Varshney. Ashutosh, *Ethnic Conflict and Civil Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013).

² Ibid, (preface to the Paperback edition), p. xi.

forms of civil engagements are business associations, professional organisations, reading clubs, film clubs, festival organisations, trade unions and cadre-based political parties. Quotidian (intraethnic) forms of civil engagements are routine interactions of life as Hindus and Muslims families visiting each other, eating together often enough, jointly participating in festivals and allowing their children to play together in the neighborhood.³

In a nutshell, according to Varshney, those cities where interethnic civil engagements are absent or are at minimal stage are more prone to riots and communal violence.

Interethnic engagements in his view also produces the peace committees and tension- managing organisations from within the society itself during the time to pre-empt violence. He argues,

In cities of thick interactions between different communities, peace committees at the time of tension emerge *from below* in various neighborhoods; the local administration does not have to impose such committees on the entire city *from above*. Because of mutual consent and involvement, the former is a better protector of peace than the latter. Such highly decentralized tension-managing organizations kill rumors, remove misunderstandings, and often police neighborhoods. If prior communication across communities does not exist, such organizations do not emerge from below. They are typically imposed from above and do not work well because their politician members, though inducted for purposes of peace, may in fact already be committed to polarization and violence for the sake of electoral benefit.⁴

In this sense, within a state the reason why a city is riot-prone but another remains largely peaceful because of the interethnic engagement, which maintain peace exist in some cities but does not exist in others.

The problem with Varshney's concept is that *interethnic* engagements may not necessarily prevent communal violence. As we have discussed earlier (in Chapter III), as to how Hindutva outfits communalised the residents of Faizabad. It is significant to

³ *Ibid*, p. 3.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 47.

remember that before the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) started their Hindutva propaganda furiously during second half of the 1980s, the people in Ayodhya and Faizabad were largely living in communes with each other irrespective of their religion.

In fact, Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay points out that,

Even in 1989, when activists of the VHP dug up the graveyard in front of the Babri Masjid to perform shilanyas- to lay the foundation of the proposed new temple (which they later claimed was not just a simple foundation stone, but the “basis of a Hindu Rashtra”)- the people of the twin towns of Faizabad and Ayodhya were unimpressed. In fact, they responded by electing a communist member to the Lok Sabha.⁵

The mention here is about Mitra Sen Yadav, a CPI leader who was elected in the November 1989 general elections. The Faizabad Lok Sabha constituency, interestingly, was a stronghold since many years of the CPI.

Paul R. Brass, providing the ethnographic evidence from his research in Meerut between 1983 and 2004, refutes Varshney’s claim.⁶ He argues that,

With regards to the question of civic action to prevent, contain, and control riots, it is evident that the political mobilization of communal sentiment overpowered whatever civic engagement existed in Meerut and that civic action to contain and control rioting once started was ineffective. The ability to sustain intercommunal relation, sentiments, and action, and thus provide a barrier to communal violence, decreases the longer the authorities delay, procrastinate, and thereby allow the momentum of the move towards a communal riot to accelerate. At some point, if no action, or sufficient or incompetent measures are taken, the end result is total communal polarization that overwhelms all existing intercommunal feelings of commercial, professional, and interpersonal solidarity⁷.

Another problem with Varshney’s analysis is the way he views the role of the state and its apparatus. We have discussed (in chapter III) as to the process of Hindutva becoming the State ideology. As riots and other forms of communal violence, that may be pogroms or genocide, are corollary to the Hindutva’s communalisation process, the fact cannot be ignored that the state sometime can and have functioned as the producers

⁵ Mukhopadhyay. Nilanjan, *The Demolition: India At The Crossroads*, (New Delhi: HarperCollins Publisher India, 1994) p. 8.

⁶ For detail discussion on this see the chapter ‘The Development of an Institutionalized Riot System in Meerut City, 1961 to 1982’ in Brass. R. Paul, *Forms of Collective Violence: Riots, Pogroms, and Genocide in Modern India*, (India: Three Essays, 2006) pp. 65- 102.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 97.

of communal violence like during the anti-Sikh riot of 1984. By ignoring the role of the state as the producer of communal violence, Varshney's analysis also glosses over the role of organisations like the RSS or its arms in such violence.

Steven I. Wilkinson is another name that comes up when we are discussing about the communal riots in India. Wilkinson⁸ studied communal riots in close relation to the election process and has attempted to explain how the democratic state's responded to the riots. His central argument is:

The democratic state protects minorities when it is in their governments' electoral interest to do so. Specifically, politicians in government will increase the supply of protection to minorities when either of two conditions applies: when minorities are an important part of their party's current support base, or the support base of or of their coalition partners in a coalition government; or when the overall electoral system in a state is so competitive- in terms of the effective number of parties- that there is therefore a high probability that the governing party will have to negotiate or form coalitions with minority supported parties in the future, despite its own preferences.⁹

He also argues that the presence of high levels of competition compels parties to provide more security to the minorities.

We have been discussing about the history of Indian politics in all the previous chapters. In Chapter III, we discussed about the State Assembly by-election in Faizabad¹⁰ during 1948. There, we highlighted how the then Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Govind Ballabh Pant, replaced Siddheshwari Prasad with Baba Raghav Das as the opponent of Acharya Narendra Dev to exploit the religious sentiments of the people which could/did consolidate votes for his party. It needs to be remembered that Dev was a strong contestant from the Socialist Party from Faizabad. He was, in fact, the Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) from the constituency in 1937. Chief Minister Pant or his party members did not in any way try to provide security for the

⁸ Wilkinson. I. Steven, *Votes and Violence: Electoral Competition and Communal Riots in India*, (India: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 6-7.

minorities. Rather, they did their best to polarise the people and the replacement of Prasad with Das was an integral part of that polarisation process. Similar analogies can be made in the national level politics too. After the emergency, Indira's Congress started to lose its hegemony over Indian electorates. Strong oppositions, both in state level and in the center, emerged against the Congress in the years that followed. But the Congress did nothing to provide security to the minorities and mitigate the danger of Hindutva. The fact is, the Congress started to search for new ways to exploit the 'opportunities' through communal politics.

Contrary to Wilkinson's argument, the history of Indian politics, particularly since the period of the emergency, has shown us that the political parties have taken the route of communal polarisation more during the competitive politics. Varshney comments 'India has had more riots in a period of greater party competition, not less.'¹¹

Perhaps, the most interesting outcome from the studies on communal violence in India has been the discovery of Institutionalised Riot System (IRS) by Paul R. Brass. IRS is the Institutionalised system of riot production. Brass argues that 'in sites where riots of a particular type are endemic, they are a grisly form of dramatic production'¹² of riots. Understanding riots and other forms of communal violence through IRS allows us to delineate from the perception that considers riots to be the spontaneous occurrences out of historical animosities between communities. Instead, it allows us to focus on the 'actual instigators and perpetrators of acts of collective violence that

¹¹ Varshney. Ashutosh, *An Electoral Theory of Communal Riots?* Economic and Political Weekly 24th September, 2005, p. 4220.

¹² Brass. R. Paul, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India*, (India: Oxford University Press, 2003) p. 15.

everywhere have for far too long and far too often gone unrecognized and unpunished.¹³

According to Brass, IRS constitutes three phases which are

- a) preparation or rehearsal
- b) activation or enactment
- c) explanation or interpretation.¹⁴

The first phase, unlike what Wilkinson suggests, occurs most notably during the competitive political system. This, according to Brass, is due to:

intense political mobilization or electoral competition in which riots are precipitated as a device to consolidate the support of ethnic, religious, or other culturally marked groups by emphasizing the need for solidarity in face of the rival communal group.¹⁵

The second phase, as the name suggests, is the enactment of the riot. The third phase occurs after the violence. As the search for the causes of violence starts after the violence, there exists the 'broader struggle within, but also outside, the local community to control the explanation or interpretation of the causes of the violence.'¹⁶ According to Brass, in this phase,

Wider elements in society become involved, including journalists, politicians, social scientists, and public opinion generally. This third phase is marked by the process of blame displacement in which the social scientists themselves become implicated, a process that does not isolate effectively those most responsible for the production of violence, but diffuses blame widely, blurring responsibility, and thereby contributing to the perpetuation of violent production in future.¹⁷

Brass discusses about the Feroze building massacre during the riots of 1982 in Meerut. A brief discussion on it will help us to understand the third phase of IRS. In

¹³ Brass. R. Paul, *Forms of Collective Violence: Riots, Pogroms, and Genocide in Modern India*, p. 68.

¹⁴ Brass. R. Paul, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India*, p. 15.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 15.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 15.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 15.

this incident, 29 Muslims including men, women and children were massacred by the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) at a site called the Feroze building in Meerut city in Uttar Pradesh. It was the last of the sequence of violent incidents during the long spate of riots that rocked Meerut during 1982. After the incident there was a struggle on interpretation of its causes and Brass brought out the process of blame displacement on it. Though all the respondents agreed that it was a police-Muslim confrontation, those 'associated with secular political parties and other organizations, were sympathetic to the Muslims and considered the PAC at fault, guilty of brutal acts.'¹⁸ And those associated with militant Hindu organisations blamed the Muslims for attacking the police and justified the police's insanity.

Even if one refrains from taking sides, it is difficult to digest the reasoning by the Militant Hindus of this incident and blaming the Muslims for all the violations by the PAC. This is because of the fact that police personnel who were in the site of this violence did not sustain even a single injury. The state and its apparatus being biased during communal riots are evident beyond any doubt.¹⁹ Similarly, Brass brought out the process of blame displacement after the Aligarh Riot.²⁰ In fact, it is not just after the riot but also after the nature of communal incidents that the process of blame displacement occurs. For instance, we have discussed how the responsibility for demolishing the Babri Masjid shifted from one actor to another. And the media, rather than bringing out the facts, participates in this process of shifting or apportioning blame.

¹⁸ Brass. R. Paul, *Forms of Collective Violence: Riots, Pogroms, and Genocide in Modern India*, p. 95.

¹⁹ For more discussion the role of police during riots see, Brass. R. Paul, *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India*, pp. 328-343.

²⁰ For detail discussion on it see, *Ibid*, pp. 305-327.

This chapter, in the following sections, will discuss about the politics of riots and blame displacement and the role of the press in it. For this purpose, the Nellie Massacre of 1983, the anti-Sikh riot of October-November 1984 and Gujarat riots of February-March 2002 are taken as the case studies. Section one will discuss the Nellie massacre in the larger context of the 'Assam Movement' and the role of the press. Section two will discuss the anti-Sikh riots in the larger context of the Punjab crisis and analyse how the media reported the incident. And section three will be on the 2002 Gujarat riots. Ostensibly, all the three incidents seemed to be pogroms and genocides, however, as Brass suggests 'no hard and fast distinction can be made between these supposedly distinct forms of violence, since pogroms masquerade as riots and many, if not most, large scale riots display features supposedly special to pogroms.'²¹ Therefore, the question whether these incidents were riots or pogroms is not the concern of this Chapter. Instead, the intention here is to analyse these communal incidents in the larger context of the *dynamic processes* of the production of such violence, the process of blame displacement and the role of the press.

I

Nellie Massacre 1983

On 18 February 1983, more than eighteen hundred Muslim peasants, according to official count, were butchered in the villages near Nellie, 70kms from Guwahati in Assam. According to the Mehta Commission report,²² among the deaths, only 10 percent were men, others being women, children and the old who could not run fast enough to save their lives. This incident, also known as Nellie massacre, was the

²¹ Brass. R. Paul, *Forms of Collective Violence: Riots, Pogroms, and Genocide in Modern India*, p. 3.

²² Tewary. P. Tribhuvam, Report of the Commission of Enquiry on Assam Disturbance, Dispur, Assam, May 1984.

byproduct of the chauvinistic movement known as anti-foreigners or the Assam movement. Therefore, for better understanding of the Nellie Massacre, a discussion on the Assam movement is necessary.

Assam had witnessed quite a few movements since independence like linguistic and oil-refinery movements, it needs to be clarified that the 'Assam movement' here is being referred to the movement in Assam between 1979 and 15 August 1985, demanding prevention of entry of 'illegal immigrants' or foreign nationals into Assam, preventing them from participation in the electoral process of Assam and the whole country and their identification and deportation from Indian soil. It started after the Election Commission's voter lists for the Mongoldoi Lok Sabha bye-elections in 1979 was found to contain of a large number of people who were considered Bangladeshis. Soon, the All Assam Students' Union (AASU), took up the matter and was joined by other organisations like All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) and Assam Sahitya Sabha. The movement witnessed several incidents of violence and the Nellie massacre was one and most gruesome among them. To analyse why and how violence materialized during this movement, we need to analyse it in a historical context.

Pre-colonial Assam 'was fundamentally semi-tribal and semi-feudal in nature which ensured the mixture of more than one classical mode of production'.²³ With the beginning of British colonization, in 1826, two major transformations occurred in Assam.

First was the geographical transformation. Till 1874, Assam remained one of the divisions of Bengal. When the British constituted Assam as separate province, in

²³ Hussain. Monirul, *The Assam movement: A Sociological Study*, Ph.D. thesis submitted to Centre for the Study of Social Systems, School of Social Science, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Sodhganga (<http://hdl.handle.net/10603/19069>), p. 44, (Accessed on 1st May 2016).

1874, regions like ‘Sylhet of East Bengal, now Bangladesh, the entire Hill areas of north east and Cachar district in addition of traditional Asamiya homeland, the Brahmaputra valley, which they had been sharing with many tribal groups like Bodos, Michings, Rabhas, Lalungs’ were included into the Assam; before 1874, Asamiya comprised only the regions like the districts of Lakhimpur, Sibsagar, Nowgong, Darrang, Kamrup and parts of Karbi- Anglong districts of today. The impact of the geographical reorganization of Assam was that it became ‘an amalgam of Asamiya-speaking, Bengali-speaking and myriad-tongued hills tribal areas — in which Asamiya was the claimed mother tongue of less than a quarter and Bengali of more than 40 per cent of the population.’²⁴

Second was the transformation on its economic front. Assam, after British occupation, was brought under the aegis of the colonial order. The colonial administrators, however, had no intention to encourage and invest in modern education and training for the Assamese population which resulted in absence of a middle class in Assamese society and the scarcity of educated Assamese who can work in new colonial set up. To mitigate this problem, the colonial rulers started importing educated unemployed persons from the Bengal presidency.²⁵

In addition to this, the colonial rulers imposed a land revenue system which resulted in the commodification of the land. Prior to this, there was a system where ‘Paik²⁶ had to offer periodic service to the state for land; in other words, he had to pay

²⁴ Guha. Amalendu, ‘Little Nationalism Turned Chauvinist Assam's Anti-Foreigner Upsurge, 1979-80’, in Ghanshyam Shah (ed.), *Social Movements and the State*, (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2015) p. 363

²⁵ It is to be noted that after the British occupation of Bengal since 1757, western education was expanded in the region.

²⁶ Paiks were the toiling class during the pre-colonial period. They were occupationally peasants, artisans, small merchants, firshermen and also militia of Ahom kingdom during the war time.

his land revenue in the form of physical labour.²⁷ The impact of new land revenue system on peasants, according to Amalendu Guha, was that:

In the given transitional situation of a deficient currency supply and extremely limited facilities of marketing farm products, this policy caused hardship and resentment. For, peasants failed to secure enough cash to pay their land tax. In the interiormost areas, even around 1850, peasants had to walk up long distances of two to three days' march to get their goods converted in to cash.²⁸

However, peasants did not accept the policies of their new rulers in the same way as they did with the previous rulers -- as of something that was divinely destined. Rather, they revolted against it, though unsuccessfully, in 1861 and 1891 and these revolts 'reflected the colonial oppression on the peasantry and determination of peasantry to fight against the colonial land revenue system.'²⁹ These upsurges also compelled the colonial rulers to bring down partially the revenue rate. In such a situation, the British government came up with an idea of expanding the extent of the agricultural lands. The expansion of agricultural land also meant more peasants necessary for these lands. Therefore, migration of peasants from neighboring regions, particularly from Mymensingh, in present day Bangladesh, was encouraged.

In the meantime, another problem arose which affected the lives of the peasantry in Assam and that was the addiction to opium. After land, opium was the main source of revenue. 'A maund of opium would have cost the Treasury Rs. 290 at the ex-factory cost in 1883-84, but it brought forth a gross revenue of Rs. 1, 040, when sold at Rs. 26 per seer.'³⁰ Opium addiction affected the peasants not just morally but economically

²⁷ Hussain. Monirul, *The Assam movement: A Sociological Study*, p. 65.

²⁸ Guha. Amalendu, *Planter-Raj to Swaraj: Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam 1826-1947* (People's Publishing House, 1988) p. 8.

²⁹ Hussain. Monirul, *The Assam movement: A Sociological Study*, p. 69.

³⁰ Guha. Amalendu, *Planter-Raj to Swaraj: Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam 1826-1947*, p. 55.

too. They were also allured, by some planters and traders, to gain economic advantages. 'For example, S. E. Peal, a planter, told the Royal Commission on Opium that for some ten to twelve years since 1863, he used to issue regularly about 40 lbs. of the drug every month to his labour- and this constituted half of his wage bill...'³¹ According to Monirul Hussain, 'however, with the growth of popularity of national movement for freedom under the leadership of Indian National Congress, the colonial policy of opium faced strong opposition from the Congress and the masses.'³² And in 1947, opium was banned under the Assam Opium Prohibition Act, 1947.

During the colonial rule the situation of the pre-colonial aristocracy also worsened. In the pre-colonial period the aristocracy, particularly the Ahoms, enjoyed the hierarchy based on the exploitation of slaves and non-ruling classes.

However, the hold of the clerics of shaktism (saivaite) i.e., the Brahmin priests and the Gossain-Mohanta clerics of vaisnavism, did not decline unlike as in the case of other elite groups of the pre-colonial aristocracy and this was because of the continuing state patronage they used to receive from the colonial rulers. Their privileges over large tracts of land continued and because of their spiritual leadership in a backward society, they could continue with some of their feudal privileges like appropriation of labour of their followers.³³

Therefore, the new middle classes that emerged during last quarter of the 19th century belonged to these Asamiya high castes. 'Only a very few belonged to the Asamiya Muslims and the Ahoms. The vast majority of the other social groups, by and large, failed to enter the emerging middle class in the colonial situation.'³⁴

However, the level of exploitation was always greater on the common peasants. The new rulers imposed new taxes like House tax, the Stamp duty and new Income Tax in 1860. After the policy of expansion of agricultural land, the setting up of tea plantation resulted in mass-migration of peasants from outside Assam, particularly

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 56.

³² Hussain. Monirul, *The Assam movement: A Sociological Study*, p. 72.

³³ *Ibid*, p. 66.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 67.

from Jharkhand. The tea plantations were a huge success. During the last three decades of the nineteenth century, the total area under tea plantations doubled and so did productivity. In the words of Amalendu Guha,

The acreage, actually under tea in the province, increased from a little over 56 thousand acres in 1872 to 338 thousand acres in 1901; and the output of tea, from about 12 million lbs to 134 million lbs during the same period.³⁵

Tea industry also became the reason for the growth of transportation and communication system in the region. Construction of railways started from 1881. Till 1903 the length of the railway lines was pushed up to 715 miles. With such transportation capabilities, thousands of labourers were recruited in remote tribal tracts and sent to Assam. Amalendu Guha points out that 'by 1905-06, the adult labour force in Assam plantations swelled to a total number of 417,262. Of this, only a few thousands were local men.'³⁶

As it happens with any successful capitalist entrepreneurship, the success of tea industry in Assam did not transform the living conditions of its workers. Rather, the conditions of workers deterred to such an extent and in the words of Monirul Hussain:

Though slavery was abolished in 1843 a new form of slavery emerged in tea-estates where tea-labourers were treated like slaves by their planter masters.³⁷

At this point, before going to the post-colonial period, it is important to discuss about the language issue in Assam. This was, among other things that helped the upsurge of the regionalist Assamese sentiments or what Amalendu Guha calls as 'little nationalism' in Assam.

³⁵ Guha. Amalendu, *Planter-Raj to Swaraj: Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam 1826-1947*, p. 34.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 37.

³⁷ Hussain. Monirul, *The Assam movement: A Sociological Study*, p. 74.

The annexation of Assam by the British in 1826, soon brought to the fore the issue of official language that was meant to be used for public administration and other official purposes. Moreover, the Charter Act of 1793,³⁸ through which colonial rulers took upon themselves the responsibility ‘to provide useful knowledge to Indians’ aroused the question of appropriate medium that was to be used in schools. Therefore, in 1937, Bengali was adopted for judicial and administrative purposes in Assam. The lack of enthusiasm on the part of the colonial rulers’ for the expansion of western education in Assamese society, resulting in the immigration of educated Bengalis into Assam. And the reorganization of Assam, after it became the separate province, resulted in the decrease of the numbers of people who spoke Assamiya in proportion to the population are the indicators which explains why the colonial rulers decided to adopt Bengali as the official language. M.S. Prabhakara observes:

Popular opinion in Assam, for long, was that the adoption of Bengali for judicial and administrative purposes in Assam in 1837 was a piece of trickery by the British under the instigation of the Bengalis, who by then had already come to, or had been brought into, Assam...who, it was argued, had not reconciled themselves to the existence and legitimacy of Assamese as an independent and separate language and, consequently, of the Assamese as a separate people.³⁹

The point is that the adoption of Bengali language annoyed the Assamese middle class, particularly of the high castes. Hence, began the Asamiya little nationalism, first on the issue of language and later on as part of other issues like jobs, during the 1850s. However, it was not until independence in 1947 that Asamiya little nationalism became a cudgel for chauvinistic Assamese.

³⁸ The Charter Act was also known as the East India Company Act of 1793. Through this Charter, Parliament of Great Britain renewed the charter issued to the British East India Company to continue its rule in India.

³⁹ Prabhakara. M. S, *Looking Back Into the Future: Identity & Insurgency in Northeast India*, (India: Routledge, 2012) pp. 26-27.

The post-independence period again brought about a geographical transformation after the Assam Sylhet, which was added to the Assam province in 1874, was separated and joined with East Pakistan then and present Bangladesh. It is necessary to stress that when Sylhet was added to Assam province by the colonial rulers, the percentage of the Bengali speaking people rose up to 40 percent of the population. And Asamiya speakers were then reduced to less than 25 percent. Needless to say, the separation of Sylhet resulted in the increase in the Asamiya speakers in post-independence Assam. In fact, in the 1951 Census report, Assamese language was the single largest lingual group in Assam. However, it will be a mistake to consider separation of Sylhet as the only cause for this. As Amalendu Guha points out:

The separation of Sylhet alone would not have sufficed to bring in this change. It was the census figures for Goalpara that tilted the balance. In all the census operations up to 1931, Bengali was returned as the mother tongue of more than 50 per cent of the district's population. This figure came down to less than 18 per cent in 1951 and 12 per cent in 1961. This was mainly because, on political considerations, Bengali Muslims and a section of the sons of the soil who had earlier returned Bengali as their mother tongue declared themselves to be Assamese-speaking.⁴⁰

This brief discussion on Assamese society during the colonial period is meant to highlight how issues that had their roots in the colonial era became the political cudgel in the post-independence period, which manifested in the Nellie massacre in 1983.

After independence, the Asamiya middle class who belonged to the high castes emerged as a new dominant class in the Assamese society. Non-caste groups like the Ahoms and the Koch-Rajbangshis and the tribals, who remained backward during colonial period, failed to assert their position in the post-independent Assamese society. This is not to say that the struggle to establish their own identity and statehood

⁴⁰ Guha. Amalendu, *Planter-Raj to Swaraj: Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam 1826-1947*, p. 333.

did not emerge then. In fact, some tribal groups like the Nagas, the Mizos, the Khasis and the Jaintias, among others got limited autonomy through the 6th Schedule of the Constitution. Later, in 1963, the Naga hill district achieved full statehood, the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hill districts were made into a state (Meghalaya) in 1972 and in the same year the Luchai Hills became a Union territory and soon into the state of Mizoram.

What is important for us to note is that the political separation of hill tribals from Assam was largely guided by their hatred towards the Asamiya ruling class in addition to their identity consciousness which sharpened significantly during the post-colonial period.⁴¹

While demographic transformation of this nature was occurring, no sign of improvement was there in the economic front in post-colonial Assam. Both the agricultural and the industrial sector failed to show any growth. The tea industry remained in the hands of British and non-Assamiya entrepreneurs.⁴²To make the matter worse, the Government of India decided to establish an oil⁴³ refinery in Barauni in Bihar, while both the state government through its resolution of 3rd April 1956 and people at large wanted it to be established in Assam. This resulted in the emergence of the Oil Refinery movement in Assam from 1956-57.⁴⁴

It is significant, at this point, to discuss the political developments in the state to showcase how issues were exploited by the political and ruling classes.

