



Title	Religion and National Identity in India : A Comparative Analysis
Author(s)	
Citation	令和2（2020）年度学部学生による自主研究奨励事業 研究成果報告書．2021
Version Type	VoR
URL	https://hdl.handle.net/11094/80632
rights	
Note	

The University of Osaka Institutional Knowledge Archive : OUKA

<https://ir.library.osaka-u.ac.jp/>

The University of Osaka

令和2年度大阪大学未来基金「学部学生による自主研究奨励事業」研究成果報告書

ふりがな	タンビ ケヅエワル	学部	人間科学	学年	3 年
氏名	Tanvi Kejriwal	学科	人間科学 (G30)		
アドバイザー教員 氏名	フィリップ シュトライク Philip Streich	所属	人間科学 Human Science		
研究課題名	Religion and National Identity in India : A Comparative Analysis				
研究成果の概要	研究目的、研究計画、研究方法、研究経過、研究成果等について記述すること。必要に応じて用紙を追加してもよい。（先行する研究を引用する場合は、「阪大生のためのアカデミックライティング入門」に従い、盗作剽窃にならないように引用部分を明示し文末に参考文献リストをつけること。）				

Introduction: Religion in Contemporary Indian Politics

India is one of the most religiously diverse states in the world and comprises many different religious groups. In fact, according to the latest census data, the country consists of Hindus (79.8%), Muslims (14.2%), Christians (2.3%), Sikhs (1.7%), Buddhists (0.7%) and Jains (0.4%) (Indian Bureau of Census, 2011). Members of all these religious communities are promised equal rights under the state's secular constitution. Yet, this does not stop religion from being a highly politicised topic in India.

The Congress Party, a political party with a near monopoly of the country's governance for most of its history, used communal unrest for political gains (Gottlob, 2007) during their rule but respected the tenets of secularism on paper. Communal relations were still strained but the Indian identity remained largely secular (Bhargava, 2002). This changed after the Bharatiya Janata Party won a historical victory in the 2014 Indian National Elections (ECI, 2014).

The BJP propagated an ideology known as Hindutva (also known as Hindu Nationalism) which is a form of majoritarian nationalism that believes that India is a Hindu state. Hindutva regards secularism to be a form of Western propaganda and considers the Muslim faith to be a threat to the safety of both Hindu individuals and the Hindu state (Anand, 2011). This rhetoric has become increasingly popular in India with the rising popularity of the BJP, leading the identities 'Hindu'

and 'Indian' to become increasingly conflated (Vaishnav, 2019). Therefore, it is an important time to examine how religion has come to become an essential component of one's national identity in India.

To answer this question, this paper explores the rise of religious nationalism within India and its foray into the mainstream Indian political narrative. To do so, the author conducts qualitative historical analysis of post-independence India to offer explanations as to how and why Hindu nationalism became popular in India.

Literature Review

The topic of religious nationalism in India and how it affects different religious communities has been a popular area of study within the field of political science. It has especially gained popularity after the resurgence of Hindu Nationalism under the BJP. Most scholarly literature is critical of the recent rise of Hindu nationalism and what that might mean for the state of Indian democracy and communal harmony. However, experts vary in their assessment of the factors that have led to the surging popularity of Hindu nationalism.

Some scholars have defined Indian nationalism as being divided into three types – secular nationalism, Hindu nationalism and separatist nationalism (as seen in regions like Kashmir), classifying Hindu nationalism as being a reaction to the other forms of nationalism and the changing Indian landscape that they represent (Varshney, 1993). Others postulate that the very identity of the Hindu has been created through historical revisionism to further the cause of Hindu nationalism. They believe that Hindu nationalism has successfully framed the Hindu community as a historically wronged community that must strive for restitution and this historical revisionism has led to a feeling of discontentment among the Hindu community, making them more receptive to ideas of Hindutva (Mukta, 1995). Yet, others provide an alternative perspective, hypothesising that the rise of Hindutva was not based in Hindu-Muslim conflict alone but was rather, a response to deepening tensions within different castes of Hindus (Shani, 2007). This paper will use a historical perspective to reconcile these varying analyses into a singular historical narrative to explain how Hinduism and Hindu nationalism came to be increasingly

interchangeable.

