

CONCEPTUALISING VINAYAK DAMODAR SAVARKAR AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION OF INDIA

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INTRODUCTION:

Hindu nationalism, or “Hindutva”, is a political and cultural ideology that seeks to define Indian identity through the lens of Hindu values tradition and heritage. The concept is rooted in the idea that India, historically known as Hindustan (the land of Hindus), should be a nation where the majority Hindu population sets the direction and goals of the State. This ideology is shaped by five key elements: land, race, religion, culture, and language, all of which are considered inherently Hindu by its proponents.

The philosophical foundation of Hindu nationalism was laid by Prominent figures such as Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, Madhav Rao Sadashiv Golwalkar, and Deendayal Upadhyay. Savarkar, a freedom fighter and one of the founders of the revolutionary group *Abhinav Bharat*, played a crucial role in shaping the narrative of Hindu nationalism. His work, particularly the book “Indian War of Independence 1857”, was the groundwork for the ideological framework that followed.¹

Hedgewar, the founder of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in 1925, further institutionalized this ideology by establishing a grassroots organization dedicated to promoting Hindu values and unity. Golwalkar, a key ideologue of the RSS, contributed significantly to the development of Hindu nationalism through his writings, particularly in “We or Our Nationhood Defined” and “Bunch of Thoughts”. These works articulated a vision of India as a Hindu nation, emphasizing the need for a strong, unified Hindu identity. Deendayal Upadhyay, another prominent RSS thinker, introduced the concept of “Integral Humanism”, which became a cornerstone of Hindu nationalist philosophy. His ideas sought to harmonize individual and national interests by integrating Hindu values into the fabric of Indian society and governance.

Hindu nationalism is therefore centered on the belief that India's identity is intrinsically linked to Hinduism. It posits that the Hindu majority should lead the nation politically, culturally, and socially, arguing that this alignment of land, race, religion, culture, and language constitutes the essence of true Indian nationalism. The ideology seeks to translate this religious majority into a permanent political majority, asserting that democracy should reflect the will and values of the Hindu populace.²

Hindu Nationalism, often referred to as Hindutva, is an ideology that envisions India as inherently a Hindu nation, not merely in religious terms but as a civilizational concept deeply rooted in its ancient past. Proponents of Hindutva argue that India has always been a "Hindu Rashtra" (Hindu Nation), predating any modern redefinition. They refer to the Indian subcontinent as 'Asetn. Himachal,' the sacred land between the Himalayas and the Indian Ocean, blessed by divine incarnations like Lord Ram and Krishna and enriched by the teachings of sages and saints. This land is not only a physical entity but also a spiritual one,

¹ Roy, H., & Singh, M. P. (2017). *Indian political thought: Themes and thinkers*. Noida. Pearson. (P.64)

² Malik, S. K., & Tomar, A. (Eds.). (2022). *Revisiting modern Indian thought: Themes and perspectives*. Sage. (PP.44-47)

revered as '**Matribhumi**' (motherland), '**Pitribhumi**' (fatherland), and '**Devabhumi**' (land of God). The proponents of Hindutva believe that this land's ancient culture, scientific advancements, and philosophical values are unparalleled in human history. The concept of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the whole world is one family) is cited as a core value of this civilization, reflecting its inclusive and universal outlook. However, Hindutva ideologues argue that this great civilization has degenerated over the centuries, particularly due to foreign invasions by Islamic and Christian forces. They see these invasions as having eroded India's cultural and spiritual fabric, leading to a loss of its ancient honor and dignity. Thus, they advocate for a revival or rediscovery of this glorious past, which they believe is essential to restoring India's rightful place as a Hindu nation.³

The social and political base of Hindutva has historically been rooted in the upper strata of Hindu society, particularly among Brahmins, Baniyas (traders), and the landowning classes. Politically, this ideology has been represented by organizations and parties like the Hindu Mahasabha, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Bharatiya Jan Sangh, and, more recently, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). These groups have sought to promote the idea of India as a Hindu Rashtra, emphasizing a cultural nationalism that ties the identity of the nation to its Hindu heritage and seeks to reclaim what they perceive as its lost glory.