We have discussed, in previous chapters, how grassroots issues were raised by the leaders of the Indian National Congress which resulted in the support from the masses to the cause of the freedom struggle and self-rule which they were leading. It won't be erroneous to say that this support was also accompanied by the higher aspirations and expectations from the idea of self-rule and independence. Though there

⁴¹ Hussain. Monirul, *The Assam movement: A Sociological Study*, p. 94.

⁴² For details, see *Ibid*, pp. 109-121.

⁴³ Oil was first discovered in Assam in 1889.

⁴⁴ For discussion on the history of Oil Refinery Movement of 1956 in Assam see, Baruah. M. Ditee, *The Refinery Movement in Assam*, Economic & Political Weekly, 1st January, 2011 vol xlvi no 1.

were different sets of people facing different forms of exploitation under the colonial rule, almost everyone assumed that the end of colonialism and the beginning of self-rule would bring about a new dawn of prosperity and growth.

However, the post-colonial reality was a different story. In Chapter II, we highlighted how the Indian National Congress (INC), soon after independence, started to cater to the class interests of the emerging bourgeoisie.

Needless to say, the living condition of the Assamese did not change for the better.

The rising expectations of the people generated at the time of collapse of colonial state and of freedom and democracy, gradually started crumbling the end of sixties. The popular expectation of the Asamiyas did not find satisfaction in post-colonial Assam; instead they felt disappointed deceived and alienated.⁴⁵

A decade after independence, in 1957 to be specific, Bimla Prasad Ghalaha from Congress became the Chief Minister of Assam and he held this position till 20th November 1970. Mohendra Mohan Choudhury became the Chief Minister after his resignation on 20th November 1970. A point to be noted is that both of them came from the high castes. At this point, because of internal conflict within the Congress, both in local and national level⁴⁶ and also because the Congress was trying to showcase itself as the party concerned with the upliftment of non-caste Assamese, a new 'coalition within the Congress headed by the backward non-castes emerged.'⁴⁷This attempt received a favorable response and attracted a massive support from the Muslims, the Scheduled Caste, the Scheduled Tribes and the migrant tea garden labourers during the 1972 state assembly elections. The Congress won 95 seats out of 114 seats in 1972 and

⁴⁵ Hussain. Monirul, *The Assam movement: A Sociological Study*, p. 161.

⁴⁶ For more discussion on this, see, Hussain, *Monirul, High Caste to Non-caste Dominance: The Changing Pattern of Leadership of the Congress Party in Assam*, *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 49, No. 3, July - Sept. 1988.

⁴⁷ Hussain. Monirul, *The Assam movement: A Sociological Study*, p. 162.

this was a great win compared to the 74 seats it won in 1967. Since then, the hegemony of high castes in state politics, which began since independence, started to crumble.

The response of the high caste political leadership to this was their support to the 'All Assam Students' Union led language movement in 1972'⁴⁸ This year also witnessed the anti- Bengali movement which was also marked by riots. The interesting point to note is that during this movement, the Bengali Muslims supported the chauvinistic Asamiyas. Another point that needs to be noted is that prior to the 1972 movement, their target was the Marwaris, particularly during mid-1960s. Therefore, the Muslims as the target of chauvinistic Asamiyas was a phenomenon that began after the late 1970s only.

Hiralal Patwari, the Janata Party leader and the then Member of Parliament from Mangoldoi constituency, died on 28 March 1979. The process of revision of electoral rolls had started even before that. Soon thousands of complaints were filed against specific entries in the voter list against names of illegal foreigners in the electoral rolls. This resulted in the escalation of already existing fear psychosis against the *bideshis*. It needs to be pointed out that till then, the Asam Sahitya Sabha (ASS) had already given the meaning of the term '*bideshis*' (foreigners), as the post-1951 immigrants from foreign countries with questionable citizenship status which got wide acceptance.

The slogan of 'sons-of-the-soil' once again spread, capturing the imagination of the Assamese speaking people. Assam was then under the Janata Party government, headed by Golap Chand Borbora. The All Assam Students Union (AASU) took up the issue of 'illegal voters' and gave a call for a statewide *Bandh* on 8 June 1979. This

⁴⁸ Hussain, Monirul, *High Caste to Non-caste Dominance: The Changing Pattern of Leadership of the Congress Party in Assam*, p. 412.

Bandh was a success and AASU, with more enthusiasm, gave a call to boycott the celebration of the Independence Day on 15th August 1979.

Then, AASU in collaboration with other organisations, formed the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) on 27th August 1979. After the collapse of the Borbora government on 9 September 1979, the AAGSP gave a call for a day-long picketing of the government offices across Assam on 15th September 1979. During one such picketing, a functionary of the ASSU -- Khargeswar Talukdar -- lost his life when 'the police tried to disperse the picketers who had gathered to prevent Begum Abida Ahmed, a Congress (I) candidate for the Barpeta constituency, from filing her nominations.'⁴⁹ Jogen Hazarika who had by then become the Chief Minister after the fall of the Borbora government also lost majority support in the assembly and collapsed; after this Assam was brought under Central rule and the assembly kept under suspended animation.

That was when the Election Commission decided to countermand polling in all but two constituencies. Violence broke out again, in the form of clashes between the agitators and the immigrants, across the state, between 5 and 8 January 1980 and Assam was now declared as 'disturbed'. This meant unbridled powers to the police and the paramilitary forces, now deployed in many parts of the state.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, the AASU and the AAGSP continued with picketing, the most pronounced form of their agitation by now, severely affecting the functioning of the government and other institutions like railways, banks and postal services. This compelled Indira Gandhi, who had returned as Prime Minister, in January 1980, after defeating the short-lived Janata Party government at the centre, to address the Assam issue; and she invited the AASU leaders for talks and the first round of talks were held

⁴⁹ Ananth. V. Krishna, *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics* (New Delhi: Dorling Kindersley (India) Pvt. Ltd, 2011) p. 267.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 267.

on 2 February 1980. During the meeting, the AASU leaders presented their charter of demands which read:

- 1) Detection and deportation of foreigners from India;
- 2) Removal of their names from the electoral rolls and tightening of rules to make it impossible for foreigners to get enlisted as voters in future;
- 3) Effective protection of international frontiers;
- 4) Issue of identity cards to all Indian citizens residing in Assam;
- 5) Constitutional provision for 15 to 20 years to protect the identity of the indigenous people of the Northeast;
- 6) Rejection of doubtful citizenship certificate granted by the governments of Tripura and West Bengal; and
- 7) Grant of citizenship certificate only by the Central Government.

‘These demands’ indeed, were ‘quite ordinary’ and ‘all the issues raised were nothing but principles enshrined in the Constitution. AASU, on the face of it, was only demanding that the government implement all that the Constitution guaranteed.’⁵¹

One of the major disagreements between the agitators and the Central government, however, was on the matter of the cut-off date to identify immigrants from Bangladesh as illegal. The AASU, in the beginning, set the date and year of 1st January 1966 as the cut-off date whereas government sought to put it as 25th March 1971.

Albeit all these, as the date 18th March 1983 was approaching, which was declared as polling day by the Election Commission, for elections to the State Assembly, there was another arena of conflict because the AASU had called for a

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 268.

boycott of the elections. The last government lead by K. C. Gogoi was dissolved on 19th March 1982 and according to 44th amendment of the Indian Constitution the maximum period for a state to be placed under Central rule was one year. Therefore, elections for both the assembly and the seats from the State in the 12 Lok Sabha constituencies (which were countermanded in December 1979) were notified, to be held in February 1983. The problem, according to the agitating organisations like AASU, was that these elections were being conducted on the basis of electoral rolls of January 1979, which they were actually protesting against. Hence, they continued their agitation.

In between, the Central government show immaturity by arresting the AASU leaders at the Guwahati airport when they were returning from Delhi after the 22nd round of talks held on 4 and 5 January 1983. In a situation where ASSU had shown the large support it commanded among the people across the state and particularly among the Assamese masses, the Central government's decision to arrest these leaders was indeed an immature act and done without a proper estimation of the movement's momentum. It won't be erroneous to say that it only increased discontent among the Assamese speaking population.

As expected, the agitators stopped candidates from campaigning across Assam and called for a boycott of the election. On 14th February 1983, voters from Nellie village in Nowgong district, majority of whom were Bengali-speaking Muslims, went on to cast their votes despite AASU's call for boycott. One of the main reasons why they were able or had confidence to vote, defying the boycott call, was that the army and paramilitary forces provided security to them on that voting day. However, after the voting day they were just ignored.

On 18th February 1983 the bloodiest manifestation of Assamese chauvinism occurred as violence against the one thousand Bengali-speaking Muslims of Nellie.

Analysis of Press Reportage on Nellie Massacre

In this section we will try to analyse how both the regional and the national newspapers 'behaved' during the Assam movement. For the regional newspaper, content analysis of the reportage from Assam Tribune will be presented. And for national newspapers, Times of India, The Hindustan Times and The Hindu reportage will be analysed.

Biasness

It is a well-known fact that the Assamese high caste/ class owns large sections of the regional press in Assam; among which Assam Tribune is one.⁵² It is not surprising, in this sense, that it completely represented the interest of the agitators of the Assam Movement. In fact, it also actively participated in the process of emotionally surcharging the Assamese sentiments.

Assam Tribune's Strategy

To sustain the momentum of the movement among the people participating in the agitation, particularly when it was compelled to publish reports that might hamper it, Assam Tribune adopted the strategy of overshadowing the discouraging reports with several reports in favour of the movement.

On 7th January 1983, for instance, it reported on the Election commission's announcement of elections for the Assam Assembly which were scheduled to be held on February 14, 17 and 20.⁵³ But on the same day, it also carried the report under the

⁵² For more discussion on this, see, Hussain. Monirul, *The Assam movement: A Sociological Study*, pp. 233-239.

⁵³ Assam Tribune, Assam, Meghalaya Poll on Feb. 14, 17 & 20, 7th January 1983.

headline like *'Assam Polls On Basis of 1979 Rolls Will Be Unconstitutional'*⁵⁴ which was a news report of a representation by Sri Nibaran Bora, former Chairman of the Purbanchaliya Lok Parishad to the Chief Election Commissioner arguing that 'elections would be constitutionally void irrespective of the political aspects of the question of foreigners.'⁵⁵ Similarly, on the same (front) page, it carried the report *Election Commission's Instruction Challenged*⁵⁶ This report was based on the notice of Division Bench of the Gauhati High Court issued to Election Commission of India and others based on a petition filed by a person named Indrajit Barua. The report read: 'The Petitioner in his petition has challenged the legality of the instructions of the Election Commission' which it issued through press note.

Together, with these two reports, (*'Assam Polls On Basis of 1979 Rolls Will Be Unconstitutional'* and *Election Commission's Instruction Challenged*) there were other such reports under the headlines like *Poll Decision- 'A Frontal Challenge' To People of Assam*⁵⁷, *Call To Observe 24-hour Guwahati Bandh From Today*⁵⁸, *Asom Janata Dal Opposed To Impose Election*.

This strategy, in fact, was being played by the paper ever since the movement began in 1979. On 6th December 1979, two candidates filed their nominations for upcoming elections despite the call for boycott of the election by the agitators. As Assam Tribune and movement leaders were keen of showcasing the mass following for the movement drawing support from every section of the Assamese, reporting the fact that only two individuals filed the nominations and putting out their identities was also

⁵⁴ Assam Tribune, *Assam Polls On Basis of 1979 Rolls Will Be Unconstitutional*, 7th January 1983.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Assam Tribune, *Election Commission's Instruction Challenged*, 7th January 1983.

⁵⁷ Assam Tribune, *Poll Decision- 'A Frontal Challenge' To People of Assam*, 7th January 1983.

⁵⁸ Assam Tribune, *Call To Observe 24-hour Guwahati Bandh From Today*, 7th January 1983.

significant. Therefore, it was necessary for the paper to follow up the report with such other news-reports; For instance, the report titled *Nomination filed In Cachar* was followed with another that *State Govt Employees To Boycott Poll Duties* which was based on the report of a meeting where representatives of 35 State government and semi-Government employees' Associations and Unions unanimously decided to boycott the ensuing election work.

Fear Psychosis

The Assam Tribune did its best to create and sustain a sense of fear among the Assamese population. The All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad was formed on 27th August 1979. And the very next day the paper decided to title its headline as *Assam's Danger*⁵⁹ In this report, the paper discussed about the obscure threat to Assamese people and their identity. Without clearing out what this threat is, the editorial stated that one of the factors aggravating this danger or threat 'is the administration, at all levels, because of a continuing political stalemate'. The editorial vividly expresses that the threat is 'to the identity of the people of Assam' which has arisen due to the 'large scale influx of foreign nationals' which is still 'continuing unabated.' These influx of foreign nationals, according to the paper, is a 'common threat'. A brief discussion on the so called 'common threat' is necessary now to point out why the claim 'threat to the identity of the people in Assam' is mere fear psychosis created by the Assamese bourgeoisie and their 'mouthpiece newspapers'.

There is no disagreement on the question of immigration into the Assam of foreign nationals in different historical periods. In fact, the Ahoms, who established their kingdom came to Assam from the regions like Thailand during the early 13th

⁵⁹ Assam Tribune, *Assam's Danger*, 28th August 1979

century.⁶⁰ In this chapter, we already discussed how immigration was encouraged by the colonial rulers in Assam. Yet another fact which cannot be ignored is that the partition of 1946 also resulted in refugees entering into Assam. This has led many to believe that the increase in population in Assam is the result of continuous migration of people into the state. However, according to Amalendu Guha ‘more than four-fifths of the decadal population growth is due to natural growth and only one-fifth due to immigration.’⁶¹ To substantiate the high natural growth in of population in Assam, Guha discusses about the high natural growth of Tribal population in the Brahmaputra Valley which was 41 per cent in the decade 1961-71 as against a 38 percent growth for the Brahmaputra Valley population as a whole.⁶²

In addition, the assumption of ‘threat to the identity of the people in Assam’ seem to have been completely wrong if we look at the growth of the Asamiya linguistic community in comparison to growth of Bengali linguistic community. In 1931, the share of the Asamiya linguistic community in the total population was 23 percent which increased to 55 percent in 1951. Then, in 1961 it reached to 57 percent. In 1971 the total percentage of Asamiya linguistic community was 61 percent.⁶³ Whereas, the share of the Bengali speaking population was 30 percent of the total in 1931 which in fact, decreased to 21 percent in 1951 and remained at 20 percent in 1971. Not to mention that Asamiya was declared as official language of the state in 1961.

⁶⁰ Sanjayya, *Assam: A Crisis of Identity*, (Assam: Spectrum Publication, 1980) pp. 2-3

⁶¹ Guha. Amalendu, *Little Nationalism Turned Chauvinist Assam's Anti-Foreigner Upsurge, 1979-80*, p. 379.

⁶² *Ibid*, p. 379.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 381.

While regional newspapers like the Assam Tribune was biased and highlighted only one side of the issue and sought to present the agitation in a positive light, national newspapers also failed to present all sides of the story.

National Treasure

The Hindu, in the beginning, seemed to be more interested in the crude oil reserves than the movement itself. On 6th January 1980, it carried the report titled *Army Out Near Gauhati*⁶⁴. In the report, the paper conveyed that the ‘army has been called out to assist the civil administration at Betbari, Maidham Basti and Simaluguri areas under Barama police station’. It is interesting to analyse the number of paragraphs in this report and see how many paragraphs were dedicated to which issue. Out of the eight paragraphs, five paragraphs discussed about the petroleum and oil producing region, Digboi, in Upper Assam. It is not to say that the news of the oil town Digboi should not have been added in this report. But, when the newspaper is devoting much space to some other issue (a profile of Digboi in this case) whereas the headline suggests that the news is about the army assisting in the law and order issues, it leaves ample scope for doubting its intentions.

Similarly, on 9th January 1980, the paper carried the report *Shoot-at-Sight Order in Silchar*⁶⁵. Apart from reporting about the deaths due to the clashes between the groups, this report also informed that ‘the State Governmentdeclared almost the entire north bank of Brahmaputra in Kamrup district as a disturbed area for two months.’ The report then informs about the ‘scarcity of essential commodities’ but

⁶⁴ The Hindu, Army Out Near Gauhati, 6th January 1980

⁶⁵ The Hindu, Shoot-at-sight Order in Silchar, 9th January 1980

mentions only petroleum. No information on the scarcity of essential commodities like food products and medicines were concerns of the paper in this regard.

At this point, it is necessary to state that petroleum has been one of the, if not the only, main reasons behind the clashes between the Assamese population and the Central Government since independence. And the Refinery movement of 1956-57 was one of the earliest movements in Assam after independence. In 1965, when government of India decided to build a refinery in Barauni, Bihar, it was considered as an injustice towards the Assamese people because establishment of a refinery in Assam could have meant creation of jobs for Assamese youth; in any case, it was prudent from many other aspects to set up a refinery closer to the crude oil sources, which was Digboi. Since then the issue of petroleum has existed as a point of rupture in the socio-political scenario in Assam. The Hindu could have at least stated this fact while focusing on the petroleum. This would have also helped readers to contextualize the Assamese ‘little nationalism’ and the significance of petroleum in it. However, the reports in The Hindu did not provide any background information on the crude oil reserves in Assam; this, however, figured later on in four out of eight reports which it published in the time span of twenty six months from 14 December 1979 till 19 January 1982.

In fact, the newspaper somehow seemed to speak for the Government for whom the crude oil in Assam was a national treasure and any disturbance in its production, transportation and distribution was a ‘national loss’ as stated by the then Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi: The Hindu reported this prominently under the headline *Stage for Defusing Assam Crisis*⁶⁶ on 3 February 1980.

⁶⁶ The Hindu, Stage for Defusing Assam Crisis, 3 February 1980

Another subject on which the newspapers laid much focus was the political situation. As many events like Assam Assembly getting dissolved and the sequence of events in that realm until the Prime Minister's rejection of the agitator's demand to postpone the Lok Sabha election and Assam State Assembly election, the newspapers like The Times of India, The Hindu and The Hindustan Times were found to have devoted considerable space for reporting them.

However, in the analysis, it was found that these papers, particularly The Hindu was more enthusiastic in supporting the Government's decision to conduct the by-elections for both the Lok Sabha and the Assam State Assembly rather than reporting on the political events that were happening. After the end of the tripartite talks involving Union Ministers, Opposition leaders and functionaries of the All-Assam Students' Union (AASU) and the All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) on 5th January 1983, The Times of India reported under the headline *Govt. warned on poll Assam Talks Collapse*⁶⁷ wherein it said 'the statements issued by both the home minister Mr. P.C. Sethi, and the Assam agitation leaders after the two-hours-long meeting, clearly indicated that the phase of negotiations had come to an end' and 'both sides will now unilaterally decide the course of action to be adopted'. The Times of India, rightly refrained from taking sides in its report of this round of talks and just reported on the event. The Hindu, however, in its report *Assam Talks reach Dead-end*⁶⁸ on 6 January 1983 declared that "if a general election is held in Assam in February or March, no disturbance are likely to occur in a vast majority of the 126 Assembly constituencies;" however, it also added that "the possibility of violence is not ruled out in 20 or 25 places where the AASU and AAGSP have considerable influence".

⁶⁷ The Times of India, *Govt. warned on poll Assam Talks Collapse*, 6th January 1983.

⁶⁸ The Hindu, *Assam Talks reach Dead-end*, 6th January 1983

It was not as if that The Hindu was unaware of the opposition to the elections. In the report *Slogans against Poll*⁶⁹ and *Anti-poll Stir in Assam from Today*⁷⁰ the paper reported the disaffection of the people and the organisations leading the movement.

At this point, it could be said that The Hindu underestimated the warnings of those oppositions and failed to read the writing on the wall. Perhaps, because, it was more confident about the security measures taken by the government. On 17 January 1983 it reported *Assam Government prepares to meet bandh*.⁷¹

In fact, it could be seen, that the paper in its complete reportage until Nellie massacre of 18 February 1983, underestimated the probability of the major violence. In most of the reports before the Nellie massacre, the violent incidents were reported using the term like “sporadic incidents”. These incidents were not reported seriously and were merely added to other reports. In a situation where there was the possibility of violence against any particular community, the media should have cogitate such events of sporadic violence and should have pressured the authorities to provide enhanced security to the people. The paper itself regretted this after the Nellie massacre and stated “The sole task with respect to Assam today is to stop the massacre of innocent children, women and men” in its editorial *Sole task in Assam*⁷² on 22 February 1983.

Realising its mistake in supporting election without considering the nuances of the issue its editorial added “The lesson to be learnt from the major tragedy is that unilateralism, even if it comes in the democratic form of election, does not work and

⁶⁹ The Hindu, *Slogans against Poll*, 7th January 1983.

⁷⁰ The Hindu, *Anti-poll Stir in Assam from Today*, 8th January 1983

⁷¹ The Hindu, *Assam Government prepares to meet bandh*, 17th January 1983

⁷² The Hindu, *Sole task in Assam*, 22nd February 1983

can prove extremely costly if it runs counter to the wishes and feelings (however misguided) of a people.”

All the newspapers that were analysed for this study focused on only few issues like the political developments and based their reports on the statements of the leaders. In the case of the Times of India, there were attempts to present both the sides of the movements without taking any sides; however, it also based its reports on such information that came from the central government and the leaders of the movement. Because of this, it can be argued at this point, that they completely missed on two grounds.

First, they missed the perspectives and the views of those who were considered foreigners and those who were against the movement. Neither a single person who belonged to immigrant community was interviewed nor did their perspective have any space in these papers. In most of the reportage leading organisations like All Assam Students’ Union and All Assam Gana Sangram Parisad were represented.

Secondly, the newspapers were unable to look beyond the events that were happening. The result of this was the inability of these newspapers to unravel the nexus between the Assam movement and the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh). The papers did not try to find out the opportunity that the Sangh Parivar got when the debate over alleged Muslim infiltration was foregrounded in the political discourse, to enhance its influence. They could not analyse how the Bengali Muslim overwhelmed the Bengali Hindus as the ‘enemy’ and ‘foreigners’ in the debate and in the anti- foreigner sentiments of Assamese consciousness.

It is important to note here that the RSS had existed in Assam since 1946 when it established its first Shakha in Guwahati. In the nationwide Satyagraha against the ban

of the RSS, after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, fifty-two RSS activists from Assam participated actively. During the 1950s, after the earthquake of 15 August 1950, it gained much popularity through its enthusiastic relief and other philanthropic works. The first regional camp of the RSS was organised in Nowgoan in 1957. Nowgoan is the same district where the 1983 Nellie massacre happened.⁷³

Discussing about the RSS's presence and its activities in Assam, Shekhar Gupta points out that

thanks to the lack of political pragmatism among the AASU leadership, the RSS elements have been able to operate at a different and more political level, succeeding in solely influencing some of the leaders in mofussil towns. These can be made to play a key role in whatever future scheme of things the RSS has for Assam and Northeast. The AASU leadership, jolted by Muslim revolt within its own ranks, has failed to check this drift and, if it continues, in five years from now (1984) the RSS in Assam will have the clout to do the kind of stuff it has been credited with during February 1983.⁷⁴

It was due to the RSS that the Assamese Muslims, who actively participated in the Assam movement during its initial phase, later turned apprehensive.

Even during the anti-election period in February 1983, Nurul Hussain, the AASU Vice President, an Asamiya Muslim, presided over the AASU and led it in the absence of its regular President Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, who was behind bars at that time.⁷⁵

The involvement of the RSS was not completely masked by the media. Assam Tribune, for instance, carried a report on 6th October 1979 under the headline *RSS Mass Contact Campaign Launched*.⁷⁶ The report was based on a press conference by the Akhil Bharatiya Sharirik head, Sudarshan. The conference was organised to inform the launching of a campaign in Guwahati to gloss over the negative image of the RSS. It is interesting to note that the paper, in the first three paragraphs, informed about what

⁷³ For more discussion on the presence of RSS in Assam see, Bhattacharjee. Malini, *Tracing the Emergence and Consolidation of Hindutva in Assam*, Economic and Political Weekly, 16th April, 2016 vol II no 16, pp. 80-87.

⁷⁴ Gupta. Shekar, *Assam: A Divided Valley*, New Delhi: Vikas Publications, 1984. Cited in *Ibid*.

⁷⁵ Hussain. Monirul, *The Assam movement: A Sociological Study*, p. 217.

⁷⁶ Assam Tribune, RSS Mass Contact Campaign Launched, 6th October 1979.

Sudarshan said, instead of informing about the campaign which was launched. In doing so, the paper emphasised on Sudarshan's comment which stated that the leadership of Pakistan was continuously sending the large number of people to Assam with 'the intention to convert Assam into a Muslim majority State'. This report shows how Assam Tribune keenly wanted to create a fear psychosis among the Assamese population. Apart from this, no report could be found which informed about the role of RSS during the Assam movement.