Methodology

Number	Method	Synopsis
Method 1	Literature Review	Critically analyse books and journal papers on Hindu nationalism and religious identity in India to form a basic framework of existing theories regarding the rise of Hindu nationalism in the country.
Method 2	Qualitative Historical Analysis	Use of political theory to explain historical events and patterns, in this case, the rise of Hindu Nationalism in India.

Table 1: Overview of Research Design

Table 1 shows the two main components of the author's research. Existing primary and secondary sources are the main source of analysis for this report. This is due to several reasons. India continues to be one of the countries worst-hit with the COVID-19 pandemic. This eliminated the possibility to use fieldwork based research methods for this paper. Further, the national scale of this paper meant that data collection from a representative sample was out of the scope at this level. For the purpose of this study, books and journal articles on issues of Hindu Nationalism were included. These constitute the framework for the author's understanding of Hindu Nationalism and the historical progression of religious nationalism in India. The author also uses existing data of communal riots to track Hindu-Muslim relations through time. The form of qualitative historical analysis used in this research constituted tracing historical instances of communal conflict and corresponding them with milestones in the rise of Hindu Nationalism and the BJP to theorise the historical causes of the popularity of Hindutva in contemporary India.

Findings

As mentioned, this research aims to utilise existing data to provide historical explanations for the rise of Hindu nationalism in India. In order to do so, it is important to locate when the upward trend towards increased Hindu nationalism and communal strife began. This research does that

by examining data on Hindu-Muslim riots starting from 1947 (independence) onwards. It finds that the mid-1980s and early 1990s displayed an atypical rise in instances of religious riots and also coincided with milestones of the rise of Hindu nationalists.

Year	Location	Deaths (known)
1967	Ranchi	184
1969	Gujarat	512
1980	Moradabad	400
1983	Nellie	2191
1984	Bhiwandi	278
1985	Gujarat	275
1987	Meerut, Delhi	346, 15
1988	Aurangabad, Muzaffarnagar	26, 37
1989	Bombay, Kota, Badaun, Indore, Bhagalpur	11, 26, 24, 23, 1000
1990	Gujarat, Colonelganj, Karnatake, Rajasthan, Ayodhya, Hyderabad, Aligarh, Kanpur, Agra, Gonda, Khurja	12, 100, 46, 50, 60, 200, 11, 20, 22, 25, 96
1991	Bhadrak, Saharanput, Kanpur, Meerut, Varanasi	33, 40, 20, 30, 20
1992	Bombay, Surat, Karnataka, Kanpur, Assam, Rajasthan, Calcutta, Bhopal, Delhi	250, 200, 30, 254, 90, 60, 35, 175, 53
1993	Bombay	1500
1994	Bangalore, Hubli	25, 6
1997	Coimbatore	60
2002	Gujarat	2000
2005	Mau, Lucknow	14, 4
2006	Vadodara	8
2008	Indore	8
2015	Nadia	4
2016	Kaliachak, Dhulagarh	Data Unavailable
2017	Baduria, Bihar	Data Unavailable
2020	Delhi and Bangalore	53, 3

Table 2: Hindu-Muslim Riots Since Independence (Graff & Galonnier, 2012)

Discussion

In order to understand the rise of the BJP and Hindu nationalism in the 2010s, it is important to look back to the 1980s. Before the mid-1980s, there was little evidence that communal tensions were high and strife was imminent. Muslim-Hindu tensions had been largely negligible in the

1960s and 70s. However, the rise of communal violence in the 1980s marked a power shift between the Congress and the BJP (Ornit, 2005). Even though a majority of these riots originated from internal conflicts between the Hindu community over the reservation system, they soon transformed into Hindu-Muslim violence wherein police officials and government officers reportedly favored Hindu rioters and did little to stop the violence (Ansari, 2016). This led to rising tensions between the two communities and increased instability. It was during this political climate that the BJP was formed in April 6, 1980. It was a party that adopted the rhetoric of Hindutva but unlike its predecessors (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Shiv Sena etc.), the BJP succeeded by portraying the Congress as a political party that unfairly favoured minority communities over Hindus (Verma, 2019 et. la). They became effective in promoting this narrative and winning their first national election (1999) because of their response to the Babri Masjid Dispute.