Press and Blame Displacement after Nellie Incident

More than two decades after the Nellie massacre of 1983, Makiko Kimura visited Nellie and interviewed both the attackers and the survivors of the Nellie incident and the Assam movement leaders. After her study, she found three different narratives on the reason why the Nellie massacre happened. Here are the three narratives in brief.

First was the narrative of the victims who stated that the massacre was the revenge for their participation in the election which was boycotted by All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP). The second narrative was of the attackers who gave the kidnapping of Assamese girls by the immigrants, together with the election and the movement, as a cause for the massacre. It should be noted that the kidnapping of girls by immigrants were never proven but as a rumor it had its impact on the minds of the attackers. The third narrative was of the local movement leaders, according to whom, the confrontation between the local people and the Muslims were due to the land alienation and danger to their cultural identity.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ For more details, see Kimura. Makiko, *The Nellie Massacre of 1983: Agency of Rioters*, (India: Sage Publications, 2013) pp. 119- 132.

We have discussed the immigration process into the Assam from a historical perspective. And the question why the Nellie incident occurred seems difficult to answer. But what we can understand, from our discussion, is that the escalation of fear psychosis among the Assamese population, particularly during the post-colonial period, in one way or another made Assam a fertile land for the occurring of communal violence like Nellie massacre.

As in any other incident of such a nature, the process of blame displacement started after Nellie incident. And it was the decision to conduct the election that became the shared cause of Nellie incident insofar as the media was concerned. The Assam Tribune, on the day after the Nellie incident, carried the report *Attack on Village Near Nellie*⁷⁸ where it reported the Nellie incident was the ‘clash between the opponents and the supporters of the poll’. On the very next day, i.e. on 20th February 1983, it carried a report titled *Over 100 More Killed In Different Places: Curfew At Nellie, Army Deployed*⁷⁹ where the paper again informed that the incident was one of a ‘stray clash between pro and anti-election groups’.

As did the Assam Tribune, all the three national newspapers, The Hindu, The Times of India and The Hindustan Times interpreted the Nellie massacre as a clash between the supporters and opponents of the elections. The Hindu reported the incident under the headline 250 die in Nowgong dt. town: Army called out⁸⁰ The Hindustan Times reported the massacre, under the headline *250 killed as violence flares in Nowgong, Troops moves in to Quell Clashes*.⁸¹ It was not just the headline that seems

⁷⁸ Assam Tribune, Village Near Nellie, 19th February 1983.

⁷⁹ Assam Tribune, Over 100 More Killed In Different Places Curfew At Nellie, Army Deployed, 20th February 1983

⁸⁰ The Hindu, 250 die in Nowgong dt. town: Army called out, 20th February 1983.

⁸¹ The Times of India, 250 killed as violence flares in Nowgong, Troops moves in to Quell Clashes, 20th February 1983.

to be near identical but the content of the reports too. And that is because both the reports were based on the report sent by news agencies United News of India (UNI) and Press Trust of India (PTI). This also explains why these so called national newspapers were unable to analyse the incident and bring out the truth. This is not to say that PTI or UNI cannot bring out the truth or their reports are not authentic. The point here is, the Assam movement and the Nellie massacre was not a small incident. There were violence occurring at different stages of the movement, which in fact these newspapers reported, though without any serious considerations. The point is that these newspapers failed to conduct proper investigation and report every side of the story. Instead, due to lack of commitment towards journalistic norms and ethics, these newspapers were outplayed by the movement's leaders.

For many, the Nellie massacre was a symbol of Indian secularism not reaching the far corners of the Indian nation. The physical distance between the 'center' -- New Delhi -- and the 'periphery' -- Assam -- was also reflected in the reportage of the Assam movement and the Nellie massacre. One can wonder whether the reportage in the newspapers would have been similar if such an incident had occurred in any of the major cities of the country. In the next section, we will be analysing the 1984 anti-Sikh pogrom and its reportage in some major newspapers.

II

Anti-Sikh Pogrom 1984

The anti-Sikh pogrom of 1984 did not occur in any corner of the country but in the very capital of the country that promised secularism and right to life⁸² as a fundamental right to its citizens. It created doubts on the very notion of governance, on the State and its apparatus whose very existence was premised on safeguarding its citizens. Such a premise did not emerge in vacuum. The long history of colonial exploitation and the mass participation in the freedom struggle were the basis of such premises. These premises, after independence, were given a legal form under the Fundamental rights⁸³ guaranteed by the Constitution to all the citizens since the birth of the Republic on 26 January, 1950. Though the term 'secularism' was added in the Preamble in 1976, the idea of secularism was never taken for granted. It was seriously considered by the members of the Constituent Assembly and discussed at length and particularly in the context of relationship between the state and religion and the nature of secularism that needed to be adopted in India.⁸⁴

The anti-Sikh pogrom of 1984, however, shed all these pretensions to secularism and highlighted how even after more than three decades of independence, a community can be targeted and massacred just because of their identity. And how the state and its apparatus, far from protecting them, instigated and participated in such

⁸² Article 21 of the Constitution of India states 'No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.' Basu. D. Durga, *Shorter Constitution of India*, (New Delhi: Wadhwa and Company Law Publishers, 2006) pp. 258- 260.

⁸³ Part III of the Indian Constitution guarantees Fundamental Rights to the Indian citizens. These rights are Right to Equality. Right to Freedom. Right against Exploitation. Right to Freedom of Religion. Cultural and Educational Rights. Right to Constitutional Remedies.

⁸⁴ For details on the discussion on Secularism in Constituent Assembly see, Jha. Shefali, *Secularism in the Constituent Assembly Debates, 1946-1950*, Economic and Political Weekly, 27th July, 2002.

pogroms. It is to be noted that during the Nellie massacre victims were accused of being ‘foreigners’. But in the case of the 1984 pogrom, there was not an iota of confusion on the victims’ nationality. This is not to say that violence against foreigners or for that matter against anyone is of lesser evil than the violence against one’s own countrymen/women. Any such violence against anyone should be condemned not just because of its immorality but also because the democratic principles through which we decided to administer our nation, our society and ourselves, does not allow it. The point that is being made here is that the State which represents its citizens and which is vested with the responsibility of safeguarding them can actually organise the violence against its own citizens, keeping its constitutional duties at bay.

The 1984 pogrom was a prime example of how the political class organised the violence against a particular community when their strategic political moves fail to deliver favorable results and backfires instead. For the purpose of contextualization, we need to look into the history of the Sikh community since the 1920s.

It was during the 1920s that the Gurdwara Reform Movement brought ‘a critical change in the institutional vitality and political organization of the Sikh as a community’,⁸⁵ this change was the foundation of two organisations the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee (SGPC) and the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD).

The Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee Act of 1925 laid the foundation for a Sikh exclusive electoral college to manage the affairs of the Gurdwaras across Punjab and elsewhere in the country. The SGPC leaders are elected by an exclusive electoral college consisting of the Sikh community.⁸⁶

On the other hand, the SAD was the Sikh exclusive political party. Soon after independence, the SAD started to demand for the Sikh majority Punjab Suba under the

⁸⁵ Brass. R. Paul, *The Politics of India Since Independence*, (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2013) p. 193.

⁸⁶ Ananth. V. Krishna, *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*, pp. 270-71.

leadership of Master Tara Singh. The then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, was not in favour of it and the committee which he led, known as the States Reorganisation Committee, also disapproved the idea. It was later, in 1966, under the Prime Ministership of Mrs. Indira Gandhi that the Punjab state was created by taking out the Hindi-speaking districts to Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, in the South and North of present day Punjab.

This did not, however, change the demographic composition of the Punjab very drastically and the Sikhs constituted only 56 percent of the population in the state. During the 1967 state assembly elections, the Akali Dal won 30 seats out of the 108. It formed the government with the support from the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, the left parties and other independent candidates. Justice Gurnam Singh became the new Chief Minister of Punjab. However, due to internal conflicts, he had to leave his leadership on 27th March 1967 to Parkash Singh Badal. Badal's elevation to chief ministership did not resolve the conflicts and the government finally collapsed and Central rule was imposed in August 1968.

During the election of 1969, the Akali Dal again won and Gurnam Singh became the chief minister again and was again replaced by Parkash Singh Badal in March 1970. However, Indira Gandhi dismissed the Badal government and dissolved the assembly. The next election was scheduled in 1972 in which the Congress under the leadership of Indira Gandhi, who by now had an image of national hero after the victory against the Pakistan in 1971 war, won. She picked Giani Zail Singh for the post of chief minister in Punjab.

After coming to power, Giani Zail Singh started to corner the Akali leaders to appropriate the agenda of Sikh identity politics. It is to be noted that the Akalis had

political success with the Sikh identity politics and was even able to politically marginalize the Congress during the 1960s. In this sense, the 1972 election was the major shock for the Akali Dal and they had to come up with a new plan to reestablish their existence in political sphere. Therefore, they in 1973, passed the resolution known as Anandpur Sahib Resolution. The demand in the resolution was the restriction of the Union Government's role to defense, foreign relations, currency and communications and leave all else to the State Government. These demands however, were not pursued with much vigor and soon was forgotten.

The years of 1977 and 1979 were significant. In 1977, the Akali Dal came back to power in Punjab while the Janata Party captured power in the centre. During the 1977 general elections, the Congress lost all the Lok Sabha seats from Punjab to the Akali Dal-Janata combine. In addition, in the state assembly election, held in the same year, the Congress could only manage to occupy 17 seats. One of the main reasons why Akali emerged as powerful political force that could even successfully challenge the mighty Congress was that the Akalis, by this time, were able to settle their internal conflicts and achieved the political stability both in the party, in particular and in the Punjab, in general. Surjit Singh Barnala became the new Chief Minister of Punjab. For the Congress leadership, who were trying to appropriate the agenda of Sikh identity politics, the political stability achieved by the Akalis meant the downfall of the party not just in the elections but also in the minds of the people in Punjab. Therefore, to delegitimize the Akali Dal leadership in Punjab, the Congress started supporting Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale.

Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale was,

A small-time preacher of the Sikh religion, transforming into a militant Sikh leader commanding a band of gun-toting young men who would go about killing anyone and everyone who came in

their way. The fact is that Bhindranwale was assiduously cultivated by Sanjay Gandhi and Zail Singh during 1977-97 and their intentions were clear: To delegitimize the Akali Dal leaders in Punjab.⁸⁷

With support from the Congress (I), Bhindranwale became more powerful. On 13th April 1978, the holy day of Baisakhi, he led his followers into a convention that the Nirankari sect⁸⁸ was holding at Amritsar. He called it a march into the 'enemy camp'. Both the Nirankaris and the fundamentalists co-existed till that day when Bhindranwale led his followers and attacked the Nirankaris which resulted in the death of 13 Sikhs. Soon, a series of clashes were reported between these two Sikh sects. In April 1980, Baba Gurbachan Singh, head of Nirankari sect was shot dead. Bhindranwale was the main suspect for this crime.

The Congress (I) was able to channelise the chaos to its political gains and won the 1980 election in Punjab. It was then that Bhindranwale became a liability for the Congress. As now the Congress was in power, it was necessary to keep him under control. Bhindranwale, unlike what the Congress leadership expected, turned a rogue and killed a politician, Jagat Narain who also owned a chain of news publications, on 9th September 1981. Narain was viewed as a Nirankari sympathiser and also opposed to the idea of Khalistan. At this juncture, it needs to be pointed out that the idea of Khalistan emerged during the 1970s when a person named Jagjit Singh Chauhan raised the demand for Khalistan from London. He also appointed himself as the 'President' of the 'Republic of Khalistan'⁸⁹

The Congress government in the state, under the chief ministership of Darbara Singh, could do nothing and both the Akalis and the Congress (I) government in the

⁸⁷ Ananth. V. Krishna, *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*, p. 272.

⁸⁸ The Nirankaris sect also belonged to Sikh tradition but believed that God was formless (nirankar) and could be realised only through a living Guru. Sikh fundamentalists on the other hand, held that Guru Gobind Singh was the last of the Gurus and the Granth Sahib (the holy book) represented the continuity.

⁸⁹ Ananth. V. Krishna, *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*, p. 272.

centre remained silent on the terror unleashed by Bhindranwale. Such was his appeal among the Sikh community. His appeal among the community also had to do with the actions of the police who were encountering innocent youths.

On 6th November 1982, H. S. Longowal, the leader of the moderate Akalis threatened to demonstrate in New Delhi during Asian Games of 1982 against the killings of innocents by Bhindranwale. Asian Games was Rajiv Gandhi's project; so Indira Gandhi wanted to stop Longowal from doing so. However, she also didn't want to take action against the Bhindranwale. In fact, when he surrendered in the case of Jagat Narain's murder, she ordered his release on 14th October 1981. But the fact also should not be ignored that a plane of the Indian Airlines was hijacked to Lahore after Bhindranwale's arrest to demand his release. Therefore, as all the roads from Punjab to Delhi passed through Haryana, Indira ordered the then Chief Minister of Haryana, Bhajan Lal to stop Longowal's march to the capital.

In the meantime, Bhindranwale, who by now entrenched himself inside the Golden Temple and accumulated a huge cache of arms and ammunitions, continued killing innocents and those leaders who were moderate Akalis, sympathisers of the Nirankaris and opposed to Khalistan. Both the state and the central governments were unconcerned about this; this was evident after the murder of A. S. Atwal, Deputy Inspector General of the Punjab Police. On 23rd April 1983, Atwal was returning after offering prayers at the Golden temple when a bullet fired from inside the temple felled him. It was clearly the job of Bhindranwale or one of his minions. Governments remained silent.

It was only when a bus to Delhi was stopped in Punjab and five passengers, all Hindus, were killed, on 5th October 1983 that Indira Gandhi decided to take action

against Bhindranwale. The Darbara Singh government of her own party was dismissed and the assembly was dissolved. The army and other security forces with the support of tanks and Armoured Personal Vehicles were called to siege the Golden temple. On 6th June 1984, the soldiers and tanks attacked the Akal Takht to shoot down Bhindranwale and his men. The offence was successful but during the battle the Akal Takht was demolished which created outrage among the Sikhs. This offence was known as Operation Bluestar.

The fallout of Operation Bluestar was the assassination of Indira Gandhi, by her own security guards, on 31st October 1984. And the fallout of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination was the massacre, continued for three days, of thousands of innocent and poor Sikhs in Delhi, Kanpur, and Begusarai. Most surprising of all was the fact that the massacre was a pogrom, organised by the state.

The attacks on Sikhs started on the very day after the news of assassination was made public. Initially, Sikhs were taken out of the buses and motorcycles and beaten while pulling off their *pagris*⁹⁰. These incidents were largely unorganized. The real targeting of Sikhs started after a meeting of Congress leaders was held that night. In the words of Jarnail Singh, a journalist, this meeting and its impact was:

Piecing together facts from affidavits and interviews given to the Nanavati Commission, a sequence of events can be arrived at. On the night of 31 October, a meeting of Congress leaders took place in Congress legislator Rampal Saroj's house where instructions were passed that the entire Sikh community had to be taught a lesson. To burn the Sikhs and their houses, sacks of an inflammable 'white powder' were procured from chemical factories and distributed all over Delhi.⁹¹

Let us now look at the media's reportage on these issues and the anti-Sikh violence on November 1984.

⁹⁰ Pagries are the turbans worn by the male Sikhs.

⁹¹ Singh, Jarnail, *I Accuse: The Anti- Sikh Violence of 1984* (India: Penguin Vikings, 2009) p.26.

Analysis of Press Reportage on Anti-Sikh Pogrom

Bhindranwale a 'Sant'?

Almost in all the reports in *The Hindu* and *The Times of India* that mentioned Bhindranwale, his name was prefixed with the term 'Sant'. 'Sant' means a saint in Hinduism and Sikhism. Maybe, Bhindranwale himself wanted to be called a Sant. However, the terror he induced in Punjab was far from the works of a saint. This is not to say that the so-called saints and holy leaders do not participate in violence. Many a times they have been the source of stimulation for violence that were based on religious identities. One needs to wonder what if Bhindranwale was a Muslim clergy and was instigating violence for the secessionist movement in Kashmir. Would he have been called a saint or a militant without any second thoughts?

It was not just about the prefix before the name. *The Times of India* went further, in its report: *Sant driven away by secret route*⁹². The report stated that 'the credit for the peaceful surrender should go to Sikh religious and political leaders present there, particularly, Sant Bhindranwale'. It was only after the Operation Bluestar that the 'Sant' turned into 'the sinister figure.'⁹³

As mentioned earlier, Jagat Narain was murdered on 9th September 1981. Bhindranwale was a prime suspect and an arrest warrant against him was issued soon after; but due to the indifference of the political masters in Punjab and in New Delhi, he was able to travel 'across Punjab for days after the murder'.⁹⁴ The reason why the *Times of India* gave credit to Bhindranwale and other religious and political leaders was to overshadow the fact that the State apparatus failed to bring him to justice by

⁹² *The Times of India*, Sant driven away by secret route, 21st September 1981.

⁹³ *The Hindu*, Crackdown in Punjab, 5th June 1984.

⁹⁴ Ananth. V. Krishna, *India Since Independence: Making Sense of Indian Politics*, p. 273.

arresting him because the political class wanted to protect him. ‘Zail Singh, who had propped him up, was now the Union Home Minister and Darbara Singh, the Congress chief minister of Punjab, could not do anything that Zail Singh did not want.’⁹⁵

These newspapers also self-censored the vital information regarding Bhindranwale and about the nexus between him and the Congress leaders. After all, he was assiduously cultivated by Sanjay Gandhi and Zail Singh during 1977-97.

Through the analysis of the reportage in *The Hindu*, it could be discerned that the paper was in favour of the Congress (I) government in the Centre. The paper, in its editorial of 8th June 1984, under the headline *Breaking terrorism’s back*⁹⁶ argued that the army’s action in the Golden Temple was “forced upon the nation and the Central civil authority by terrorism gone wild”. Not much was said about the roles of Sanjay Gandhi and Zail Singh during the two years between 1977 and 1979 in propping up Sant Bhindranwale to delegitimize the Akali Dal leaders in Punjab. On the same day, the paper carried the report *Phenomenon, even if shortlived*⁹⁷ to inform the readers about the history of Bhindranwale’s life. Nowhere did this article mention about the support provided by Sanjay Gandhi and Zail Singh to him during his initial years.

The paper tried to hide this part of Bhindranwale’s life by merely stating that “worse is that some leaders of an all-India party like the Congress (I) should directly or indirectly have created the impression of building up Sant Bhindranwale, the fanatic exponent of this theory, to serve as a counter to the other Akalis and thus encourage

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 273.

⁹⁶ *The Hindu*, *Breaking Terrorism’s Back*, 8th June 1984

⁹⁷ *The Hindu*, *Phenomenon, even if shortlived*, 8th June 1984

him and his followers but only to find them pursuing a perilous path.” in its editorial *Plainly anti-national*⁹⁸ on 1 October 1981.

The Hindu newspaper viewed (or chose to view) the Punjab crisis as the crisis merely created due to the separatist sentiments among some of the Sikhs. In the editorial *Crackdown in Punjab*⁹⁹ the paper commented that ‘civil society broke down in the strategic border State of Punjab several weeks ago. Armed terrorists, championing or taking the name of Sikh fundamentalism....’ And also in another editorial titled *Plainly anti-national*¹⁰⁰ stated that ‘the immediate need is for all political leaders, to whichever party they belong, to repudiate any talk of a separate homeland for the Sikhs. And more important, the Government should make it clear to all concerned that it will act promptly and firmly against those who indulge in deeds that are plainly anti-national.’ It was indeed a fact that Bhindranwale was a staunch supporter of Khalistan and was violently agitating for it. However, the role of Congress leaders’ influence in his life cannot be ignored.

When a Mighty Tree Falls.....

The assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her own security guards shocked and tormented everyone. In such a situation, newspapers devoting several pages on the life of the departed leader is understandable. Decently, the newspapers like The Hindu, The Times of India and The Indian Express also made sure that the news of violence against the Sikh community, in different parts of the country, did not get overshadowed by the reports that dealt with Indira Gandhi’s life.

⁹⁸ The Hindu, Plainly anti-national, 1st October 1981.

⁹⁹ The Hindu, Crackdown in Punjab, 5th June 1984.

¹⁰⁰ The Hindu, Plainly anti-national, 1st October 1981.

The Times of India, on 2nd November 1984, in its lead story in the front page informed about the violence under the headline *MANY KILLED IN WAVE OF VIOLENCE: Army out in Several Places*¹⁰¹ The Hindu reported the violence against the Sikhs under the headline like *Mob frenzy mars mourning*¹⁰² The Indian Express carried the report *NATION REELS IN AGONY: Delhi, 30 towns curfew-bound violence claims 148 lives* on 2nd November 1984.¹⁰³

However, these newspapers, except The Indian Express, ignored the role of the Congress (I) leaders in these violence. In fact, the reportage of The Indian Express was way more commendable than the reportage of the other two newspapers. On 2nd November 1984, The Indian Express, in its editorial, *Stop The Holocaust*¹⁰⁴ rightly pointed out that ‘Indira Gandhi’s assassins were not representative of any community’ and ‘what started out seemingly as sporadic outbursts of community anger steadily degenerated into a mindless frenzy.’

The paper also carried the report *Secularism Betrayed*,¹⁰⁵ by Sanjay Suri, where it was stated that ‘Mrs. Indira Gandhi was killed by policemen posted to protect her. After her death, thousands were killed because the police chose not to protect them.’ Suri again, on 11th November 1984, in collaboration with Arati R. Jerath, wrote a report *Victims- It’s a planned assault*,¹⁰⁶ like the headline suggested, the report informed how those so called riots were actually planned violence against the Sikh community.

¹⁰¹ The Times of India, *MANY KILLED IN WAVE OF VIOLENCE: Army out in Several Places*, 2nd November 1984.

¹⁰² The Hindu, *Mob frenzy mars mourning*, 3rd November 1984.

¹⁰³ The Indian Express, *NATION REELS IN AGONY: Delhi, 30 towns curfew-bound violence claims 148 lives* on 2nd November 1984, 2nd November 1984.

¹⁰⁴ The Indian Express, *Stop The Holocaust*, 2nd November 1984.

¹⁰⁵ Suri. Sanjay, *The Indian Express, Secularism Betrayed*, 23rd November 1984.

¹⁰⁶ Suri. Sanjay and Jerath R. Arati *The Indian Express, Victims- It’s a planned assault*, 11th November 1984.

Journalist Sanjay Suri and the Indian Express also brought out the role of Congress (I) leaders in those violence. The editorial *Secularism Betrayed*¹⁰⁷ mentioned that ‘another factor that retarded the police was the presence of Congress (I) leaders at many places. One leader was seen controlling a 4,000-strong mob near Gurdwara it had threatened to raid.’

Sanjay Suri, later in 2015, wrote a book¹⁰⁸ based on his experience while reporting the 1984 pogrom. In this book he mentions about the incident of Karol Bagh police station where a Congress MP, Dharam Das Shastri and another senior Congress leader Moti Lal Bakolia, were protesting against the arrests of few individuals accused in looting the Sikhs’ homes. On this Suri asserts:

What finally emerged from Karol Bagh police station was a Congress leader’s ownership of men arrested for loot; what emerged also was the government’s refusal to apply the law after a rare bunch of policemen those day had acted as required by law.¹⁰⁹

The Nanavati commission stated that

The attacks on Sikhs appear to the Commission as organized, an attempt was made to see who were responsible for organizing the same. Some of the affidavits filed before the Commission generally state that the Congress leaders/workers were behind these riots.....The slogans which were raised during the riots also indicate that some of the persons who constituted the mobs were Congress (I) workers or sympathizers.¹¹⁰

Moreover the infamous statement by Rajiv Gandhi on the violence- when a mighty tree falls, the earth shakes- delivered during the election rally at the Boat Club in Delhi on 19th November 1984, highlights not just the disinterest of the people who had responsibility to protect the people but also an encouragement to those who had indulged in killings and looting of the Sikh population and their property. Sanjay Suri holds:

The difference lies between ordering killings and failing to prevent them. How much less is the second kind of guilt than the first? Less, certainly but how much less? On that we will all have

¹⁰⁷ Suri. Sanjay, *The Indian Express*, *Secularism Betrayed*, 23rd November 1984.

¹⁰⁸ Suri. Sanjay, *The Anti-Sikh Violence and After*, HarperCollins Publishers, India, 2015.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Report, Justice Nanavati Commission Of Inquiry (1984 ANTI-SIKH RIOTS), Vol. 1.

our own views. But views cannot be held in disregard of facts that point the way they do. These facts point to a clear responsibility for failing to protect Sikhs, even if they stopped short of any active command to kill. Nothing Rajiv Gandhi said or did can be construed as a command to kill; but so much of what he said, and did, spoke of a passive aggression that encouraged the killings. And this he followed up with decisions that were guaranteed to deny justice later.¹¹¹

However, for the newspapers like *The Hindu*, this was not of any concern. The *Hindu* twisted the context in which Rajiv Gandhi gave his comment. The paper stated:

Mr. Gandhi referred more than once to the forces behind the assassination and their designs. The assassination was not intended to remove just one person but to break India, which however, was not weak as to fall asunder, he said. India had shown to the world that it could not be dismantled by bullets and those forecasting its disintegration after the assassination had proved wrong. "We have shown to the world that the country is more united and powerful" and that it could withstand pressures, he said. There were tremors here for two or three days after the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi but that phase was got over, he said. He compared it to the shaking of the earth whenever a giant tree fell. The best way to perpetuate Mrs. Gandhi was to maintain peace and follow her policies and ideas.¹¹²

In the above paragraph from the report *Country is now more powerful and united: PM* published on 20 November 1984, the readers could assume that the statement of 'big tree and earth shaking' was given by the new Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, in context to the those forces who were trying to break India, rather than in the context of justifying the mob's anti-Sikh violence which was well "organised" and had similar patterns, as reported by the paper on 24 February 1987 under the headline *Mishra panel indicts police for Delhi riots*.¹¹³

Moreover, when the Mishra commission brought out its report, the paper was quick to say that the Mishra Commission, based on its definite findings, could not hold Congress (I) responsible for organising the violence in an editorial *who was responsible for the Delhi riots?*¹¹⁴ on 25 February 1987. Rather, it tried to gloss over the issue by stating that "The Commission was not really surprised that a number of people of the Congress (I) party, at the lower level, were involved in the rioting since they were acting

¹¹¹ Suri. Sanjay, *The Anti-Sikh Violence and After* (India: HarperCollins Publishers, 2015) p.26

¹¹² *The Hindu*, *Country is now more powerful and united: PM*, 20th November 1984

¹¹³ *The Hindu*, *Mishra panel indicts police for Delhi riots*, 24th February 1987.

¹¹⁴ *The Hindu*, *who was responsible for the Delhi riots?* 25th February 1987.

in a vengeful attitude". In this way, the paper actually justified the Congress party-men's action against the innocents Sikhs.

The paper here, abdicated from its democratic responsibility of raising questions against the authority and their wrong deeds. As the Mishra commission made it clear, the police did not even try to control the situation, as reported by the paper under the headline *Police behaviour during riots shabby*¹¹⁵ on 24 February 1987, the paper could have asked why the authorities did not take the necessary measures for the safety of the people. Rather, the paper used its space to acquaint readers about the sanctity of the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and other Congress (I) leaders.

III

The Gujarat Carnage 2002

We have discussed, in Chapter III, about the Ram Janmabhumi Movement and the demolition of the Babri Masjid on 6th December 1992. One of the fall out of the campaign for Ram Janmabhumi temple was the 2002 Gujarat Carnage where thousands of Muslims, mostly women and children, were massacred in a systematic and planned manner. The incident that sparked off the massacre was the burning of sleeper coach S-6 of Sabarmati Express at the Godhra railway station early in the morning on 27 February 2002. The bogey was carrying the Kar Sevaks who were returning from Ayodhya. In this incident, 58 people were burnt alive and killed. There are differences of opinion on what sparked off this gruesome incident.

¹¹⁵ The Hindu, Police behaviour during riots shabby, 24th February 1987.

One narrative, which was also an official narrative, stated that the incident was an act of Islamic terrorism.

It was alleged, to add gravity to the incident, that the burning was planned by Muslim militants and extremists at the instance of the Inter-Services Intelligence of Pakistan (ISI). Thus it was projected as a planned act.¹¹⁶

Another narrative states that the incident was triggered by the Kar Sevaks themselves. 'It started from a place called Dahod, 75 km before Godhra railway station. At about 5.30 to 6.00 a.m. the train reached the Dahod railway station.'¹¹⁷The Kar Sevaks in the train, got into argument with a stall owner and broke down his stall after having tea and snacks. 'The stall owner then filed an N C against the kar sevaks at the local police station about the above incident.'¹¹⁸ Nothing more happened there. But when the train reached the Godhra railway station, the Kar Sevaks continued their mischief. They first had tea and snacks from a stall which was being run by an old man from the minority community.

The kar sevaks, on purpose, argued with this old man and then beat him up and pulled his beard. This was all planned to humiliate the old man since he was from the minority community. These kar sevaks kept repeating the slogan 'Mandir ka nirmaan karo, Babar ki aulad ko bahar karo'. (Start building the Mandir and throw the sons of Babar, i.e. the Muslims, out of the country.)¹¹⁹

The daughter of the old man, aged 16 years, intervened and pleaded with the Kar Sevaks to stop beating her father. The Kar Sevaks then carried the girl inside their compartment. When the train started to move, few vendors jumped inside the train and pulled the emergency chain due to which the train stopped one kilometer away. When more people gathered around the train, pleading the release of the girl, the Kar Sevaks

¹¹⁶ Engineer. Asghar Ali (ed.), *The Gujarat Carnage: The Question of Truth*, (India: Orient Blackswan Private Limited, Kindle Edition).

¹¹⁷ Mohammed. Kalim, 'Truth About the Train Incident', in Engineer. Asghar. Ali (ed.), *The Gujarat Carnage: The Question of Truth*.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

started assaulting them and threatening them with bamboo sticks. And it was then that the ‘crowd started to bring diesel and petrol from trucks and rickshaws standing at the garages at Signal Falia (a place in Godhra) and burnt down the compartment.’¹²⁰

No matter what the reason was, the incident became the pretext for unleashing the wrath of communal violence in the following days, on the Muslim population across the state. The then chief minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi, in an interview¹²¹ with Tribune India stated that ‘the Godhra incident was not communal violence but terrorism.’¹²² This was an official narrative of the incident that became the dominant narrative on the Godhra incident. To understand how this narrative became a dominant narrative and how it led to the massacre of thousands of Muslims, we need to discuss about the communalisation process in the Gujarat.

The communalisation of Indian society, in general, also communalised the Gujarat society in particular during the post-independence period. In addition, the anti-Brahmin or backward caste movement, which challenged the Brahmanical hegemony in other states like Maharashtra did not have any impact in Gujarat. This is because the Hindutva outfits in Gujarat had achieved a measure of success in their attempts to create the unity among the upper and lower caste Hindus. ‘The Bharat Sevashram and Hindu Milan Mandir, outfits of the Hindu Mahasabha, launched in 1920s were more active in Gujarat since 1970s.’¹²³ Apart from undertaking measures to unite the Hindus, the *Sangh Parivar* had also been carrying out welfare and relief measures for the poor. What this meant was that the, ‘upper caste dominance, which is synonymous with the

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ The Tribune (online edition), My govt is being defamed, says Modi, available at <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2002/20020310/main4.htm> (Accessed on 2nd July 2017).

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ Shah. Ghanshyam, *Caste, Hindutva and Hideousness*, Economic and Political weekly, 13th April, 2002, p.1392.

principal sources of social, cultural, and material oppression, has remained largely uncontested in Gujarat.¹²⁴

Together with the lower castes, the *Sangh Parivar* has also been trying to assimilate the tribal population into its Hindutva fold.

Hindutvisation of the adivasis was begun by the Sangh Parivar. This was a planned process. The Sangh Parivar surveyed, selected and targeted villages, planted its men, recruited local people and began its anti-missionary campaigns. They also built their institutions for children. With a view to speedy Hindutvisation they used Advani's 'rathayatra', 'ramshilapujan' and collection of bricks from adivasis for the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya.¹²⁵

The 1969 communal riots in Ahmedabad, where more than six hundred people lost their lives, gave another chance to the *Sangh Parivar* to consolidate its support base. Soon after, the Navnirman movement, launched by Jayaprakash Narayan, also helped the RSS and other Hindutva outfits to build its image and consolidate its position in the political arena of Gujarat. It is to be noted, as discussed in the second chapter of this that till then, the RSS was looking for an opportunity to get out of the social stigma after the assassination of Gandhi. All these culminated in the BJP's victory in the 1993 elections to the state assembly.

Meanwhile, it was also necessary for the *Sangh Parivar* to create an enemy. The Hindutva politics since its inception, has held on to anti-Muslims slogans. Its anti-Muslim rhetoric has been a successful campaign in Gujarat among the tribals too.

Even among dalits, adivasis, and other low status categories constituting the underclass, it is the Muslim who is perceived as the main enemy. Muslims are depicted not only as criminals and exploiters, but also as lustful beasts – ever ready to violate Hindu women.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Chakravarti. Anand, *Doubly Alienated Muslims Some Implications of the Gujarat Carnage*, Economic and Political Weekly, 12th October, 2002, p. 4247.

¹²⁵ For more discussion on this, see, Lobo. Lancy, Adivasis, *Hindutva and Post-Godhra Riots in Gujarat*, Economic and Political Weekly, 20th November, 2002, p. 4845.

¹²⁶ Chakravarti. Anand, *Doubly Alienated Muslims Some Implications of the Gujarat Carnage*.

While discussing about the 2002 Gujarat anti-Muslim carnage, it is also significant to note that Elections were due in Gujarat in March 2003. Asghar Ali Engineer, points out that after the defeat of the BJP in the state assemblies in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, the party's position in Gujarat was also weak due to 'the scandals during the Gujarat earthquake of 26 January 2001, and the collapse of buildings constructed by contractors close to the BJP ministers and their relatives'¹²⁷ In such a situation, he stresses:

The only trick up the sleeve of the BJP was the polarisation of Hindus and Muslims, and thus the consolidation of Hindutva forces. And the easiest way to do it was to organise communal riots. All indications suggest that the carnage was well planned and executed with finesse. The organisers were waiting only for a spark, and the spark was provided by the burning of sleeper coach S-6 at Godhra early in the morning on 27 February 2002.¹²⁸

Let us now look at the way the media reported on the 2002 carnage from the point of this larger context.

Media Reportage of the 2002 Gujarat Carnage

This section will analyse the reportage of the 2002 Gujarat Carnage. The difference between the analysis of the media reportage of this incident from the other two incidents namely Nellie Massacre and 1984 anti-Sikh riot, dealt with in this chapter, will be the entry of television in the media scene and hence reportage in TV channels too will be analysed in this. The 2002 Gujarat carnage was extensively covered by the television news channels. In fact, the Gujarat communal violence of 2002 was 'the first riot in the full glare of 24-hour news channels.'¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Engineer. Asghar. Ali, *The Gujarat Carnage: The Question of Truth*.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Sardesai. Rajdeep, Drawing the Ram-rekha, Seminar, Vol 533, January 2004 <http://www.india-seminar.com/2004/533/533%20rajdeep%20sardesai.htm> (Accessed on 1st August 2017).

Television Reportage

The Hindi news channel, Aaj Tak, telecast the report titled *Gujarat: Khooni Dastan*¹³⁰ (Gujarat: Blood soaked story) on 2nd March 2002. The report started with informing the viewers that there were different narratives of the burning of the Sabarmati Express which led to the communal violence in Gujarat. The callous attitude of the State's security personnel was also brought out when the report informed that on the day (27 February 2002) the mob attacked the Sabarmati Express, there were about 30 security personal posted in and around the Godhra railway station but only three of them, that too not in their uniforms, were seen in the spot while the coach was being burnt.

The report, without naming the attackers and the victims of the violence,¹³¹ stated that the attacks were well organised and planned. Though a direct connection was not made between the VHP and the violence, the report gave special stress to the VHP's procession and informed that it was after the VHP's procession that started the the targeting of business establishments of a particular community (Muslims) began.

In between, the report also carried the footage of a press conference by the then Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, where the C.M stated that only 10 percent of the total area of Gujarat was under the wrath of communal violence, while the other 90 percent were completely peaceful. And his government was successful in mitigating the violence, which according to him, were mere revenge for the Godhra incident. The report raised questions against his claims as to how could thousands of individuals be

¹³⁰ Aaj Tak, Gujarat: Khooni Dastan, 2nd March 2002, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tp7m9oXmorA&t=217s> (Accessed on 1st August 2017).

¹³¹ Aaj Tak during Gujarat Carnage adopted the policy of not naming the community of the victims and avoided using the terms like 'majority' and 'minority'. See, Mehta. Nalin, *India On television*, (New Delhi: HarperCollins Publishers India, 2008) pp. 282-283.

mobilised in same time and at the same place to form a mob which created chaos in the state and why the State did not take appropriate measures to mitigate the violence.

Similarly, the Star TV broadcast the programme *Reality Bites- The fires of Godhra*¹³² in March 2002. The report was based on the situation on the Vadodara-Godhra Highway. It specifically gave emphasis on the impact of violence on the poor. Among them, was a man called Ramesh. He was a barber and was running a small hairdressing saloon on the highway since last 10 months, during which he said he never had any issues with his fellow Muslim friends and neighbors. His saloon was vandalised and looted. The incident points to the fact that the mob was not creating chaos and killing innocent as the revenge of Sabarmati train incident. If it was so then Ramesh's salon would not have been vandalised and looted because he was not a Muslim.

However, it also does not mean that the mob was uncontrollable. The attacks, as informed by the report, were largely targeted upon factories owned by the members of the minority community.¹³³

These were the two instances, among others, where private news channels proved capable of unbiased and truthful reporting of the 2002 Gujarat violence. As it mostly happens, in situations where the media presents the true picture of the events, that may harm the image of the authorities, 'the state government sought to ban the Star News channel because the Modi government claimed that the channel was guilty of 'incitement''¹³⁴ Targeting of the media for its honest reporting during the 2002 Gujarat

¹³² Star Tv, Reality Bites, March 2002, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHEvCD7C0d4&t=78s> (Accessed on 9th June 2017).

¹³³ It should be pointed out here that Star TV unlike Aaj Tak made a conscious editorial decision to identify the victimised community. See, Mehta. Nalin, *India On television*, (New Delhi: HarperCollins Publishers India, 2008) pp. 282-283.

¹³⁴ Sardesai. Rajdeep, Drawing the Ram-rekha, Seminar, Vol 533, January 2004 <http://www.india-seminar.com/2004/533/533%20rajdeep%20sardesai.htm>, (Accessed on 1st August 2017).

violence by the government will be discussed later in this section. Before that, let us see how the print media reported the carnage across the state.

Newspaper Reportage

The burning of the sleeper coach S-6 of Sabarmati Express at the Godhra railway station on 27 February 2002, where 58 persons died was a shameful act, no matter what provocative slogans were made or what events occurred before it that could have instigated such actions by the mob. The killings of many cannot be justified by the actions of a few individuals. However, it is also important to note that viewing this inhumane incident in isolation cannot give us the clear picture. This is because of the two facts; first the target of this incident was the S-6 coach of the train which was boarded by the Kar Sevaks, and secondly, this incident led to larger communal violence. As mentioned earlier, the Sabarmati Express incident was one of the fall out of the campaign for the Ram Janmabhumi temple led by VHP. It needs to be clarified, at this stage, that the incident of 27 February 2002 in Godhra railway station is not being argued here as the revenge for the Ram Janmabhumi movement or demolition of the Babri Masjid. The attempt here is not to create a direct connection between the two. Rather, the intention here is to point towards the fact that the process of communalisation of the Indian society, which reached to a peak during Ram Janmabhumi movement, had its impact on the events that occurred in Gujarat on 27th February 2002 and the days of killings and arson that followed.

The Telegraph realised this fact and reported the incident in the larger context of the Ram Janmabhumi issue. It carried a report *Nation Faces Trial By Fire*¹³⁵ on 28th February 2002. The lead paragraph of the report stressed this:

Ayodhya returned to haunt the nation through a grisly tragedy in which 58 passengers were charred to death when a mob torched a train carrying kar sevaks in Gujarat this morning.¹³⁶

The report, while informing that the incident might have occurred due to the “provocative slogans” did not skirt from mentioning that the kar sevaks were ‘returning from Ayodhya, where the Vishwa Hindu Parishad activists are gathering in thousands to build the Ram temple.’¹³⁷ Interestingly, the report also argued that ‘Ayodhya was sitting on a powder keg, as the two sides in the temple dispute traded ominous warnings.’¹³⁸

Whereas, The Hindu kept it simple and merely reported the incident matter of fact, under the headline *57 killed as mob torches train in Gujarat*¹³⁹ on 28th February 2002. But in the editorial titled *Deadly Spiral*¹⁴⁰ the paper went on to hold:

One cannot but pinpoint the harsh reality that events such as the horror of Godhra were tragically predictable as a result of the wounding and aggressive communal campaign of the VHP.¹⁴¹

The Times of India, however, decided to speak from the side of the ABVP-BJP-VHP trio. On 28th February 2002, it carried five reports under the headlines *ABVP decries attack on train*¹⁴², *Arrest culprits in 24 hrs*, *VHP tells govt*¹⁴³, *BJP condemns*

¹³⁵ Rawat. Basant, The Telegraph, *Nation Faces Trial By Fire*, 28th February 2002.

¹³⁶ Ibid, Rawat. Basant, The Telegraph, *Nation Faces Trial By Fire*, 28th February 2002.

¹³⁷ Ibid, Rawat. Basant, The Telegraph, *Nation Faces Trial By Fire*, 28th February 2002.

¹³⁸ Ibid, Rawat. Basant, The Telegraph, *Nation Faces Trial By Fire*, 28th February 2002.

¹³⁹ Dasgupta. Manas, *57 killed as mob torches train in Gujarat*, 28th February 2002.

¹⁴⁰ The Hindu, *Deadly Spiral*, 1st March 2002.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, The Hindu, *Deadly Spiral*, 1st March 2002.

¹⁴² Times of India, *ABVP decries attack on train*, 28th February 2002.

¹⁴³ Times of India, *Arrest culprits in 24 hrs*, 28th February 2002.

*arson on Gujarat train*¹⁴⁴, *VHP activists mob Modi at Godhra*¹⁴⁵, *VHP to put armed activists at stations*¹⁴⁶.

The report, *ABVP decries attack on train*, was based on the press release issued by the ABVP, Andhra Pradesh unit where it condemned the Godhra incident. The report, *Arrest culprits in 24 hrs, VHP tells govt*, stated that the VHP ‘has described the Godhra incident as a ‘manifestation of Islamic fundamentalism’ and has given a 24-hour ultimatum to the state government to bring the culprits involved in the incident to book.’¹⁴⁷The paper did not question how the VHP was able to come to the conclusion that the incident was ‘manifestation of Islamic fundamentalism’, even while the official investigation had not even started. In fact, for any sensible person, it was clear that calling the incident as ‘manifestation of Islamic fundamentalism’ was actually an act of instigation for communal violence against the Muslim population. It was not difficult,, even at that point to realise that such ultimatums and statements could result in violence against a particular community, which it did eventually. Therefore, the way The Times of India reported the incident of February 27 in its edition on 28th February 2002 was irresponsible.

Moreover, in the report, *VHP to put armed activists at stations*, the paper informed that ‘the kashi prant unit of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad has decided to deploy armed bajrang dal volunteers at the railway stations where the karsevaks are expected to arrive.’¹⁴⁸It is to be noted that the State has its own police and para-military forces through which it has to maintain the rule of law and provide safety and security to its

¹⁴⁴ The Times of India, BJP condemns arson on Gujarat train, 28th February 2002.

¹⁴⁵ The Times of India, VHP activists mob Modi at Godhra, 28th February 2002.

¹⁴⁶ The Times of India, VHP to put armed activists at stations, 28th February 2002.

¹⁴⁷ Times of India, Arrest culprits in 24 hrs, 28th February 2002.

¹⁴⁸ The Times of India, VHP to put armed activists at stations, 28th February 2002. Op. Cit

citizens. Safeguarding the Indian citizen is in fact, the constitutional responsibility of the Indian State under the Article 21 of the Constitution.¹⁴⁹ And groups like VHP (or anyone else), arming its members, is actually constitutionally illegal according to Article 19 (1) (b). Article 19 (1) (b) provides Indian citizens right ‘to assembly’ but ‘peaceably’ and ‘without arms’.

It is appropriate, at this stage, to refer the Supreme Court’s judgment on *Nandini Sundar & Others versus State of Chattisgarh*. Dr, Nandini Sundar, a Professor of Sociology at Delhi School of Economics, along with others filed a writ petition. The petitioners ‘alleged that the State of Chattisgarh was actively promoting the activities of a group called “Salwa Judum”, which was in fact an armed civilian vigilante group, thereby further exacerbating the ongoing struggle, and was leading to further widespread violation of human rights’¹⁵⁰ The Salwa Judum, meaning ‘Peace March,’ was an armed vigilante group created by the Central and the Chhattisgarh government for anti-insurgency operations in Chhattisgarh. It mostly comprised of youth from the tribal communities. In its judgment, the Supreme Court held Salwa Judum as both illegal and unconstitutional. The judgment stated that the existence of Salwa Judum violates Article 14 of the Constitution of India because

subjecting such youngsters to the same levels of dangers as members of the regular force who have better educational backgrounds, receive better training, and because of better educational backgrounds possess a better capacity to benefit from training that is appropriate for the duties to be performed in counter insurgency activities, would be to treat unequal as equals. Moreover, in as much as such youngsters, with such low educational qualifications and the consequent scholastic inabilities to benefit from appropriate training, can also not be expected to be effective in engaging in counter-insurgency activities, the policy of employing such youngsters as SPOs engaged in counter-insurgency activities is irrational, arbitrary and capricious.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Article 21 of the constitution of India states that ‘Protection of life and personal liberty No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law’, See, Basu. D. Durga, *Shorter Constitution of India*, p .258.

¹⁵⁰ Writ Petition (Civil) No. 250 of 2007. Available at Human Rights Law Network <http://www.hrln.org/hrln/defend-the-defenders/pils-a-cases/1511-a-landmark-judgment-in-salwa-judum-case.html> (Accessed on 20th August 2017).

¹⁵¹ Writ Petition (Civil) No. 250 of 2007.

The court further held that it also violates Article 21 of the Constitution of India because,

notwithstanding the claimed volition on the part of these youngsters to appointment as SPOs engaged in counter-insurgency activities, youngsters with such low educational qualifications cannot be expected to understand the dangers that they are likely to face, the skills needed to face such dangers, and the requirements of the necessary judgment while discharging such responsibilities. Further, because of their low levels of educational achievements, they will also not be in a position to benefit from an appropriately designed training program that is commensurate with the kinds of duties, liabilities, disciplinary code and dangers that they face, to their lives and health. Consequently, appointing such youngsters as SPOs with duties, that would involve any counter-insurgency activities against the Maoists, even if it were claimed that they have been put through rigorous training, would be to endanger their lives.¹⁵²

In this sense, The Times of India should have actually criticised the VHP's decision to send its armed Bajrang Dal volunteers to stand vigil at the railway stations. However, because this newspaper was more interested on reporting what ABVP-BJP-VHP trio had to say than reporting on the Godhra incident, it just ignored these aspects of the law and ethics in journalism.

Prime Suspect?

On 1st March 2002, the Chief Minister of Gujarat Narendra Modi declared the Godhra train attack as "a pre-meditated act" in the state legislative assembly. The Times of India reported this in the report *Judicial probe ordered: Modi*.¹⁵³ As the chief minister pronounced his verdict on the nature of the Godhra incident, even before the official investigation had begun,

The stringent anti-terror law POTA was invoked and the Godhra case morphed into an act of terrorism. But since mob fury could not pass muster as terrorism without introducing the element of conspiracy, six days after POTA was invoked, on 9 March, the police invoked section 120(b) of the Indian Penal Code, which pertains to criminal conspiracy.¹⁵⁴

Soon, arrest of leaders belonging to the Muslim community began on charges of terrorism. Among them was Mohammad Hussain Kolota and Maulvi Umarji. Both

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Times of India, *Judicial probe ordered: Modi*, 1st March 2002.

¹⁵⁴ Khetan. Ashish, *Tehelka*, *The Godhra Verdict: Burn After Reading*, 5th March 2011 http://archive.tehelka.com/story_main48.asp?filename=Ne050311CoverStory.asp (Accessed on 20th August 2017).

were accused as ‘main conspirators’ in the incident at the Godhra railway station. In reality, their arrests, particularly of Kalota, was a political vendetta. ‘Umarji was one of the most respected Muslim clerics in Godhra. Kalota was the chief political opponent of the BJP in the communally sensitive town and was president of the Godhra Municipal Council at the time of his arrest.’¹⁵⁵ Their innocence was later realised and both of them were acquitted by the special court.¹⁵⁶

The reason behind discussing their arrests is the fact that political vendetta is not an unknown phenomenon in Indian politics. Plus, during the time of a gruesome incident like the Godhra incident, the possibility of innocent individuals being apprehended by the police force, on trumped up charges, is also not an unknown phenomenon, particularly when the police fails to apprehend the real conspirators. It is true that legally only the courts can pronounce the accused as guilty or innocent. However, in such a situation, trumped up charges and political vendetta were possible, the role of media, is to highlight all sides of the story.