The Babri Masjid was a mosque built during the Mughal era in the sacred Hindu city of Ayodhya. In the 1990s, it became a socio-political dispute between the Hindu and Muslim communities after Hindutva organisations began calling for its demolition. It also led to several major riots around the country in the early 1990s (see, Table 2). In September 1990, the BJP organised a political rally from parts of North India to Ayodhya to call for a demolition (Siddiqui, 2016). This led to the arrest of BJP leader L.K. Advani, following which some of his supporters tried to vandalise the mosque. While those supporters were unsuccessful, this widely increased BJP support in Uttar Pradesh (the state that Ayodhya is in) and caused the BJP to win a majority in the state. Following this victory, the BJP and its parent organisation, the RSS held yet another rally in Ayodhya in 1992 leading to the demolition of the mosque by their supporters. This caused the BJP to become a nationally known party and win a national election in 1999. Over the course of the next two decades, the BJP redefined the discourse around secularism in India. This new-found influence led the BJP to redefine the Hindu identity and utilise the politics of fear geared around the dangerous Other and the awakened Self (Anand, 2016). While the BJP was unseated by Congress once again from 2004-2014, this politics led to an unprecedented electoral victory for the BJP in

2014.

Conclusion

The BJP era has been rife with communal riots, discriminatory legislation and human rights violations. However, in order to understand how India got here, it is important to consider the various historical events that led to the popularity of Hindu Nationalism. Looking at the trends in religious riots and other forms of communal violence, it is clear that sour relations between the two largest religious communities in India often coincides with the BJP's attempts to create an exclusively Hindu India. The rise of Hindutva can often feel like an overnight process that began with the BJP's historic 2014 victory however, fundamental political change does not happen overnight. Communal strife and violence has began pushing the Hindu community towards Hindu nationalism back in the 1980s.

Regardless, this paper should by no means be regarded as comprehensive, due to the limitations posed both by the pandemic and the scope of undergraduate research, this paper only seeks to provide a basic historical framework for the rise of Hindu nationalism in India. India is a massive multi-cultural country and there are several factors affecting any political trends within the country. Therefore, through this research, the author hopes to call for greater international attention to the issues of Hindu nationalism within India.

References

1. Anand, D. (2011). Hindu Nationalism in India. In *Hindu Nationalism in India and the Politics of Fear* (pp. 1-17). Palgrave Macmillan, New York.
2. Anand, D. (2016). *Hindu nationalism in India and the politics of fear*. Springer.
3. Ansari, M. T. (2015). *Islam and nationalism in India: South Indian contexts*. Routledge.
4. Bhargava, R. (2002). Liberal, secular democracy and explanations of Hindu nationalism. *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 40(3), 72-96.
5. Census of India. (2011). 2011 National Census of India. Retrieved from <https://censusindia.gov.in/>
6. Chhibber, P., & Verma, R. (2019). The rise of the second dominant party system in India: BJP's new social coalition in 2019. *Studies in Indian Politics*, 7(2), 131-148.
7. Election Commission of India. (2014). General Election 2014 Results. Retrieved from <https://eci.gov.in/files/category/97-general-election-2014/>
8. Gottlob, M. (2007). India's unity in diversity as a question of historical perspective. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 779-789.

9. Graff, V., & Galonnier, J. (2012). Hindu-Muslim Communal Riots in India II (1986-2011). Online Encyclopaedia of Mass Violence, Paris, Sciences Po, CERI.
10. Mukta, P. (1995). The Politics of Religious Nationalism and New Indian Historiography: Lessons for the Indian Diaspora. Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, University of Warwick.
11. Shani, O. (2005). The rise of Hindu nationalism in India: The case study of Ahmedabad in the 1980s. *Modern Asian Studies*, 39(4), 861-896.
12. Shani, O. (2007). Communalism, caste and Hindu nationalism: The violence in Gujarat. Cambridge University Press.
13. Siddiqui, K. (2016). A critical study of 'Hindu Nationalism' in India. *Journal of Business and Economic Policy*, 3(2), 9-28.
14. Stewart, K. (2020). *The Power Worshipers: Inside the Dangerous Rise of Religious Nationalism*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
15. Vaishnav, M. (2019). *The BJP in Power: Indian Democracy and Religious Nationalism*.
16. Van der Veer, P. (1994). *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*. University of California Press.
17. Varshney, A. (1993). Contested meanings: India's national identity, Hindu nationalism, and the politics of anxiety. *Daedalus*, 122(3), 227-261.