The Telegraph did a commendable job on this. In its report, *Shadow of Politics on Gujarat Arrest*¹⁵⁷ the paper highlighted the fact that Mohammad Hussain Kalota had been an leader whom the BJP had to reckon with in Godhra and had, in fact, won the municipal president’s post. The report argued:

Allegations of political witch-hunt muddled the investigation into the Godhra carnage as it emerged that the arrested prime suspect had toppled the BJP’s nominee to snatch the municipal president’s post.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, Khetan. Ashish, Tehelka, The Godhra Verdict: Burn After Reading, 5th March 2011 http://archive.tehelka.com/story_main48.asp?filename=Ne050311CoverStory.asp (Accessed on 20th August 2017).

¹⁵⁶ The Hindu, It was a pre-planned conspiracy, says special court, 10th October 2016, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/31-convicted-63-acquitted-in-Godhra-train-case/article15455766.ece> (Accessed on 20th August 2017).

¹⁵⁷ Rawat. Basant, The Telegraph, Shadow of Politics on Gujarat Arrest, 5th March 2002.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

The Hindu, in its report, *Prime suspect in Godhra carnage held*¹⁵⁹ did not bring out the political rivalry between the Mohammad Hussain Kolota and the BJP but informed that he was a 'local Congress leader and president of the Godhra municipality.'¹⁶⁰

Apart from these few instances during the coverage of Godhra incident, the coverage of 2002 communal violence in Gujarat in the newspapers was commendable.

Newspapers were bold enough to criticise the State and its apparatus for failing in its responsibility of safeguarding its citizens. The Telegraph argued:

There is nothing more hideous than hatred in action. But before that action there was a build-up towards exactly this kind of an outcome, and a country full of people — the man on the street or in his house, the state and Central governments, the bureaucracy, the police — sat back and let the passions grow.¹⁶¹

In its editorial, *Price of Folly*¹⁶² the paper specifically criticised the Gujarat government for its inaction. The editorial stated:

The communal riots were a disaster waiting to happen once the train carrying *kar sevaks* was burnt down at the Godhra railway station. But Mr Modi took no pre-emptive action. He allowed Ahmedabad to burn for 48 hours before a reluctant police force was galvanized into action. The word reluctant is used advisedly because it was clear from the pictures and reports that came in that the police were in many cases mere bystanders while the crowds went on a rampage against Muslims.¹⁶³

Similarly, The Indian Express, in its editorial, *Stop this madness*¹⁶⁴ was unambiguous that the Modi Government

Failed miserably in handling the situation leading to the incineration of 58 'Ram sevaks' at Godhra and the events following the gruesome incident. It is as clear as daylight that the mob of 2,000 or so that attacked the Sabarmati Express had assembled there with clear intentions to kill. Had the government acted on just common sense and prevented the marauders from assembling at the station, the mass murder could have been averted.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹ The Hindu, Prime suspect in Godhra carnage held, 4th March 2002.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ The Telegraph, Hatred in Action, 3rd March 2002.

¹⁶² The Telegraph, The Price of Folly, 5th March 2002.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ The Indian Express, Stop this madness, 2nd March 2002.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

In conclusion, if we compare the media reportage of the three incidents, namely the 1983 Nellie massacre, the 1984 anti-Sikh Riots and the 2002 Gujarat carnage, we can see that the reportage of the Gujarat violence has been more appropriate. In the incidents of 1983 and 1984, newspapers by and large, refused to criticise and apportion any responsibility towards the governments. Rather than investigating and finding out the reality and facts, newspapers focused on the statements and activities of the powerful few individuals.

This, however, changed when it came to the reporting of the 2002 Gujarat violence. Acts of both Atal Bihari Vajpayee government in the centre and the Narendra Modi government in the Gujarat were scrutinized and criticised. This also substantiates the argument espoused in the last Chapter (Chapter III) that the media or press does not subscribe to the Hindutva ideology per se.

Unlike, during Nellie incident, the newspapers tried to bring out the different narratives that circulated about the cause of Godhra incident. The chief minister, even before the official investigation started, declared the incident as a terrorist attack which was 'pre-meditated' but the newspapers did not give much credence to it, albeit they reported on it.

Thereafter, the then chief minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi later emerged as the Prime Ministerial face of the BJP in the 2014 general election and steered his party to a historic victory. The next Chapter will analyse the role of the press during the 2014 general elections in India and analyse how Modi and his party, the BJP who were criticised during 2002 Gujarat violence, were treated by the media only 12 years later.

CHAPTER V

Parliamentary Elections and the Media: The Role of Media in the 2014 General Election in India

Any study on the role of the media during the elections has to essentially deal with the question as to whether the media contributed towards the victory of a certain political party or in the making of a leader during elections. From the concerns of this chapter, the question then would be, as to whether the media contributed in any way to the victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the 2014 Parliamentary Elections? This question is significant from the concerns of this thesis too; not just because the BJP is the political wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) but also from the fact of the matter of Narendra Modi having been projected as the Prime Ministerial candidate by the BJP. In the previous chapter (Chapter IV) we saw how the media (particularly the English language media), scrutinized and criticised the actions and the inactions of the state government in Gujarat which was led by him during the 2002 Gujarat pogrom. Having said this, it should also be clarified, right at the outset that the idea here is not to consider Modi as a distinct or a different leader vis-a-vis other BJP leaders. All the BJP's leaders, particularly the prominent ones, subscribe to the ideology of Hindutva and the lens through which they see India as a nation is the same. Yet, the fact of Modi being presented officially by the party as its Prime ministerial candidate and more importantly the fact that this helped the party realise its mission of winning a simple majority in Parliament on its own and that Modi became the 14th PM of India in May 2014, makes it necessary to analyse how the media reported the 2014 parliamentary elections.

For this purpose, the content analysis of the media reports during the 2014 election campaign from five English language newspapers -- Times of India, The Hindustan Times, The Hindu, The Telegraph and Indian Express -- will be done. The first section of this chapter will discuss the debacle of the Congress party. The second section will discuss the resurgence of the BJP and try to record its reasons. And the third section will attempt to find out the answer to the question as to whether the media in India contributed towards the victory of Narendra Modi and his party, the BJP?

I

The Congress's Debacle

One of the main reasons why the 2014 parliamentary elections will be the matter of discussion in both the academic and the non-academic spheres is the magnitude of the loss suffered by the Indian National Congress (INC); the party 'whose history is integral to India's founding narrative'¹ ended up with the lowest number in the Lok Sabha in its own history and in that sense the defeat it suffered in 2014 is unlike those it suffered earlier in March 1977, November 1989, May 1996, September 1998 and September 1999. Until as it happened in May 2014, the Congress, had never before, been reduced to mere forty-four seats out of 543 in the Lower house of Parliament. This was a sharp decline from the 206 seats which it secured in the 2009 elections. In vote percentage too, the party could manage to poll only 19.3 percent and this was an unprecedented low in its own history. The decline, approximately was by 9 percentage points when compared with the 28.6 percent of vote share the Congress polled in the 2009 elections.

¹ Hasan. Zoya, 'Collapse of the Congress', in Desai. Meghnad et al., *Making Sense of Modi's India*, (India: HarperCollins Publishers India, 2016) p-139.

So, it will be relevant, from the larger concerns of this thesis, to see as to what were the reasons behind the party, which once had ‘a formidable organisation that ran an effective political machine’² and which governed the country for a decade before 2014, losing the 2014 elections in such a magnitude?

Looking at the historical trajectory of the INC since independence, some scholars argue that the magnitude of its defeat in 2014 has to be seen not merely as a flash in the pan or an isolated event and hence trace its genealogy in the post-emergency period. In Chapter II, we have discussed about this period and brought out how the hegemony of the Congress started to fade out. Suhas Palshikar refers this period as the beginning of the post-Congress polity and argues:

The 1977 defeat itself marked the sharp decline in the ability of the party to continue its hegemonic hold over the polity. The two defeats of 1977 and 1989 brought about structural changes in the arena of competitive politics in India.³

Zoya Hasan, meanwhile, explains as to why, since the 1970s, did the INC lose its *hegemonic hold over the polity*. She contends:

This was mainly because Indira Gandhi, who had very little use for the institutional structure of the party, made systematic efforts to change it into a centralized and family-centred political organization. From then on no attention was given to the reorganization and regeneration of the Congress.⁴

While these two perceptive analysis explain the long-term dynamics that led to the Congress party’s decline or its weakening, to locate the immediate causes or the factors that caused it in the short term, we need to look into the ten years of governance of the Congress from 2004 to 2014. The Congress wrested power from the BJP-led coalition in 2004 and this it did with support from an array of political parties, forming

² *Ibid*, p- 140.

³ Palshikar. Suhas, ‘Understanding Congress’s Debacle’, Palshikar. Suhas et al., (ed.), *Electoral Politics in India: The Resurgence of the Bharatiya Janata Party*, (New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition, 2017)

⁴ Hasan. Zoya, ‘Collapse of the Congress’, p- 140.

the United Progressive Alliance⁵ (presently known as UPA-1); the formation of a Congress-led coalition, by itself, was unprecedented and far from the Congress party's stand, hitherto, against coalitions that were predominantly the strategy of the non-Congress opposition. This strategy worked in favour of the Congress once again in 2009 (the UPA-2) and the Congress strength in the Lok Sabha increased by 68 seats; compared with 141 seats it secured in the year 2004 as part of the UPA 1, the Congress party alone won 209 seats in the lower house in 2009. It could be argued that the policies it implemented during its first tenure (2004 to 2009) was well received by the citizens.

The period between 2004 and 2009 was the period of economic growth. The Real Gross Domestic Product (real GDP) during the BJP led National Democratic Alliance (NDA), which was in power between 1998 and 2004, was around 6 percent and this increased to 8 percent during the first term of the UPA.⁶ This trend continued for most parts of the UPA 2 also despite the setting in of the global economic slowdown since 2006. In fact, except the last two years of UPA-2, i.e. 2012-13 and 2013-14, the economy grew faster. 'Industry grew at 7.7 per cent, up from 5.4% under NDA. The service sector growth increased from 7.8 per cent to 9.5 per cent, while agriculture grew at 3.3 per cent, which was higher than the 2.9 per cent registered under the NDA.'⁷

With the economy in steady growth-mode, the UPA-1, also implemented such social welfare schemes like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment

⁵ Members of this coalition were Indian National Congress, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Indian Union Muslim League, Kerala Congress (M), Revolutionary Socialist Party, Communist Marxist Party, Kerala Congress (Jacob), Peace Party of India, Rashtriya Lok Dal and Mahan Dal

⁶ For more details on the economic growth during the period under UPA see, Ghatak. Maitreesh, Ghosh. Parikshit, Kotwal. Ashok, *Growth in the time of UPA: Myths and Reality*, Economic and Political Weekly, 19th April 2014, pp. 34 -43.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 36.

Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)⁸, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)⁹, Right to Education¹⁰, National Rural Health Mission, etc., during the early years of its rule itself.¹¹

The corollary of the amalgamation of economic growth and social welfare schemes was that ‘poverty declined two-and-a-half times faster than under the NDA-far faster than at any time in India's history.’¹²

However, once the UPA came back to power in 2009, it started showing a lukewarm attitude (or even a contempt) towards the social welfare schemes. ‘Strong attempts were made by the government to limit the scope of MGNREGA wages which were still not paid.’¹³

Also, one or the other members’ name in the coalition cabinet, began to pop up in different corruption scandals or scams; like in 2008, the 2G spectrum scam where former telecom minister Andimuthu Raja’s name, among others, came up as the main accused and Raja was even jailed. He was from Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, one of the prominent partners in the UPA since its formation in 2004. In 2012, the UPA government came under the scanner for irregularities in auctioning 194 coal blocks and

⁸ Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was initially implemented in the year 2005 under the name National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and subsequently named Mahatma Gandhi NREGA, to secure the livelihood of people in rural areas by guaranteeing hundred days of wage-employment in a financial year for a family as a statutory guarantee.

⁹ Under the Right to Education Act of 2009, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) aims to escalate the education by opening of new schools and providing facilities like textbooks, clean drinking water and toilets in schools, periodic teacher training and academic resource supports.

¹⁰ Right to Education Act or The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act was implemented in the year 2009 with the aim to provide compulsory education to the children between the age 6 and 14 under the Article 21 (a) of Constitution of India.

¹¹ National Rural Health Mission was launched in 2005 to provide accessible, affordable and quality health care to the people in the rural areas.

¹² Sharma. S. Mihir, Farewell, a golden age, Business Standard, 11th May 2014 http://www.business-standard.com/article/opinion/mihir-s-sharma-farewell-a-golden-age-114051100745_1.html (Accessed on 1st October 2017).

¹³ Zoya, ‘Collapse of the Congress’, p- 143.

causing a loss of Rs. 1. 86 lakh crores, albeit notional, to the national exchequer. There were nine such major corruption scams during the UPA government.¹⁴

In the meantime, the anti-corruption movement led by Anna Hazare brought these corruption and scams into the public discourse in a big way. We have dealt with and discussed this anti-corruption movement and the media reportage on it earlier in this thesis (in Chapter I). The role of the media in rendering to this movement a character symbolizing nationalism has also been discussed there. In this chapter, we will see how the media reports of this movement contributed to the defeat of the Congress Party, but this will be done in the third section. For now, let's look at some of the other factors that caused the downfall of Congress party in the 2014 election.

In 2014, Lokniti-Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) conducted a post-poll survey, under The National Election Studies (NES) series. The survey was conducted among 22301 individuals across 26 states, plus the Seemandhra region, across the country. This survey indicated that the majority of those who benefited from the social welfare schemes were unaware that these schemes were implemented by the UPA government in the center.

¹⁴ Indiatoday.in, UPA report card: Nine years, nine scams, 22nd May 2013 <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/gallery/upa-govt-9-years-9-scams-sonia-manmohan/1/9401.html#photo1> (Accessed on 1st October 2017).

Table 5.1

Credit given for central welfare schemes by the beneficiaries.

Schemes	Central Government	%	State Government	%	Local politician	%	Local Bureaucrat	%	Can't say	%	N.A.	%	Total	%
Indira/Rajiv Awas Yojna	746	3.3	1669	7.5	489	2.2	128	0.6	292	1.3	18977	85.1	22301	100.0
MNREGA	1180	5.3	1842	8.3	706	3.2	214	1.0	449	2.0	17910	80.3	22301	100.0
NRHM	925	4.1	2584	11.6	462	2.1	236	1.1	414	1.9	17680	79.3	22301	100.0
Pension money (old age, widow, disabilities etc.)	732	3.3	2088	9.4	501	2.2	173	.8	387	1.7	18419	82.6	22301	100.0

Source: NES 2014.

The figures available in Table 5.1, even if they are based on perceptions, highlight two important facts about the welfare schemes that the UPA implemented during its first term, i.e. between 2004 and 2009 and as revealed in a study in 2014. First, these schemes benefited only approximately 20 percent of the respondents. This is significant because the majority of those respondents who did not benefit from these schemes voted for the BJP. ‘Among the 57 per cent of non-beneficiaries, only 18 per cent voted for the Congress Party and its allies, whereas 34 per cent voted for the BJP and its allies.’¹⁵ Moreover, even from among those who benefited from any one of these

¹⁵ Chhibber. Pradeep, Vermal. Rahul, ‘The BJP’s 2014 resurgence’, Palshikar. Suhas et al., *Electoral Politics in India The Resurgence of the Bharatiya Janata Party* (New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition, 2017).

schemes, ‘only 21 per cent voted for the Congress Party and its allies; meanwhile, 28 per cent voted for the BJP and its allies.’¹⁶

Second, as mentioned above, the people were unaware about the institutions which implemented these schemes. As shown in the table 5.1, only 3 to 5 percent of the respondents credited these schemes to the central government, whereas, 8 to 12 percent of the respondents credited them to the state government. Interestingly, local politicians were also credited by 2 to 3 percent of the respondents and even bureaucrats got the credit, though only by a marginal percentage of the respondents.

This data and the implications that could be derived out of it can be made sense further with similar data evolved by the same study on what were the issues that dominated the perception of the voters in May 2014, which we may see in the following table.

Table 5.2 Most Important Issue (before and after voting)

Issues	Pre-Poll		Post-Poll	
	Nos.	%	Nos.	%
Price rise/LPG hike/Diesel/Petrol etc	3843	18.3	4242	19.0
Employment/Unemployment/Jobs	1549	7.4	1662	7.5
Economy/Economic growth	299	1.4	352	1.6
Supply of electricity	454	2.2	481	2.2
Supply of drinking water	560	2.7	683	3.1
Food security/Food security bill	31	.1		
MNREGA	80	.4	70	.3
Healthcare, hospitals, doctors	96	.5	89	.4

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Education, schools, colleges, teaching, teachers	218	1.0	227	1.0
Poverty/ rich-poor gap/neglect of poor	296	1.4	427	1.9

Source: NES 2014

This also points towards another fact with regard to these welfare schemes and that is the significance of these schemes among the people while making the decision to vote. To see how much the social welfare and the schemes based on them were the main issue we need to look into Lokniti-CSDS's pre-poll and post-poll surveys and the findings. In both the surveys, the respondents were asked about the single most important issue before and after voting that they had in mind during voting and subsequently. The respondents were asked to select from the given options: Table 5.2 above does not contain all the options that were given. It needs to be mentioned here that only those options that were based on social welfare issues were listed together apart from the option 'Price rise/LPG price hike/Diesel/Petrol etc' and it was found that these were selected by the most number of the respondents.

The data suggests that the majority of the respondents considered 'Price rise/LPG hike/Diesel/Petrol etc' as a major issue both before and after their voting in the 2014 Parliamentary Election. As high as 18.3 percent of the respondents were influenced by this issue during the pre-poll survey and this was singularly higher than the percentage of all those who opted on the welfare schemes put together, and that stood at 17.1 percent. Similarly, during the post poll survey 'Price rise/LPG hike/Diesel/Petrol etc' were considered the most important of the issues by 19 percent of the respondents; again higher than the percentage of the people who held the welfare issues, which collectively stood at only 18 percent. It should also be noted that the MNREGA, health care and education were considered most important issues by merely

0.4, 0.5 and 1.0 percent of respondents respectively, and this percentage too in fact, decreased in the post-poll survey.

However, we should not interpret the low figures in the responses towards the welfare schemes as a sign of their ineffectiveness. As discussed before, these welfare schemes were actually successful and gathered votes for the UPA in the 2009 elections. But then, the question arises as to why the majority of the people (28 percent in the NES survey), who benefited from these schemes, voted for the opposition, the BJP in 2014?

Here, mention should be made about the fact that many of the times, no matter how much a particular political organisation wishes, the awareness about the issue remains less among the electorate. Sanjay Kumar, of the CSDS, has highlighted how the loss of the Congress in 1996 and 1998 could be attributed to the low level of awareness about the economic reforms among the people. With the empirical data, he argued that majority of those who supported the policies of liberalisation voted for the Congress and those who did not, voted for the BJP. However, 'only 19 per cent of the electorate were aware of economic reforms, and nearly 81 per cent of the electorate had not even heard of economic reforms.'¹⁷ As suggested by the data from Lokniti-CSDS NES survey, a similar situation hampered the congress during the 2014 elections. Majority of respondents were unaware about the fact that it was the central government of the UPA which implemented those welfare schemes. Therefore, welfare schemes were not the major issue while voting, for the electorate too.

¹⁷ Kumar. Sanjay, *Impact of Economic Reforms on Indian Electorate*, Economic and Political Weekly, 17th April 2004, p. 1623.

Another probable answer to this question is that in the national discourse, social welfare programmes lost its significance, which is evident from the responses in NES surveys. In contrast to 2009, the debate and discussion during the 2014 elections revolved around the issues like corruption and inflation. This was possible due the well-crafted election campaign by the BJP. The campaign strategy of the BJP will be discussed in next section but it will suffice to say here that because it was the BJP, with its leading voice Narendra Modi, who had wrested control over the discourse during the 2014 parliamentary election, and the party was able to bring or ignore any issue as they wanted in the election discourse.

So next question that arises is how did the BJP gain control over the discourse during the 2014 election? One major reason for this is that the BJP had more control over the media. The BJP's control over the media and how the media followed the BJP is a matter to be discussed in the third section. For now, let's see how the Congress or the UPA themselves gave the opportunity to the BJP to control the election discourse.

One of the earliest opportunities that the UPA gave to the BJP was during the anti-corruption movement in 2011. As stated earlier, the movement brought the issue of the high level corruption among the UPA leaders down to the everyday discussion of the common people. The movement completely bewildered the UPA government and it responded as any corrupt regime would have responded. While the movement was being perceived as the movement to galvanise forces towards a deepening of democracy¹⁸ and Anna Hazare, the leader of the movement was being projected as

¹⁸ Denyer. Simon, The Washington Post, India's anti- corruption movement aims to galvanize democracy, 12th August 2011 https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia-pacific/indias-anti-corruption-movement-aims-to-re-energize-democracy/2011/08/09/gIQAWMVWVWJ_story.html?utm_term=.c20c0799a78c (Accessed on 2nd October 2017).

‘Gandhi’ of new India,¹⁹ the UPA government responded by arresting the ‘Gandhi’ himself.²⁰ As expected, the arrest of Hazare created a new wave of antagonism²¹ against the government. In addition, ‘the Congress could have reached out to the anti-corruption campaigners but it didn’t.’²² The movement was successful in proliferating the idea that the UPA government was the most corrupt government in independent India.

While in 2011, the fallout of the movement was difficult to gauge as elections were still three years away, it was clear even then that the government had alienated vast swathes of voters across the social divide, and earned the wrath of the middle classes and young men and women voters of future.²³

Next, the leadership crisis in the Congress party also created doubts among its supporters and the common voters about its ability to win the election. The party projected Rahul Gandhi as the new leader for them, continuing the long history of dominance of Nehru family in the party.²⁴ However, though Rahul Gandhi was trying to do his job²⁵ he seemed to be a complete amateur against Modi. Needless to say, this also affected the people’s trust on the Congress. And finally, the campaigning by the Congress was also weak and directionless against the well-crafted campaign of the BJP.

¹⁹ French. Patrick, The Telegraph, A new ‘Gandhi’ shakes India, 17th August 2011 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/india/8706706/A-new-Gandhi-shakes-India.html> (Accessed on 2nd October 2017).

²⁰ The Times of India, Anna Hazare arrested by Delhi Police ahead of fast, 16th August 2011 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Anna-Hazare-arrested-by-Delhi-Police-ahead-of-fast/articleshow/9618768.cms> (Accessed on 2nd October 2017).

²¹ Parsai. Gargi, The Hindu, Hazare arrest sparks angry protests, 16th August 2011 <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/hazare-arrest-sparks-angry-protests/article2361785.ece> (Accessed on 2nd October 2017).

²² Hasan. Zoya, ‘Collapse of the Congress’, p- 145.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Bal. S. Hartosh, The Caravan: A journal of politics and culture, Family Ties: How the Gandhis kept a party but lost the country, 1st January 2014 <http://www.caravanmagazine.in/perspectives/family-ties> (Accessed on 2nd October 2017).

²⁵ Livemint, Rahul Gandhi sets out blueprint for 2014 Lok Sabha Election, 18th January 2014 <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/DkYfl3wtCXgaSd7CNTpeCN/Congress-is-well-prepared-to-fight-Lok-Sabha-elections-So.html> (Accessed on 2nd October 2017).

These were some major reasons for debacle of the Congress in 2014. It should be remembered that the reasons for one particular party's debacle may not necessarily mean the victory for specifically another political party. In simple terms, the reasons for the Congress debacle did not necessarily mean the victory for the BJP; an illustration of this was the Aam Admi Party's victory in the Delhi Assembly election, first in 2013 and thereafter, more decisively in 2015. Therefore, in the next section we will analyse how the BJP was able to resurge itself before and during 2014 election.

II

The BJP's Resurgence

While the Congress was losing its foothold on the political landscape, speculations on the BJP's ability to capture power in the 2014 election surfaced. In all these speculations and predictions, Narendra Modi was the person who held the center stage. The fact is, the BJP itself was banking on his Gujarat growth model to attract the middle classes. Sambuddha M. Mustafi, in a perceptive analysis in the New York Times, put it succinctly that Modi was a 'hero' of Indian middle class who 'don't really care about democracy, free speech or religious tolerance, as long as they help people get richer.'²⁶ At another plane, Christophe Jaffrelot, who had studied the rise of Hindutwa in great detail from a political science perspective, indicated that it may not be an easy task for Modi due to the dichotomy within the BJP created due to the differences of approaches between him and the BJP stalwart L. K. Advani.²⁷ Similarly, Ashutosh Varshney also indicated the stupendous need for anti- Congress votes to land-up in BJP's share to

²⁶Mustafi. M. Sambuddha, The New York Times, What Makes Narendra Modi a Middle-Class Hero? 16th May 2013 <https://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/05/16/what-makes-narendra-modi-a-middle-class-hero/?mcubz=3> (Accessed 10th October 2017).

²⁷Jaffrelot. Christophe, The Indian Express, A tale of two BJPs, 25th June 2015 <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/a-tale-of-two-bjps/1133187/> (Accessed on 10th October 2017).

capture power in 2014 elections. He also pointed out that ‘rural folk, who still determine India’s election results, have not heard of the Gujarat model. And it is virtually impossible to turn rural constituencies around in a matter of months.’²⁸ Sanjay Kumar and Pranav Gupta, meanwhile, stated that despite the factors indicating the BJP’s win, ‘the coming election will be a big hurdle for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the NDA led by its prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi.’²⁹ Presenting the class profile of the BJP voters that fluctuated in the earlier elections, they also argued that ‘if the party seeks to return to power it needs to consolidate the upper-class votes’ and ‘add voters from among the lower classes’ to its vote base.³⁰

Looking at the socio-political situations during the end of UPA-2 reign, it is not surprising that none of these reports and write-ups, among others, argued against the victory of the BJP in the 2014 elections. The only contention, in most these writings, was on the number of seats that BJP could garner for itself. Still, no one could speculate that the BJP would win two out of every three seats it contested and win 282 seats out of the 428 seats for which its candidates contested.

The BJP’s 16th Lok Sabha victory, where it polled 31.1 percent vote share, gave it the clear majority to govern the country. After 1984, this was the first time that any party had achieved absolute majority in the lower house of the parliament.

The votes for the BJP came from almost all the sections of the Indian society. Pradeep Chhibber and Rahul Verma point out that,

²⁸Varshney. Ashutosh, The Indian Express, Doing the Modi math, 27th June 2013, <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/doing-the-modi-math/> (Accessed on 10th October 2017).

²⁹ Kumar. Sanjay & Gupta. Pranav, *Can the BJP Revive Itself in 2014?* Economic and Political Weekly, 28th December 2013.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 44.

Not only did the upper castes and the other backward classes (OBCs) vote for the party, but many scheduled tribes (STs) and scheduled castes (SCs) did vote as well. The BJP received more votes from STs and SCs than the Congress.³¹

If we try to understand the BJP voters in terms of the class, we can also see that the growth in the proportion of the middle class have benefited the BJP.³²

To understand why the voters, irrespective of class and caste, voted for the BJP both these category needs to be differentiated and analysed. First let's see how the BJP managed to poll votes in terms of class.

Class

Before 2014, the BJP's highest vote share hitherto was 24 percent in the 1999 elections. This share decreased to 19 percent in the 2009 elections. The class-wise vote percentage shows that the BJP had always attracted votes from the Upper sections of the society. In 1996, the party polled 38 percent from the rich section and 28 percent from the middle-class voters, whereas only 13 percent of its votes came from the poorer section of the society.³³ Though, it polled 20 percent votes in total, much of its votes came from urban middle class.³⁴ The fact is the urban middle class had been the 'base of the Hindu nationalist electorate'.³⁵

In 1999, the BJP not only retained its core voters from the upper and the middle classes but also attracted voters from the poorer sections. The survey conducted by the CSDS show the increase in the BJP supporters from across the poor and the lower classes between 1996 and 1999.

³¹Chhibber. Pradeep, Vermal. Rahul, 'The BJP's 2014 resurgence'.

³²Sridharan. E, *Class Voting in the 2014 Lok Sabha Elections: The Growing Size and Importance of the Middle Class*, Economic and Political weekly, 27th September 2014.

³³ Kumar. Sanjay & Gupta. Pranav, *Can the BJP Revive Itself in 2014?*

³⁴Jaffrelot. Christophe, *The World's biggest democracy searches for Stability, India in the hands of the Hindu nationalists*, Le Monde Diplomatique, June 1998.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Table. 5.3 Votes in percentage for the INC and the BJP in the year 1996 and 1999.

	Poor		Lower		Middle		Rich	
	INC	BJP	INC	BJP	INC	BJP	INC	BJP
1996	30%	13%	28%	20%	28%	28%	26%	38%
1999	29%	16%	30%	23%	27%	29%	26%	36%

Source: NES 1996 and 1999.

It is clear from the data in Table 5.3 that the BJP had been the favorite among the rich both during the 1996 and the 1999 general elections. Whereas, the middle-class voters were, by and large, divided equally among both the parties, and the BJP registered a mere one percentage point increase from this segment of the society in 1999 from its 1996 performance. The major improvement for the BJP was among the poor and lower class. Though, in both these classes, its vote percentage were yet lower than the Congress, it improved by three percentage points in both the categories. A three percentage point increase for the BJP in the poor and lower section may not seem to be a huge success but it is important to note that in these years the Congress failed to make any progress in the middle and the rich categories.

However, as shown in the following table (5.4), the BJP started to lose its vote share among the lower, middle and rich classes, though it gained two percentage points increase in the poor section.

Table. 5.4 Votes in percentage for the INC and the BJP in the year 2004 and 2009.

	Poor		Lower		Middle		Rich	
	INC	BJP	INC	BJP	INC	BJP	INC	BJP
2004	27%	18%	25%	20%	26%	22%	28%	30%
2009	27%	16%	29%	19%	29%	22%	29%	25%

Source: NES 2004 and 2009

From all these, now let us look at the class wise vote percentage in the 2014 general election in table 5.5 below.

Table. 5.5 Votes in percentage for the INC and the BJP in the year 2014.

	Poor		Lower		Middle		Rich	
	INC	BJP	INC	BJP	INC	BJP	INC	BJP
2014	20%	24%	19%	31%	20%	32%	17%	38%

Source: NES 2014

If we do the numbers, we can see the increase of vote share of the BJP in all the sections. However, it is not the reason for which the data has been listed above. The reason is to see the proportion or the margin of the increase in the vote share for the BJP in these categories in comparison to 2009. The increase was of whopping 9, 12, 10 and 13 percentage points in the categories Poor, Lower, Middle and Rich respectively.

Gujarat's Growth Model

As mentioned earlier, the BJP was banking on Gujarat's growth model to attract the upper and middle class voters. Gujarat, under the chief ministership of Modi, was highlighted as the development 'model' for the country prior to and during the 2014 general election. Columbia University Professor, Arvind Panagariya, who also in January 2015 became the vice-chairman of the National Institution for Transforming India Aayog (NITI Aayog), stated that 'the Gujarat economy not only made speedy recovery from the shock, its growth rate also accelerated significantly and became much more stable in the subsequent years'³⁶ during Modi's Chief Ministership. Later,

³⁶Panagariya, Arvind, The Times of India, Why the Gujarat miracle matters, 29th June 2013 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/edit-page/Why-the-Gujarat-miracle-matters/articleshow/20820774.cms> (Accessed on 15th October 2017).

professor Panagariya also came out with proof of his argument about Gujarat's growth rate under Modi.³⁷

However, scholars have pointed out that Gujarat's growth rate did not accelerate during Modi's leadership alone in the state. Gujarat was already growing at a rate faster than the rest of India during the 1990s, which was a period before the chief ministership of Modi in the state and that there was no further acceleration during 2000s, when Modi had become the Chief Minister.³⁸ Moreover, 'for both GSDP growth and per capita NSDP growth, Gujarat has to share this honour with Maharashtra, Haryana and Tamil Nadu'.³⁹ In fact, both Gujarat and Bihar, the two states which drew attention for their supposedly outstanding economic performance prior to the 2014 election because of the good governance by their political leadership, had hardly shown any improvement in the economic sector during the decade after 2000 in relation to the national average.⁴⁰

Though there were hardly any indicators that suggested the economic growth during Modi's chief ministership in the Gujarat, the rhetoric of Gujarat's development under Modi helped create his image as a market-friendly and pro-business leader. This helped the BJP attract both the economic right, those who were in favour non-interference by the state in the economy and the social conservatives, those who were against 'tokenism' and special privileges to specific communities and regions.⁴¹

³⁷ Panagariya. Arvind, Tehelka.com, Here's proof that Gujarat has flourished under Modi, 29th March 2014 <http://www.tehelka.com/2014/03/heres-proof-that-gujarat-has-flourished-under-modi/> (Accessed on 15th October 2017).

³⁸ Ghatak. Maitreesh. Roy. Sanchari, *Did Gujarat's Growth Rate Accelerate under Modi?* Economic and Political Weekly, 12th April 2014.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Nagaraj. R and Pandey. Shruti, *Have Gujarat and Bihar Outperformed the Rest of India? A Statistical Note*, Economic and Political Weekly, 28th September 2013.

⁴¹ Chhibber. Pradeep, Vermal. Rahul, 'The BJP's 2014 resurgence'.

Caste

As in the class-wise category, the BJP did equally well in the caste-wise category too, though it could only manage to poll only 8.5 percent of the Muslims votes.

The BJP won 24 percent of the Dalit vote as opposed to the Congress's 18.5 percent; 37.5 percent of the Scheduled Tribes' vote versus the Congress's 28.3 percent; and 33.6 percent of the middle-caste vote to the Congress's 15.1 percent.⁴²

So how was the BJP able to increase its vote share among almost each and every social category? Notwithstanding the anti-incumbency that Congress suffered from during the end of its tenure, there are other factors too that led to the victory of the BJP in such decisive manner.

'Social-engineering' and the BJP's transformation

We have discussed the emergence of the BJP from its previous avatar, the Bharathiya Jan Sangh (BJS), in Chapter III. In the same chapter, we also discussed how the BJP, which was initially unsure about its stand on Ayodhya and Babri Masjid, decided to adopt a militant Hindu line subsequently and after the Palampur session of its national executive. From the BJP's early existence with its urban middleclass and upper-caste Hindu orientation, adaptation of a militant Hindu line and advocating for the unity of Hindus was the first transformation that it went through. During the 1970s, when it was still the BJS, the party had a strong hold on the northern and the western parts of the country with its social base largely among the upper-caste Hindus who also constituted a large proportion of the urban middle classes. However, in the late 1980s and early 90s, in the post-emergency scenario 'the party (now the BJP) sought to rise to prominence by forging political and electoral support on the basis of the Hindutva

⁴² Varshney. Ashutosh, *India's Watershed Vote: Hindi Nationalism in Power?* Journal of Democracy, October 2014, p.36.

ideology by taking up the issues of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, a Uniform Civil Code and the demand for the abrogation of the special status for Kashmir in the Constitution.’

⁴³ Particularly after the Mandal issue leading to the consolidation of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs), even as the Dalits were already asserting their socio-economic power, the BJP was compelled to transform itself from its upper-caste characteristic and give special attention to the new leaders from the OBCs and the Dalits, who aspired the high political positions. K N Govindacharya, one of the strategists of the RSS, called this approach of appropriating and promoting backward-caste leaders as ‘social engineering’.⁴⁴ Needless to say, these among others, were the reason behind the BJP’s increasing vote share during the 1990s.

Similarly, in 2014, the BJP underwent a second transformation. While the Congress was already unable to inspire confidence among the OBCs on the sharing of power with it. As explained by Suhas Palshikar:

The OBC parties such as Samajwadi Party, Rashtriya Janata Dal and even Janata Dal (United) that held the promise of representing the democratic upsurge and radically restructuring the society had reached a dead-end in their OBC politics due to the perception they were only interested to perpetuate the political dominion of certain OBC groups around one leader or a family.⁴⁵

In these situations, the BJP under Modi started to project itself as the party of all. Modi in particular started talking of his humble origin and his backward caste status.⁴⁶

For this purpose, the party also made an alliance with those leaders and parties that represented the smaller segments from among the backwards communities. For

⁴³ Palshikar. Suhas and Suri. C. K, *India’s 2014 Lok Sabha Elections: Critical Shift in the Long Term, Caution in the Short Term*, Economic and Political Weekly, 27th September 2014, p. 42

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁴⁶ The Times of India, ‘Modi is a Teli-Ghanchi OBC’: BJP, 23rd April 2014 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ahmedabad/Modi-is-a-Teli-Ghanchi-OBC-BJP/articleshow/34084111.cms> (Accessed on 15th October 2017).

instance, in Bihar, it made an alliance with the Ram Vilas Paswan led Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) and Upendra Kushwaha's Rashtriya Lok Samata Party (RLSP).⁴⁷

Till now, we have discussed how the BJP was able to attract voters through its combination of the development rhetoric and by forming a social alliance. Now, let us analyse its Hindutva politics during 2014 elections. As we have been discussing in this thesis, that the BJP is the political wing of the RSS, whose majoritarian ideology is in process of redefining the meaning of the term 'nation' and imposing its own version of nationalism in India, any discourse skirting its Hindutva politics may not present a clear picture.

The Hindutva Agenda?

The question on the status of the Hindutva agenda during 2014 general elections, once again, brings Narendra Modi onto the center-stage. With an image he and his party had consciously built that Modi was indeed the leader whose interest lied only in the economic development, there were many who believed or pretended to believe and present that the concerns for economic growth would downplay the BJP's Hindutva politics. Ashutosh Varshney indicated that though the RSS intends to proliferate Hindutva ideology, Modi under BJP would be compelled to undergo an ideological moderation and put less emphasis on the majoritarian agenda. In his own words,

Modi is known for advocating an investment-driven model of growth, and massive riots would seriously damage prospects for both private investment and growth.⁴⁸

Meghnad Desai, again, had made a similar argument. That:

⁴⁷ Kumar. Sanjay, *BJP Crafts a New Social Coalition in Bihar*, Economic and Political Weekly, 27th September 2014, pp. 95-98.

⁴⁸Varshney. Ashutosh, *India's Watershed Vote: Hindi Nationalism in Power?* , p. 44.

Modi's 2014 campaign marked a departure from all previous BJP campaigns. It offered a forward-looking aspirational vision of development in which every Indian regardless of religion could gain.⁴⁹

Eswaran Sridharan, in a similar manner, pointed out that though there were some anti-Muslim utterance by the BJP leaders,

The BJP for the most part kept quiet about Hindu nationalism and focused instead on what it said was the Congress led government's corruption and poor performance, particularly the slow growth, unemployment, and inflation that had dogged its watch.⁵⁰

So, did the BJP's 2014 election campaign, under the leadership of Modi, avoid the usage of Hindutva politics to mobilise voters? To get the answer, the first thing that we need to do is look into an important factor behind the BJP's 2014 election campaign, the RSS.

It is a well-known fact that the RSS provides a 'ready-made apparatus of voluntary organisations, which supplies manpower and generate support for the regime'⁵¹ for the BJP and 'also raises issues that the party may not formally want to be seen as raising.'⁵²

During the 2014 elections, RSS volunteers were involved in the process of image building for Modi on the ground, for collecting feedbacks on Modi's speech from the people after his speech during election rallies, for managing election booths, among others.⁵³

If the BJP is the political wing of the RSS and if it is the RSS that provides cadres during its election campaign, it is a mistake to assume that the BJP would restrain

⁴⁹ Desai. Meghnad, *India as a Hindu Nation-and Other Ideas of India*, in Desai. Meghnad et al., *Making Sense of Modi's India*, (India: HarperCollins Publishers India, 2016), p- 14.

⁵⁰ Sridharan. Eswaran, *India's Watershed Vote, Behind Modi's Victory*, Project Muse, Journal of Democracy, October 2014, p. 26.

⁵¹ Palshikar. Suhas, *What Make BJP Really Different*, Economic and Political Weekly, 13th May 2013, p. 13.

⁵² *Ibid*, p. 13.

⁵³ For details see, Narayan. Badri, *Modi's Modus Operandi in the 2014 Elections*, Economic and Political Weekly, 17th May 2014.

itself from using Hindutva rhetoric for mobilising voters. ‘The BJP winning elections means that the RSS will control governmental power and state institutions, nothing less’.⁵⁴

We did mention earlier that the BJP underwent a transformation; but the Hindutva agenda during these transformation remained intact throughout this transformation. Only the rhetoric of Hindutva changed. For instance, we have discussed in Chapter III on how the rhetoric of ‘positive secularism’ was brought in during the Shah Bano controversy. Not to mention that the anti-Muslim rhetoric used to mobilise Hindus from all sections and notwithstanding the fact, as Ashutosh Varshney mentioned, ‘the BJP seeks votes; the RSS does not’⁵⁵ arguing that the BJP did not use Hindutva politics is similar to arguing that the RSS did not use Hindutva politics. It is true that both these organisations are separate and they function in different spheres; but it is also true that the umbilical cord through which both of them survive is the same, which is connected to the Hindutva ideology.

It is true that economy, governance, opportunities for youths, the UPA’s scams and other similar issues dominated most of the BJP’s election campaign; but the party and its leaders didn’t refrain from bolstering the communal sentiments among the voters, particularly in those regions where such issues had an impact. For instance, in West Bengal ‘Modi cleverly linked unemployment to the Bangladeshi infiltration and the Muslim appeasement.’⁵⁶ During his speech in Kishennagar in West Bengal in May 2014, he said that ‘while the people here don’t get jobs, those who infiltrate from

⁵⁴ Editorial, The BJP fringe, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. Xlix no 18, 3rd May 2014.

⁵⁵ Varshney. Ashutosh, *India’s Watershed Vote: Hindi Nationalism in Power?*, p. 38.

⁵⁶ Kanungo. Pralay, *The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party in West Bengal*, Studies in Indian Politics, Sage Publications, p. 58.

Bangladesh are welcomed with red carpet.’⁵⁷ Few days prior to this speech, he also said ‘we have responsibility towards Hindus who are harassed and suffer in other countries. Where will they go? India is the only place for them’⁵⁸ during his speech in Silchar, Assam. It needs to be mentioned here that in Chapter IV we have discussed how the issue of illegal immigrants, particularly Muslims immigrants, had dominated the political scene in Assam for long and before 2014. In the same chapter, we also discussed the role of the RSS during the Assam movement. Therefore, it is not a difficult task to interpret Modi’s comment in the West Bengal and the Assam public meetings as the usage of Hindutva idioms for mobilising voters.

If what Modi said in Assam and West Bengal is not convincing enough to say that Hindutva politics was equally significant for the BJP to mobilise voters in 2014 elections, then it would be appropriate to mention that the BJP leader, Giriraj Singh, was reprimanded by the Election Commission for stating ‘those opposing Narendra Modi would have to go to Pakistan.’⁵⁹ In fact, Singh’s hate speech was not the only hate speech by the BJP leaders during the 2014 elections.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Deccan Chronicles, Bangladeshi infiltrators would have to go back: Narendra Modi, 8th May 2014 <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/140507/nation-current-affairs/article/%E2%80%98didi%E2%80%99-doesn%E2%80%99t-want-good-days-bengal-modi-mamata%E2%80%99s-home-turf> (Accessed on 16th October 2017).

⁵⁸ Deccan Chronicles, Hindu migrants from Bangladesh must be accommodated: Narendra Modi, 22nd February 2014 <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/140222/news-current-affairs/article/hindu-migrants-bangladesh-must-be-accommodated-narendra-modi> (Accessed on 16th October 2017).

⁵⁹ Jain. Bharti, The Times of India, Hate speech: Election Commission Bans Giriraj Singh from campaigning, 22nd April 2014 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/lok-sabha-elections-2014/news/Hate-speech-Election-Commission-bans-Giriraj-Singh-from-campaigning/articleshow/34080871.cms> (Accessed on 16th October 2017).

⁶⁰ Mody. Anjali, Inflammatory speeches by BJP men show that Hindutva, not development, is still core of Party’s ideology, Scroll.in, 23rd April 2014 <https://scroll.in/article/662616/Inflammatory-speeches-by-BJP-men-show-that-Hindutva> (Accessed on 16th October 2017).

Now let us look at the role of the media during 2014 elections.

Analysis of Media Reportage during 2014 Parliamentary Elections

Delegitimising UPA's Rule

While accusations of corruption in the 2G spectrum scam, Commonwealth games scandal, Adarsh Housing Society scam and Coalgate were already making headlines in the Indian media, anti-corruption (or Anna Hazare) movements became another major media spectacle in 2011. Anna Hazare became the obsession for both the print and the television channels. English news channel, Times Now, broadcast a program *who is Anna Hazare*⁶¹ where it went on with a detailed narrative into his past. In doing so, viewers were informed about his engagement in the Indo-Pak war of 1965. The report also highlighted the agitations that Hazare undertook in the past for the Right to Information Act until its passage in 2005. This was the earliest example of how television news channels built the image of Anna Hazare as the 'crusader against corruption'.

Similarly, the Times of India carried the report *Anna Hazare: The man who can't be ignored*⁶² where it informed its readers about the sacrifices he made to fight against the corrupt government, for the rights of the people in India. The report stated 'Anna has chosen to firmly stay away from any family ties and never visits his sisters.'⁶³ It also mentioned that he was born in a family of 'an unskilled labourer'⁶⁴ and that he

⁶¹ Times Now, The Anna Hazare Phenomenon Part-1, Youtube.com, 10th April 2011 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eC6Y_ROxoOQ (Accessed on 10th November 2017).

⁶² Damlel. Manjiri, The Times of India, Anna Hazare: The man who can't be ignored, 7th April 2011 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Anna-Hazare-The-man-who-cant-be-ignored/articleshow/7892596.cms> (Accessed on 16th October 2017).

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

had to ‘sell flowers for a living’⁶⁵ and had to ‘quit studies after Class VII.’⁶⁶ Such a construction of a positive image of Hazare also enhanced his credibility as a ‘crusader’ as a result of which he and his campaign garnered support from various sections of the Indian society. Soon, the headlines of support for Anna Hazare filled the pages of major English dailies in India. The news of support from college students,⁶⁷ Bollywood celebrities,⁶⁸ political parties⁶⁹ and others became the regular headlines.

To show that the people were supporting Hazare, irrespective of their identities, the Times of India, on 8th April 2011, under the headline *Supporters plan special prayers in dargah*⁷⁰ informed that various market organisations in Ajmer had ‘decided to organize special prayers in the ‘dargah of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti.’⁷¹ On a similar note, the paper, on the same day, also carried a report *Muslims, others join the movement.*⁷²

To highlight the extent to which the newspapers were obsessed with Anna Hazare and his movement, data in Table 5.6 below on the number of reports (including editorials and op-ed articles), which were based on the movement or referred to it,

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Madaani. Neha, The Times of India, College students join movement, 8th October 2011 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/pune/College-students-join-movement/articleshow/7906861.cms> (Accessed on 16th October 2017).

⁶⁸ High Beam Research, Hindustan Times, Bollywood extends support to Anna Hazare, 6th April 2011 <https://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P3-2311637611.html> (Accessed on 16th October 2017).

⁶⁹ The Hindu, CPI supports Hazare’s fast, 6th April 2011 <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-karnataka/CPI-supports-Hazares-fast/article14672336.ece> (Accessed on 16th October 2017). The Times of India, BJP supports Hazare’s cause, 7th April 2011 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mangalore/BJP-supports-Hazares-cause/articleshow/7904451.cms> (Accessed on 16th October 2017).

⁷⁰ Gauri. Kshitiz, The Times of India, Supporters plan special prayers in dargah, 8th April 2011 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/jaipur/Supporters-plan-special-prayers-in-dargah/articleshow/7907139.cms> (Accessed on 16th October 2017).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² The Times of India, Muslims, others join the movement, 8th April 2011 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kanpur/Muslims-other-join-the-movement/articleshow/7919709.cms> (Accessed on 16th October 2017).

published within three days after the movement started on 5th April 2011 in the four major national English dailies in India.

Table 5.6 Number of reports (including editorials and op-ed article) based on Anna Hazare movement published from 6th April 2011 to 8th April 2011

Newspapers	Number of reports on 6 th April 2011	Number of reports on 7 th April 2011	Number of reports on 8 th April 2011	Total
Hindustan Times (Delhi)	13	30	49	92
The Hindu (Chennai)	14	15	26	55
The Telegraph (Kolkata)	2	3	1	6
The Times of India (Mumbai)	19	24	51	94

As is evident from the table above (5.6), except The Telegraph, all the other newspapers dedicated huge amount of space to report/comment on the movement. The reason why The Telegraph provided less space to the movement was that it was more skeptical about it. Its skepticism could be seen in its editorial titled *Meaningless*⁷³ on 7th April 2011. Apart from the headline, which in itself explains the paper's view on the movement, the editorial argued that 'it is by no means certain that the establishment of the post of Lok pal will lead to a substantial reduction in the level of corruption.'⁷⁴

Anyways, the sheer amount of dedication that other newspapers showed while reporting Anna's movement can be argued as the reason behind the issue of corruption

⁷³ The Telegraph, Meaningless, 7th April 2011 https://www.telegraphindia.com/1110407/jsp/opinion/story_13817601.jsp 9Accessed on 16th October 2017).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

and scams turning into the everyday talk of common citizens. However, the discourse on corruption, which the media helped to create and sustain during the Anna Hazare movement was very well structured. It was carefully crafted against the government and no issue of corporate corruption was discussed. About the movement, Arundhati Roy observed:

At a time when the state is withdrawing from its traditional duties and Corporations and NGOs are taking over government functions (water supply, electricity, transport, telecommunication, mining, health, education); at a time when the terrifying power and reach of the corporate owned media is trying to control the public imagination, one would think that these institutions- the corporations, the media, and NGOs- would be included in the jurisdiction of a Lokpal bill. Instead, the proposed bill leaves them out completely.⁷⁵

Though the Anna movement and its massive coverage in the Indian media did nothing to extinguish any forms of corruption, it did have an impact on the perception of the common voters in the country. As discussed earlier, many were left in the belief that the UPA government was the most corrupt government in India since independence. The fact, however, is the UPA government also contributed towards demonising itself at that time. It did not reach out to the protestors, arrested Anna and members of his core team, who by now was ‘Gandhi’ for many and behaved more as the colonial rulers did with the freedom fighters than as representatives of the people. Similarly, the media also contributed in the process of delegitimising the UPA regime. It is not to say that without Anna movement there would have been no difference in the level of acceptance of UPA government among the common masses; the point is the Anna movement and the media coverage of it raised the level of delegitimising the UPA rule in the minds of people to such a level that it gradually developed into the anti-

⁷⁵ Roy. Arundhati, *The Hindu*, I'd rather not be Anna, 21st August 2011 <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/id-rather-not-be-anna/article2379704.ece> (Accessed on 16th October 2011).

incumbency sentiment among the people against the poor performance of the UPA government.

Prior to the 2014 general elections, the rising anti-incumbency sentiment among the people was evident in the State assembly elections in the states like Rajasthan and Delhi. These were the states where the Congress was in power before the 2013 state assembly elections. In Rajasthan, the BJP secured 163 seats out of 200 which was a whopping 85 seats more than what it had won in the previous elections in 2008; whereas the Congress could manage only 21 seats which was the decrease of 75 seats from its existing strength. Similarly, the Congress party, in the Delhi state assembly elections, was reduced to a mere 8 seats in the 70 member strong assembly; its strength fell from 43 seats it won in 2008. While the Congress was losing elections in the states, the ‘series of scams and corrupt deals, inefficient delivery of welfare services, rise in the prices of essential commodities and an ineffective leadership worked together to make the central government extremely unpopular.’⁷⁶ The argument here is, the issue on which the Congress lost in these state elections were, for the first time, made popular during the anti-corruption movement in year 2011; and as we have seen how the media participated in this movement through its reporting, we can state that the media played a major role in creating the anti-incumbency sentiments among the people against the government led by the Congress.

The amalgamation of the Anna movement and the extensive coverage to it by the Indian media created the vacuum in political landscape. This vacuum got deeper each time the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was called a ‘puppet’ leader. During the election rallies, BJP leaders did their best to remind the people that the

⁷⁶ Chhibber. Pradeep, Vermal. Rahul, ‘The BJP’s 2014 resurgence’,

Congress was/is being directed by the Gandhi family and Prime Minister was just a ‘puppet’. As anything that a political leader says during the election campaign becomes a news, this too became a major news in the Indian media. When BJP leader Arun Jaitley, while addressing election rally at Nag Kalan village in Punjab, stated that the Congress and the Gandhi family were using the Prime Minister as a puppet, the Hindustan Times had the headline *PM Manmohan Singh was used as ‘puppet’ by Cong, Gandhi family: Jaitley*.⁷⁷ Calling the then PM a “puppet” was not a 2014 election phenomenon. In fact, it was one of those issues through which members of the Gandhi family were targeted all through the UPA’s rule. The only difference was, during the 2014 election campaign this became one of the rallying points through which an urgency over the need of a strong leader in the form of Prime Minister was created.

Modi as Prime Ministerial candidate and the media

After the perception of anti-incumbency against the Congress led UPA government and the need for a strong leader was built in the minds of the people, the BJP on 13th September 2013 declared Narendra Modi as their Prime Ministerial candidate. As expected, it got extensive media coverage.

All the major news channels telecast the announcement live from the BJP’s headquarter in New Delhi on 13th September 2013. But in all these news reports there was no reference, whatsoever, to the 2002 Gujarat pogrom. Instead, the most important issue was L. K. Advani’s dissatisfaction or resentment over the name of Narendra Modi as the party’s Prime Ministerial candidate.

⁷⁷ Hindustan Times, PM Manmohan Singh was used as ‘puppet’ by Cong, Gandhi family: Jaitley, 27th April 2014 www.hindustantimes.com/punjab/pm-manmohan-singh-was-used-as-puppet-by-cong-gandhi-family-jaitley/story-22RrNaj3GckGxYKaJtOeiO.html (Accessed on 16th October 2017).

Hindi news channel, ABP news, telecast a special program called *ABP Live Special: The story behind Modi's declaration as BJP's PM candidate*.⁷⁸ As the headline suggested, the program was based on the events that occurred on 13th September 2013, before the announcement of Modi as the party's Prime Ministerial face. The programme began with the footage of BJP supporters celebrating the announcement. In the middle of the programme, viewers were informed about L. K Advani's letter to the BJP president Rajnath Singh, where Advani conveyed to his party president his decision of not attending the meeting before the announcement was to be made.

Times Now, in its NewsHour Debate,⁷⁹ kept the discussion limited to the Advani - Modi conflict. However, NDTV 24x7, did an admirable job. The channel, in its debate, *BJP's Trump Card?*⁸⁰ Programme, not just brought into the debate the 2002 Gujarat pogrom but also had in the discussion the importance of the RSS in the event. The anchor of the programme, Barkha Dutt, tactfully brought in the issue of justice for the victims of the Gujarat riot while Mahesh Jethmalani, senior lawyer and also the BJP's National Executive member and Swapan Dasgupta senior journalist and member of Rajya Sabha, were stating that the issue of 2002 Gujarat pogrom was just a 'motivated and deliberated alarmism.'⁸¹

The differences between the Modi and Advani was also the main issue in the newspapers. The day after the announcement, The Indian Express carried thirteen news reports on it. The paper informed about the Modi's PM candidature announcement in

⁷⁸ ABP News, Youtube.com, ABP Live Special: The story behind Modi's declaration as BJP's PM candidate, 13th September 2013 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPTmLU_IPXk (Accessed on 17th October 2017).

⁷⁹ Times Now, Youtube.com, The NewsHour Debate, 16th September 2013 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4uoQDpEnJbs> (Accessed on 17th October 2017).

⁸⁰ NDTV, Youtube.com, BJP's Trump Card?, 13th September 2013 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iF-nkZCPIL4> (Accessed on 17th October 2017).

⁸¹ This was specifically stated by Swapan Dasgupta during the debate. Mahesh Jethmalani was also stating similar argument.

the report *Modi is BJP's Prime Ministerial candidate despite Advani's objection*⁸² where it also mentioned that 'the decision to project Modi was taken at a meeting of the party's parliamentary board which Advani skipped as a mark of protest.'⁸³ Other reports, which is not significant to be mentioned here, were based on the reactions of the BJP and Congress leaders on the announcement and Modi's visits to the leaders of the party's allies in the NDA. A report in The Indian Express calls for mention here and some discussion in detail. This report *Muslim organisations greet Narendra Modi's elevation as a blow to NDA's chances in 2014*⁸⁴ and it read:

Muslim organisations largely greeted Narendra Modi's formal anointing as the NDA's prime ministerial candidate as a blow to the coalition's chances of forming a government both because of the communal taint attached to Modi and the difficulty the alliance will find with him at the helm to enrol new members. Even former Dar ul uloom Mohtamim Ghulam Mohammed Vastanvi, whose support for the Gujarat CM had cost him his job at Deoband, said Modi's elevation would be the death knell for the NDA's prospects.⁸⁵

However, when it came to the choice of a picture to accompany the report, the paper chose a photo, credited to the Associated Press where Modi was shown shaking both hands with individuals from the Muslim community, all having smile on their faces. Interestingly, the caption below the photo read 'Even 2% of the Muslim votes could be a game changer.'⁸⁶ Needless to say, no mention was made about the 2002 Gujarat pogrom.

The Hindu reported the announcement with the headline '*It's official: Modi is BJP's choice*'.⁸⁷ The report did mention about the RSS and informed that 'the formal

⁸² Tiwari. Ravish, The Indian Express, Modi is BJP's Prime Ministerial candidate despite Advani's objection, 14th September 2013.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Ghosh. Abantika, The Indian Express, Muslim organisations greet Narendra Modi's elevation as a blow to NDA's chances in 2014, 14th September 2013 <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/muslim-organisations-greet-narendra-modis-e/1169012/> (Accessed on 17th October 2017).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Reddy. Muralidhar. B, The Hindu, It's official: Modi is BJP's choice, 14th September 2013 <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/its-official-modi-is-bjps-choice/article5126720.ece> (Accessed on 17th October 2017).

announcement came after the BJP Parliamentary Board, which Mr. Advani skipped, rubber stamped the nomination after the RSS made it loud and clear.⁸⁸ On the same day, the paper also carried an editorial *Aided democracy*⁸⁹ which, was by and large, based on the Modi- Advani tussle.

The Times of India carried the news under the headline, *Narendra Modi anointed BJP PM candidate, Advani disappointed*⁹⁰ and The Telegraph reported the event with the headline *BJP hopes to reap NaMo windfall*.⁹¹ It is, thus, clear that different newspapers saw the event in different ways; while the Times of India chose to report Modi's rise as having to do with the internal dynamics and inter-personal rivalry in the BJP, The Telegraph saw it in terms of the implications of Modi and his rise for the party's electoral prospects.

It is conspicuous that none of these newspapers talked about the 2002 Gujarat pogrom while reporting Modi's ascendancy. It is true that the Special Investigation Team (SIT) that had gone into the pogrom had exonerated Narendra Modi in year 2010 itself as was reported by the Hindu;⁹² still, as a so called 'fourth pillar' of the democracy, the press should have informed about it to their viewers and readers. The fact that thousands of Muslims were massacred while Modi was the Chief Minister of Gujarat,

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ The Hindu, Aided democracy, 14th September 2013 <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/aided-democracy/article5126705.ece> (Accessed on 17th October 2017).

⁹⁰ The Times of India, Narendra Modi anointed BJP PM candidate, Advani disappointed, 13th September 2013 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Narendra-Modi-anointed-BJP-PM-candidate-Advani-disappointed/articleshow/22554959.cms> (Accessed on 17th October 2017).

⁹¹ Mishra. Ashutosh and Mohanty. Subhashish, BJP hopes tp reap NaMo windfall, 14th September 2014 https://www.telegraphindia.com/1130914/jsp/frontpage/story_17347822.jsp (Accessed on 17th October 2017).

⁹² Venkatesan. J, The Hindu, SIT gave clean chit to Modi even in May 2010, 10th February 2012 <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/sit-gave-clean-chit-to-modi-even-in-may-2010/article2876248.ece> (Accessed on 20th October 2017).

in itself, provides the justification for bringing the issue, particularly after the announcement of him being the BJP's Prime Ministerial candidate.

In a democracy, one of the important role of a news organisation, particularly during the elections, is to inform the citizens about each and every aspect of their leaders, so that the citizens could make a conscious decision while voting. This is the basic right of every citizen of India guaranteed under Article 19 (1) (a) of the Constitution of India; this indeed has been established as a 'fundamental right'. In fact, rights to freedom of speech and expression guaranteed by Article 19 (1) (a) also guarantees right to be informed and it is also through this Article that the press derives its freedom. Therefore, the action of these newspapers and television channels attempting to conceal the 2002 Gujarat pogrom was not less than a violation of Article 19 (1) (a) of the Constitution. Even if constitutional rights is not a concern, the 2002 Gujarat pogrom should have been discussed because the SIT report itself, exonerating Modi for from his role of commission and omission, was not completely free of controversy.⁹³

So, why did the media, which questioned and criticised Modi during the 2002 Gujarat pogrom and in the days and weeks after that, refrain from not even mentioning about the 2002 pogrom in its reportage of Modi's ascendancy as the Prime Ministerial candidate of the BJP and subsequently during the run up to the 2014 elections? An answer to this question will have to be found by looking into the relationship between

⁹³ NDTV, Zakia case: 'SIT report ignored testimony against Narendra Modi,' says retired Judge who probed 2002 riots, 11th April 2012 <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/zakia-case-sit-report-ignored-testimony-against-narendra-modi-says-retired-judge-who-probed-2002-rio-476045> (Accessed on 17th October 2017).

the media and Modi, in particular and the three tier nexus between the corporates, the political leaders and the media, at large.

Modi and the Media

The relationship between the media and Modi during 2014 elections campaign was not similar to the relationship that they had during the 2002 pogrom and in the weeks and months after that. There were vast differences in the approaches of the media towards him and the regime in Gjarat in 2002 and in 2014. The transformation or the transition of the media's approach towards Modi from being critical and holding him accountable for the pogrom to one of glossing it over and even seeking to put a quietus to it began to be found as early in 2008.

The year 2008 was the year of economic crisis around the world.⁹⁴ The economic crisis that had its geneses in the United States had its impact on the developing nations like India too.⁹⁵ The report, *Global Economic Crisis and Its Impact on India*⁹⁶ tabled in the Rajya Sabha, while explaining the impact of the 2008 economic crisis on the industrial sector in India pointed out that 'In manufacturing sector, the growth has come down to 4.0 per cent in April-November, 2008 as compared to 9.8 per cent in the corresponding period last year.'⁹⁷This decline, in the industrial sector, it added, had the 'cascading effect'⁹⁸ on the employment scenario in India.

⁹⁴ Elliot. Larry, The Guardian, Global financial crisis: five key stages 2007-2011. 7th August 2011 <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2011/aug/07/global-financial-crisis-key-stages> (Accessed on 18th October 2017).

⁹⁵ Singh. Shalini, The Times of India, Global meltdown hits hiring in India, 8th October 2008 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/Global-meltdown-hits-hiring-in-India/articleshow/3572194.cms> (Accessed on 18th October 2017).

⁹⁶ Global Economic Crisis and Its Impact on India, Research Unit (Larrdis), Rajya Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, June 2009.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

While people in India were trying to comprehend the complete implication of the financial crisis and were in grief due to job losses, a news came in of Ratan Tata's decision to establish its small car manufacturing factory in Sanand, near Ahmedabad in Gujarat, on 6th October 2008. Interestingly, newspapers tried to give different angles to the story.⁹⁹

From 7th October 2008 to 9th October 2008, the Indian Express carried a total of 11 stories on it. The news was reported under the headline *Nano gets a new home in Gujarat*¹⁰⁰ and *Nano gets new home, Gujarat signs MoU with Tatas*.¹⁰¹ But while informing about this news, the paper also tried to show how West Bengal was going to suffer from it. The report *Meanwhile, Nano leaves a trail of despair in Singur*¹⁰² informed the readers that 'those who thought of earning a livelihood out of the project seemed demoralized.'¹⁰³ The report also quoted some individuals who were discontented because of the shifting of the Nano factory from Singur to Sanand. An attempt was made to show how people from different sections in West Bengal were going to suffer. While on the one side, the paper informed about the discontentment of residents in Bengal, on the other, the paper also highlighted the contentment of the people in Gujarat. The report *Singur's loss becomes Chharodi's gain*¹⁰⁴ appraised the

⁹⁹ The Nano Car factory, incidentally, was initially planned in West Bengal's Singur and was mired in trouble due to the agitation against it by the peasants who lost their lands there and was subsequently shifted by the Tata Motors group to Sanand in Gujarat.

¹⁰⁰ Indian Express, Nano gets a new home in Gujarat, 7th October 2008 <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/nano-gets-a-new-home-in-gujarat/370420/> (Accessed on 17th October 2017).

¹⁰¹ Indian Express, Nano gets new home, Gujarat signs MoU with Tatas, 7th October 2008 <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/nano-gets-new-home-gujarat-signs-mou-with-t/370395/> (Accessed on 17th October 2017).

¹⁰² Indian Express, Meanwhile, Nano leaves a trail of despair in Singur, 8th October 2008 <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/meanwhile-nano-leaves-a-trail-of-despair-in/370822/> (Accessed on 17th October 2017).

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Siddiqui. Tanvir, Indian Express, Singur's loss becomes Chharodi's gain, 8th October 2008 <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/singur-s-loss-becomes-chharodi-s-gain/370823/> (Accessed on 17th October 2017).

readers that the smiles of local residents in Ahmedabad ‘could not get any wider’¹⁰⁵ when they ‘knew for sure that Singur’s loss had ultimately become Chharodi’s gain.’¹⁰⁶ On the next day, the paper also informed about the joyful landlords who were delighted due to increase in the value of their land in the report *Tata’s small car ignites big dreams of Guj realtors*.¹⁰⁷

For The Telegraph, Ratan Tata’s decision on shifting the factory for Nano car from Singur was the ‘knockout punch to the tottering image of Brand Bengal.’¹⁰⁸ For the Times of India, it was the double sadness of the residents of Singur during Durga Puja who were already saddened by ‘the departure of the Goddess.’¹⁰⁹ The title *WB mourns loss of ‘god of small cars’*¹¹⁰ of this report says it all.

By differentiating between the sorrow and happiness of the people of West Bengal and Gujarat, these newspaper projected that the common people are in favour of such corporate projects. We will discuss, later on, as to why the media does so; but at this point, it could be argued that the media completely reported the implications of such project in a biased manner. It did not even inform why the people in Singur protested against the Tata Motors project at all? That the media did not capture this and also mis-represented the people and their mind was evident, when the Trinamool Congress, led by Mamata Banerjee, swept the state assembly elections in 2011,

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Siddiqui. Tanvir, Indian Express, Tata’s small car ignites big dreams of Guj realtors, 9th October 2008 <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/tatas-small-car-ignites-big-dreams-of-guj-r/371159/> (Accessed on 17th October 2017).

¹⁰⁸ Rawat. Basant, The Telegraph India, Tata’s opt for ‘good M’, 8th October 2008 https://www.telegraphindia.com/1081008/jsp/frontpage/story_9942250.jsp (Accessed on 17th October 2017).

¹⁰⁹ Times of India, WB mourns loss of ‘god of small cars’, 8th October 2008 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/WB-mourns-loss-of-god-of-small-cars/articleshow/3571656.cms> (Accessed on 17th October 2017).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

defeating the CPI (M)-led Left Front that was in power un-interrupted since 1977; Mamata Banerjee, interestingly spearheaded the agitation against the Singur project and this certainly threw her up as the leader against the CPI (M) in West Bengal since then.

Unlike what almost all these newspapers tried to project, the protest against the factory of Tata Nano in Singur was not just about the compensation and as reported in the Times of India, which described the agitation and her role in that as ‘the game of political brinkmanship started by Mamata Banerjee.’¹¹¹ It was also about the Government of West Bengal’s fraud while acquiring the land. D Bandyopadhyay on this issue mentioned,

Since the government cannot acquire any land for a private company except through the procedure laid down in chapter VII of the LA Act, the GOWB openly committed a fraud on the law and on the public by acquiring the land in the name of the West Bengal Industries Development Corporation (WBIDC)-a government company-for leasing it to Tata Motors Ltd (TML). This chicanery on the part of the GOWB enabled the Tatas to get hold of 643 acres of land on lease without paying a paisa.¹¹²

Few members of the urban middle class could have been indeed appropriated in the jobs that could have been created through the Tata factory; however, the need for the skilled production workers in the modern factories evades the chances of peasants, who are not trained to work in these factories, to be employed by the Tata factory in the Singur. Moreover, as Nirmal Kumar Chandra pointed out, ‘the skilled workforce would come from Kolkata or from other states. The vast majority of those in “indirect” jobs in canteens, small shops and so on would have a low pay.’¹¹³

¹¹¹ Sen. Arindam and Desai. Bharat, Times of India, Gujarat betters Bengal’s offer, 8th October 2008 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/Gujarat-betters-Bengals-offer/articleshow/3571460.cms> (Accessed on 18th October 2017).

¹¹² Bandyopadhyay. D, *Singur: What Happened, What Next and Time to Pay the Cost*, Economic and Political Weekly, 29th November 2008, p. 13.

¹¹³ Chandra. K. Nirmal, *Tata Motors in Singur: A Step towards Industrialisation or Pauperisation?*, Economic and Political Weekly, 13th December 2008, p. 47.

As Ratan Tata's decision to establish the factory for its Nano car in Sanand was celebrated by the media in India, the reputation of Narendra Modi among the news outlets also started to transform from being that of someone who was guilty by commission or omission in letting the 2002 pogrom happen and continue into one of a savior of industry and peace.

As soon as the announcement was made about the decision to establish the Tata factory in Gujarat by Ratan Tata and the then Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi in a joint press conference, the same newspapers which criticised Modi during 2002 filled their space with the stories of how Modi and his men, as suggested by a headline¹¹⁴ in the Indian Express 'fought battle of wits and won'. The Times of India, in its report, *Modi razes speedbreakers from Nano's path*¹¹⁵ had the lead which read,

The Gujarat government did everything possible to ensure a smooth transfer of the land at Chharodi to Tata Motors Limited including taking care of financial liabilities and future water and effluent treatment needs.¹¹⁶

As every successful story needs a successful hero, and Tata factory in Gujarat was a successful story for news outlets, Modi was transformed into a hero from a person responsible for the massacre of thousands of people in Gujarat.

If there were any doubts on the changed attitude of the media towards Modi, then the reportage of his speech at Shri Ram College of Commerce (SRCC), New Delhi, on 6th February 2013, cleared it out. Many believe that the speech was the beginning of his 2014 election campaign. All the major news channels telecast it live and newspapers

¹¹⁴ Pathan. Bashir, The Indian Express, How Modi's men fought battle of wits...and won, 7th October 2008 <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/how-modi-s-men-fought-battle-of-wits--and-wo/370821/> (Accessed on 17th October 2017).

¹¹⁵ Shah. Rajiv, The Times of India, Modi razes speedbreakers from Nano's path, 10th October 2008 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Modi-razes-speedbreakers-from-Nanos-path/articleshow/3578374.cms> (Accessed on 17th October 2017).

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

reported it in the front page of next morning's issue. This was not the only event that occurred in the SRCC that day; a large gathering of students were protesting outside the gate against Modi's speech as reported by The Hindu in the report *Anti-Modi protesters at DU allege manhandling*.¹¹⁷

Except The Hindu, only the Times of India carried the report on the protest under the headline *Narendra Modi visit rocks DU: Jeers outside and cheers inside*.¹¹⁸ But while reporting on the protest, the Times of India did not forget to remind the readers that while 'there were anti-Modi protests outside SRCC, the crowd inside was rooting for the man. Students applauded, cheered Modi each time he paused after making a point. He shook hands and posed for photographs with students. SRCC student Preeti Mohan said Modi's speech was "inspiring" and an "eye-opener".'¹¹⁹

All the newspapers, except the Hindu, sang the praises of Narendra Modi while reporting on the speech. The Indian Express sang it under the headline Modi stresses 'packaging, branding' in DU hardsell,¹²⁰ while the Times of India, with the headline, *Narendra Modi pitches for 'vibrant India', positions himself for 2014 polls*¹²¹ informed the readers that,

The cheers that Modi evoked from SRCC students, a group with a predisposition for entrepreneurship and economic growth, reinforced the argument of the faction which feels that

¹¹⁷ S. N. Vijetha, The Hindu, Anti-Modi protesters at DU allege manhandling, 7th February 2017 <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/antimodi-protesters-at-du-allege-manhandling/article4386900.ece> (Accessed on 17th October 2017).

¹¹⁸ Vasta. Aditi, The Times of India, Narendra Modi visit rocks DU: Jeers outside and cheers inside, 7th February 2013 <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/narendra-modi-visit-rocks-du-jeers-outside-1070436/> (Accessed on 17th October 2017).

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Indian Express, Modi stresses 'packaging, branding' in DU hardsell, 7th February 2013 <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/modi-stresses-packaging-branding-in-du-ha/1070500/> (Accessed on 10 October 2017).

¹²¹ Times of India, Narendra Modi pitches for 'vibrant India', position himself for 2014 polls, 7th October 2013 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Narendra-Modi-pitches-for-vibrant-India-positions-himself-for-2014-polls/articleshow/18374526.cms> (Accessed on 10th October 2017).

only he can bring in the additional votes that BJP needs to overtake Congress decisively. This faction now appears to have gained an upper hand in the leadership debate.¹²²

The report indicated that the Times of India was also the one which belonged to the faction which the report was talking about. Just to substantiate the point that was made earlier about the equal significance of Hindutva agenda during BJP's 2014 elections campaign, it needs to be mentioned here that a report *Committed to build Ram temple: BJP*¹²³ in Indian Express accompanied the reports on Modi's speech at SRCC. The report mentioned 'seeking the blessing of saints for the task, BJP president Rajnath Singh on Wednesday said that his party was committed to the construction of a Ram temple at Ayodhya.'¹²⁴ At one side, Modi was lecturing the SRCC students on economic terms and on the other side BJP president was ensuring his Hindutva assertions to followers of the Hindutva ideology.

Therefore, the media attitudes towards Modi changed after the year 2008. They,

Neatly segued from his culpability in the 2002 riots to a more generic concern about how his divisive and polarizing persona would serve his prospects in the elections and, perchance, national politics in the future, and then to what his election rhetoric augured for national policy in a new government.¹²⁵

Still, the question remains as to why the media changed its attitude towards Modi only after the announcement of Tata factory in Gujarat? An answer to this ought to be sought in the three tier nexus between the corporates, political leaders and the media.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ Indian Express, *Committed to build Ram temple: BJP*, 7th February 2013 <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/committed-to-build-ram-temple-bjp/1070381/> (Accessed on 10th October 2017).

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Editorial, *Fourth Estate That Vanished*, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol xlix no 21, 24th May 2014, p. 9.

The Three Tier Nexus

Walter Lippmann, who is probably among the earliest among the critiques of the mass media, claimed in the 1920s, that the propaganda had already become ‘a regular organ of popular government’. This was given a full shape in the ‘Propaganda Model’ enunciated by Herman and Chomsky; it focuses on the inequality of wealth and power and its multilevel effects on mass media’s interest and choices which states that the money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print and allow the government and dominant private players to get their message across to the people. This propaganda model presents five filters which are:

1. the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms;
2. advertising as the primary income source of the mass media;
3. the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power;
4. "flak" as a means of disciplining the media; and
5. "anti- communism" as a national religion and control mechanism”¹²⁶.

This section, adopts the framework of the first filter i.e. ownership, to explain why the media in India did not foreground the 2002 pogrom in its reportage during the 2014 general elections.

Size, concentrated ownership

Propaganda model’s first filter explains that the ownership of the media houses all around the world is concentrated in the hands of few individuals. In simple terms,

¹²⁶Hermann, S. Edward, Chomsky, Noam. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (London: Vintage Books, 1994) p. 2.

Herman and Chomsky explained that any news content that do not get the consent of the owners of the news outlets fails to get printed and broadcasted.

It's fits in perfectly in case of the Indian media houses too. Paranjoy Guha Thakurta provides some features of media ownership in India:

- The sheer number of media organizations and outlets often conceals the fact that there is dominance over specific markets and market segments by a few players – in other words, the markets are often oligopolistic in character.
- The absence of restrictions on cross-media ownership implies that particular companies or groups or conglomerates dominate markets both vertically (that is, across different media such as print, radio, television and the internet) as well as horizontally (namely, in particular geographical regions).
- Political parties and persons with political affiliation own/control increasing sections of the media in India.
- The promoters and controllers of media groups have traditionally held interests in many other business interests and continue to do so, often using their media outlets to further these. There are a few instances of promoters who have used the profits from their media operations to diversify into other (unrelated) businesses.
- The growing corporatisation of the Indian media is manifest in the manner in which large industrial conglomerates are acquiring direct and indirect interest in media groups. There is also a growing convergence between

creators/producers of media content and those who distribute/disseminate the content.¹²⁷

The features presented by the Thakurta about the media ownership in India presents substantive similarities between the media houses with that of the first filter in the Propaganda model. Because of the cross-media ownership, the powerful few are able to control the media industry. Naturally, the information disseminated from such media houses would be in the interest of those powerful groups and individuals.

The capacity of the media in public relations and in profit making has attracted more and more powerful individuals and groups from the corporate sector in gaining the ownership of the media. And the media houses, both print and television, due to the years of financial crises are looking for the investors and loan lenders. In recent years, big business conglomerates like the Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) have gained ownership of the media houses like Network 18. Network 18 comprise channels like CNBC-TV18 and CNBC Awaaz, together with websites like Web18, newswire18 and magazines such as Forbes India and Overdrive.¹²⁸ When a businessmen like Mukesh D Ambani, who owns RIL, gets the control over the media conglomerates like Network 18, it only expands their influence over the society and these influences are not only on the decision of a consumer to buy a certain product (like influencing a customer to buy RIL products through continuous advertisements in these media outlets) but are also on the political decision of a person.

¹²⁷Thakurta, GuhaParanjoy. Media ownership trends in India, The Hoot <http://thehoot.org/web/MediaownershiptrendsinIndia/6053-1-1-16-true.html> (Accessed on 12/3/2014).

¹²⁸ For complete list of channels, websites and magazines visit Network 18 website <http://www.network18online.com/About-Group-tv18.html> (Accessed on 1st November 2017).

During the elections, if any candidate gained the support from the business elites, they can be promoted through exposing individual or groups of voters, to the news that would directly and indirectly popularise these candidates. Not to mention that even the politicians themselves exercise control over the media through ownership.¹²⁹

Coming back to the corporate ownership of the media, the political decision of the voters can also be influenced by censoring the news that could damage the image of the candidate.

Keeping this in mind, we now need to look into the relationship between the business corporates and Modi as the Prime Ministerial face of the BJP and by extension the NDA. It won't be erroneous to say that business corporates supported Modi during 2014 elections more than anyone else. This can be easily substantiated by the fact that the BJP was the favorite for the corporate donors before election.¹³⁰ In 2013, it was reported that out of 100 corporate leaders, 74 per cent supported Modi.¹³¹ Praful Bidwai, argues that the business corporates loves Modi and his Gujarat model because,

It gives huge tax write-offs (eg, over 60% on the Tatas' Nano project). Business adores Modi for his ruthless decisiveness in granting super-fast industrial approvals. In promoting Modi, it's committing the same blunders that Hitler's and Mussolini's business backers made — aggravating the grave threat to Indian democracy from the communal extreme-right.¹³²

Therefore, the answer to the question that was raised in the beginning of this chapter, whether the media contributed in any way to the victory of the Bharatiya Janata

¹²⁹ For ownership patterns in some of the major news outlets see, NewsLaundry.com, who owns your media? 5th February 2014 <https://www.newsLaundry.com/2014/02/05/who-owns-your-media-4> (Accessed on 17th October 2017).

¹³⁰ Mishra. Ashutosh, *indiatoday.in*, BJP receives maximum funding from corporate donors, says report, 17th August 2017 <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/elections-congress-adr-bjp-political-parties-donations-corporate/1/1028037.html> (Accessed on 1st November 2017).

¹³¹ Livemint, India business favours Narendra Modi to be PM: poll, 6th September 2013 <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/HmcZzc60II1sKfRCPCOQyK/India-business-favours-Narendra-Modi-to-be-PM-poll.html> (Accessed on 15th October 2017).

¹³² Bidwai. Praful, *Daly News & Analysis*, Why Big Business strongly favours Narendra Modi, 18th April 2013 <http://www.dnaindia.com/analysis/column-why-big-business-strongly-favours-narendra-modi-1823847> (Accessed on 17th October 2017).

Party (BJP) in the 2014 Parliamentary Elections? will be in the affirmative. The media indeed contributed to the victory of BJP led by its PM candidate Narendra Modi. This contribution came in three distinct but inter-connected ways.

First, by giving extensive coverage to Modi, as the CMS Media Lab study report suggests.¹³³ According to this report, during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, Modi got 2,575 minutes, which was 33.21 percent of the prime-time news telecast. Coverage of Modi in television was 7.5 times more than the coverage of Rahul Gandhi during the same period.¹³⁴ Rahul Gandhi got 336 minutes, which was only a mere 4.33 percent of the total coverage. The Aam Admi Party leader, Arvind Kejriwal, interestingly, was in the second position with 799 minutes which was 10.31 percent, six percentage points more than the Congress vice-president.

Second, while giving such an extensive coverage to Modi, media outlets created his image of a pro-business leader. News outlets celebrating the announcement of Tata factory in Gujarat was one of the earliest example of it. Any news that could have damaged the image of Modi, like the 2002 Gujarat pogrom for instance, was either filtered out or rendered into the margins. Moreover, the aspect on welfare schemes were not given space and time because doing so might have created a positive image of UPA government in the minds of the voters. This was also the reason why, in the NES survey conducted by the Lokniti-CSDS, the respondents' choice of welfare issues as a major issue before and after election was at negligible percentage. CMS Media Lab report found out that,

¹³³ CMS Media Lab Analysis of TV News Coverage of 2014, report available at <https://www.google.co.in/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwiqoYSK7KfXAhVIO48KHd-WA9MQFggqMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.cmsindia.org%2F2014-Lok-Sabha-Election-media-coverage.docx&usg=AOvVaw2UEZqBmsMOg0YOvIbXQk9c> (Accessed on 5th November 2017).

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

Despite extensive coverage, there was no qualitative shift in the priorities of coverage. Corruption, Election Commission and opinion polls, in that order, received more coverage among issues next to development and governance related issues.¹³⁵

The third way in which the media manufactured the consent for Modi, with the support from the business corporate leaders who own (completely or in shares) media outlets and the BJP was able to control and limit the issues that entered the national and regional election discourse. Plus, the media, under the tutelage of their corporate masters, did not try to challenge the discourse that was being set by Modi and his party; rather they participated in proliferating it.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

With the formation of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in 1925, Hindu Nationalism, an idea that was at best localized and scattered around and manifesting in incidence of anti-Muslim riots and clashes hitherto, assumed the shape of a political ideology located in the context of modern institutions; in other words, here was the birth of an organised platform with an agenda for independent India. Its format was aggressive as well. The RSS, right at its inception was clear and categorical on what it intended and its aims were: To indoctrinate the young, particularly the teenagers and provide them with physical training towards achieving a Hindu nation. Yet, it was the nationalism propagated by Gandhi and the Indian National Congress (INC) which became the 'organic ideology' of the Indian society during the last phase of colonial rule. One of the main reasons for this was that Gandhi and the INC adopted an inclusive approach while mobilising the Indians; whereas, the proponents of the Hindutva ideology preferred high caste Hindus as its leaders (the Chitpavan Brahmins alone were ordained to head the RSS for many years until the 1980s, when a Rajender Singh, a Rajput became its head) and excluded others, particularly the Scheduled Castes and the Other Backward Castes. Therefore, the Indian masses rallied behind the INC in the course of the anti-imperialist struggle; and the rallying point was to establish an egalitarian socio-economic structure. This was based on a categorical realisation that it could only be built upon on a democratic foundation.

This socio-political scenario changed after the independence. The experience of the partition, particularly the shared memories of those who were rooted out of their homes that went to Pakistan on partition and the consumption by the society of this history did come to the aid of the RSS. Alongside, the INC started to cater to the vested

interests of the emerging bourgeoisie and thus sending messages that were not as egalitarian as was done by it in the pre-independence times, more particularly since the Karachi session in 1931. The Hindutva ideologues, after the difficult times they had landed in the immediate wake of independence, due to popular perception of their association with Nathuram Godse and his fellow conspirators in the assassination of M. K. Gandhi, started their 'war of position'. New organisations were founded under the tutelage of the RSS such as the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) in 1948, the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) in 1954 and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) in 1964. The idea was to enter into different sections of the society to disseminate the Hindutva ideology.

With the formation of these new wings, they also utilised all possible means to reach out to the people. As for instance, in 1950, the RSS worked for the relief of the Assam earthquake victims. It started campaigns against cow slaughter in 1952. It joined the *satyagraha* to liberate the Portuguese enclaves of Dadra and Nagar Haveli. The Sino- Indian Border conflict in October 1962 was another opportunity for the Hindutva ideologues to showcase their patriotic credentials. They managed this with ease and the RSS was also let, by the then Nehru administration, to participate in one of the columns of the Republic Day parade in New Delhi on January 26, 1963. In 1965, when India and Pakistan went for war, the traditional anti-Muslim propaganda plank of the RSS and its political wings got a boost and it was able to further consolidate its 'patriotic' image. The war, indeed, aided the process of *enmification*¹ that the Hindutva ideologues had conceived and worked towards the building of their cultural nationalism

¹ *Enmification* is a concept used by Alan C Tidwell and is explained as the process of enemy making, being practiced among political or social elites and transmitted to the masses through education and the media. See Alan C. Tidwell (1998), *Conflict Resolved: A Critical Assessment of Conflict Resolution*, London, Pinter Press, p 126.

(as opposed and distinct from the inclusive economic anti-colonial nationalism that the INC steered until August 1947). In this case, by locating the enemy in the state of Pakistan, the RSS discourse on Hindu nationalism as espoused by M.S.Golwalkar as early as in the 1930s were sunk into the Indian society and thus served the sangh to show the Indian Muslims as much the enemy.

The next important moment, in terms of an opportunity for the RSS and the Hindutva ideologues came during the 1975 emergency. It could entrench itself in the minds of the people as an organisation that fought for the restoration of Democracy and it was possible with the RSS having established an organisation with cadres in most parts of the country. The Bharathiya Jan Sangh, founded out of the Hindu Maha Sabha by Shyama Prasad Mukherjee in 1951 and with aid from the RSS in terms of its cadres being deputed to the Jan Sangh had already landed itself in positions in such states as Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh to head the anti-Congress coalitions that won elections in March 1967. This too had helped the RSS to expand its cadre and organisational base.

Meanwhile, the media (newspapers), during the freedom struggle, was the prominent tool of disseminating nationalistic messages to the common people. Gandhi and the INC made use of the newspapers to educate the ordinary Indians about the colonial exploitation and the need to fight against it. Such messages against colonial rule were integral to both the newspapers that were run by Gandhi himself (*Young India* and *Harijan*), the *National Herald*, which was brought out by the Indian National Congress (ofcourse through a trust that it controlled) as well as by enterprises driven by patriotic Indians such as *The Hindu*, *The Hindustan Times* and the *Amrit Bazar Patrika* and a large number of such ventures in Indian languages across the country. An inclusive nationalism and secular in its core was the nature of these media propaganda.

These were distinct from *The Times of India*, *The Pioneer* and *The Statesman*, which were described then as Anglo-Indian newspapers due to their pro-British slant.

In the post-independence period, Hindutva as an ideology never dominated the space in the mainstream liberal media. The earliest instance of this came in the mid-1980s and along with the earliest manifestation of Hindutva politics, in its most aggressive form and locating itself explicitly against the Muslim people, after independence, during the Ram Janmabhoomi Movement during 1980s. Rather, the mainstream media broadly functioned as an Ideological State Apparatus all these while and even in the years running up to the demolition of the Babri Masjid. When the Babri Masjid was demolished, newspapers were quick in absolving the leaders of the Hindutva movement like L. K. Advani. This, however, was just on December 6, 1992. However, once the central government began taking legal actions against these leaders and their outfits, we noticed that the same set of newspapers changed their stand and started blaming the BJP and other Hindutva leaders for the demolition.

However, this does not mean that the liberal media did not contribute to the proliferation of the Hindutva ideology. This was established earlier and subsequent to the demolition. In fact, as and when the State adhered to the Hindutva ideology, like during Indira Gandhi's second stint as Prime Minister since January 1980, the media too remained idyllic towards it. The media's attitude towards the Hindutva ideology was generally in tune with the attitude of the State from time to time and from place to place.

As for instance, during the Assam movement and the Nellie massacre, the regional media (Assam Tribune) and the national media seemed to be divided on the issues that they were interested in. While the Assam Tribune was spreading the fear of

threat coming out of the influx of ‘outsiders’ in their midst on the Assamese identity (with the Bangladeshi immigrants being shown as the other), national newspapers were more concerned about the petroleum resources in Assam and the adverse impact of the movement there to the transportation of this natural resource, rendered precious after the oil crisis since 1973. But both the regional and the national newspapers agreed on the ‘cause’ behind the Nellie massacre. Soon after the massacre, the process of blame displacement began in these newspapers. The Assam Tribune kept stating that the 18th February 1983 Nellie incident was the result of clashes between the supporters and opponents of the election of 1983. The national newspapers, which were mostly dependent on the report sent by the news agencies United News of India (UNI) and Press Trust of India (PTI), were in agreement; that the Nellie massacre was indeed the fallout of pro and anti-election forces as was being projected by the Assam Tribune.

As there were negligible number of their own reporters from the national newspapers in Assam for reporting on the Assam movement and the massacre, which is clear from the fact that most of the reports on these newspapers were from UNI and PTI, the national media, perhaps, failed to conduct proper investigation and report every side of the story. Both the regional and the national media completely ignored the victims and their views and perspective. While doing so, the national media also ignored the role of the RSS during the Assam movement.

The anti-Sikh riot of 1984 was another example of how the media, in large parts, abdicated from its responsibility to further the democratic process. While reporting on it, most of the English language newspapers, except the Indian Express, refrained themselves from criticising the government. The Hindu, in fact, went further and attempted a laboured clarification on the irresponsible and reckless statement by the Prime Minister of the day, Rajiv Gandhi, that ‘When mighty tree falls, earth shakes’.

The paper also expressed on record its disagreement with report of the the Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission of Enquiry, set up later to look into the anti-Sikh pogrom of November 1984, wherein the involvement of Congress leaders in the riot was brought out. No newspaper, for that matter, informed the readers about the nexus between Bhindranwale and the Congress party since 1977 and the making of Bhindranwale into a leader of a violent army from the mendicant preacher that he was of a sect in Sikhism.

It was only in 2002 Gujarat riots, that the media, both television and print, became vocal in criticising the governments in the both the state and the centre. News channels like Aaj Tak and NDTV brought out the callous attitude of the State's security personnel and questioned the then chief minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi, on his claim that only 10 percent of Gujarat's area was affected by the riot. NDTV specifically focused on the impact of riot on the poor. The news media, during the 2002 riot, also challenged the dominant narrative on the Gujarat pogrom which was being proliferated by the then state government. Newspapers like The Telegraph played a pro-active role and informed the readers about political vendetta that BJP was unleashing on its rivals in the pretext of anti-terror measures even after the anti-Muslim pogrom subsided.

However, this changed during the 2014 general elections. The very same news outlets, which were critical of Modi in 2002, became his admirers. The media's attitude towards him changed after the announcement of the establishment of Tata's small car factory in Gujarat. Soon, he was viewed as the robust leader whose only concern was the economic growth of the country by the media professionals and this view was sent out as a message with a lot of elan. Contrary to evidence to the contrary, the media, by and large peddled the idea that Gujarat achieved new heights in the economic sector only under his Chief Ministership.

Moreover, with the support from the business corporates and the media, which is also owned by the business corporates, Modi gained control over the discourse during the 2014 election campaign. Issues that could have damaged his and his party's image were ignored by the media, both print and visual. Issues like corruption during the Congress rule between 2004 and 2014 and inflation were given much prominence. The media played a major role in this exercise.

An analysis of media reportage in various events, as done in this thesis, we can conclude that the press, certainly, may not have been guilty of subscribing to the ideology of Hindutva per se. Newspapers, indeed, tried to hide the role of the leaders from the RSS-BJP-VHP trio after the demolition of the Babri Masjid but as soon as the State started taking legal actions against them, the very same newspapers started criticising those leaders and organisations. This, in fact, proves that the media actually behaved as the Ideological State Apparatus, as enunciated by Luis Althusser. During the 2002 Gujarat pogrom too, the media criticised the State government of Gujarat; this also substantiates this point. However, the media did contribute to the proliferation of the Hindutva ideology and had a role in the emergence of Hindu nationalism in the Indian politics.

Following are the reasons why the media, even though did not subscribe to the ideology of Hindutva, ended up contributing to its proliferation.

- Lack of investigative rigour in journalism

During the Assam movement and the Nellie massacre, much of the reports that appeared in the national newspapers were from the PTI and UNI; it simply means that these newspapers lacked their own reporters in Assam during that period. The natural consequence of this was the lack of properly investigated reports. Therefore,

newspapers were unable to inform their readers that the Nellie massacre was not a result of a clash between the groups; rather it was an instance of communal violence directed against the minority Muslim Community who were sitting ducks to be associated and identified as Bangadeshis and thus contributed to the *enmification* process, which was central to the Hindutwa project. The history of the process of communalisation of the Assamese society and the targeting of the so called 'Bangladesh immigrants' were not discussed in the reports in these newspapers.

Moreover, in other cases too, except in the case of 2002 Gujarat riots, most of the news reports were based on the statements made by one or the other prominent individuals. In fact, this is one of the major problems with the working of the press all around the world.

Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, in their 'Propaganda Model,' discussed about the filtered 'source'. In doing so, they have enunciated that the media in the USA relies on the information provided by the government, business, and "experts" who are actually the agents of the power. Similarly, in India too, the media are dependent upon the 'experts' for the information. These experts, who get time and space in the newspapers and television channels, are not even effected by the issues that are being discussed; also, they do not even belong to the groups about whom the so called 'news debates' in the news channels are held. And this is even evident in present.

Lack of investigation have resulted in the lack of diversity in views and interpretation of the events and the issues. When the Indian Express went out of the league and did proper investigation, it was able to bring out the role of Congress leaders in the 1984 riots. However, what the Indian Express did in 1984 is a rare case. As the press failed to investigate and bring out the truth, it also failed in understanding the role

of the communal forces like it failed to understand and bring out the role of the RSS during the Assam movement. Whenever any organisation tends to polarise the people and targets any community, the media as a guardian of democracy should bring it out to the public sphere; but because it itself remains unaware, due to lack of investigation from its side, it fails to do that.

➤ When the State attempts to appropriate Hindutva

While the media functioned more as ISA, than the fourth pillar of the democracy, it contributes to the proliferation of the Hindutva ideology, particularly when the State tends to appropriate Hindutva. This was evident, particularly during the post-emergency period when the Indian State, under the leadership of Indira Gandhi and later under the Rajiv Gandhi, tried to employ the Hindutva politics for its own political benefits.

➤ Nexus between corporates, politicians and the media sets the agenda.

The liberalisation of the Indian economy did not just bring in the monetary resources for the media houses in the form of advertisements and sponsorships. It also expanded the ownership of media by business houses. Particularly, since the 2008 global economic meltdown, which also had its impact on the revenue of media houses, media houses had become prey to big corporates. While media houses are looking for investments for their survival, big corporates are gaining more and more control over them. Needless to say, these business corporations have no such intention of furthering the democratic principles, which is actually the prime responsibility of the media in India. For them, media industry is another industry for profit making. It is true that even before the control of business corporates, media houses looked forward for profits but

still they also held on to perform their democratic responsibilities, though they did it rarely.

Now, with the increasing control of business tycoons and their companies over the media houses, the democratic responsibilities as one of the guiding principles for the working of the press in India is losing its significance. It was clearly evident during the 2014 general elections and the campaign when the press in India came under the tutelage of their corporate masters and set an agenda that their masters wanted from the journalists. What these agendas would be? How it would be communicated? Whom it benefits (politically)? Are we dependent upon the corporate masters.

Therefore, when the Hindutva ideologues in general and Narendra Modi, in particular, gained supports from the corporates, the media remained silent on the matter of his misdeeds and becomes vocal while singing praises for him. In simple words, citizens were not informed about all sides of the story and were served half-truths or complete lies like it happened in 2014.

- The statements like ‘national unity’, ‘national security’ ‘positive secularism’, ‘modernization’, ‘development’ in the discursive formation of the Hindutva attracts media.

Hindutva ideologues do not depend only in one or another issue for all the times and everywhere. It may be true that the anti-Muslim or anti- Christian sentiments constitute the core of the ideology; but to attract different segments of the Indian society, which is diverse in nature, the Hindutwa campaign has always comprised of many other issues or statements. The discursive formation of Hindutva have many such issues and statements, few of them like ‘national unity’, ‘national security’, ‘modernisation’, ‘development’, etc., and these attracted and continues to attract the

interests of the media. It is not necessary that the media agrees and accepts all the issues and statements that any ideology comprises within itself. But if any ideology is able to assert themselves on the basis of these issues and statements than the media tends to give its support. This is what Hindutva ideologues have understood, particularly after 1975. Therefore, the media, even if it do not adheres to Hindutva ideology, in some cases it even criticizes it, ends up contributing towards its proliferation because of its support towards these issues and statements.

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