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, a key figure in the development of Hindu nationalist ideology, played a crucial role in shaping the concept of Hindu Rashtra, which has been central to various socio-religious and political formations in India, such as the Hindu Mahasabha, RSS, Bharatiya Jan Sangh, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, and ultimately the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Savarkar's influence is rooted in his reinterpretation of India's history, particularly the events surrounding the 1857 rebellion. In his book **The Indian War of Independence of 1857** and other writings, Savarkar challenged the prevailing view that the rebellion was merely a spontaneous outburst triggered by minor incidents, such as the use of greased cartridges. Instead, he argued that the revolt was driven by deeper, more profound motivations tied to the principles of "Swadharma" (self-religion) and "Swaraj" (self-rule). He emphasized that the struggle was not merely about isolated grievances but was a collective effort to protect the religious and political freedom of the Indian people, which he saw as inherently connected. Savarkar drew parallels between the 1857 rebellion and other significant historical events, like the French Revolution, suggesting that both were driven by fundamental principles rather than superficial causes. He viewed the kidnapping of Sita in the Ramayana as symbolic of deeper conflicts, just as the incidents leading up to the 1857 rebellion were seen as manifestations of a broader struggle for autonomy and religious integrity. For Savarkar, these struggles were not merely about political power but about the preservation and revitalization of Hindu culture and identity, which he believed were under threat from foreign domination. Through his writings and ideological influence, Savarkar laid the groundwork for the later development of the Hindu nationalist movement. His vision of 'Swadharma' and 'Swaraj' became central to the idea of Hindu Rashtra, which continues to shape the political discourse in India.⁴

The BJP, as a political descendant of these earlier movements, carries forward this legacy, emphasizing the idea of a nation defined by Hindu cultural and religious values. The relationship between 'Swadharma' and 'Swaraj' is often viewed as deeply interconnected, with each concept complementing the other. It is argued that 'Swadharma' (one's own duty or

³ Savarkar, V. D. (1937). Address to the Hindu Mahasabha. In *Selected Works of V. D. Savarkar*. Veer Savarkar Prakashan. (pp. 112–115)

⁴ *Ibid.*, (p. 127)

righteousness) and 'Swaraj' (self-rule or independence) are not in conflict but are instead linked as means and end. The idea suggests that Swaraj without Swadharma is hollow, while Swadharma without Swaraj lacks strength. This perspective implies that separating religion from the state's power structure is unfeasible within this framework of thought. Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, a significant advocate of the concept of a Hindu Rashtra, builds on Vinayak Damodar Savarkar's ideas of 'Swadharma' and 'Swaraj.' Golwalkar asserts that when applying modern notions of nationhood to India, it is evident that the Hindu race, along with its Hindu religion, language (including Sanskrit and its derivatives), forms the complete concept of the nation. He argues that in Hindustan, the ancient Hindu nation exists and must continue to exist as the predominant identity.⁵

Golwalkar writes in his book, *We or our Nationhood Defined* and said, "we repeat", in Hindusthan, the land of the Hindus, lives and should live the Hindu nation-satisfying all the five essential requirements of the scientific nation concept of the modern world. The five essential requirements³ are as follows:⁶

LAND OF HINDUS (HINDUSTHAN):

Hindusthan, or the Land of Hindus, is revered by the proponents of Hindu Nationalism as a sacred territory, Bharat, whose glories are extolled even by the gods. Golwalkar quotes a Sanskrit shloka that emphasizes this reverence, stating that "the men in the land of Bharat, the gateway to heavens and salvation, are more blessed than the gods themselves." This land, envisioned by Mahayogi Aurobindo as the living manifestation of the Divine Mother of the universe—Jagmata, Adishakti, Mahamaya, and Mahadurga—has taken a concrete form to be worshipped. Golwalkar further elaborates on the sacredness of Bharat, describing it as "Asetu-Himalaya," stretching from the Setu (Rameshwaram) to the Himalayas. This geographical expanse has been celebrated since ancient times. He cites a Sanskrit shloka that defines Bharatvarsha as the land to the north of the oceans and south of the Himalayas, with its people being the children of this land. Golwalkar argues that for a race to live as a Nation, it must have its own territory, ideally bounded by natural geographical features. This territory, he asserts, forms the physical foundation of national life. Consequently, Hindustan is envisioned as the land of Hindus, a terra firma where the Hindu Nation alone can flourish.

RACE (HINDU):

Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, often referred to as "Guruji," was a prominent leader of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), an Indian right-wing, Hindu nationalist, paramilitary volunteer organization. His views on race, nation, and nationalism are deeply rooted in the concept of Hindu nationalism, or "Hindutva." In the excerpt you've provided, Golwalkar defines a "race" as a group bound by common heredity, customs, language, and shared memories. He emphasizes that this race forms the core of a nation. For him, the survival of a nation depends on the preservation of the race's religion and culture. If these elements are destroyed, Golwalkar argues, the nation itself ceases to exist.⁷

He further suggests that only those movements and individuals who work towards the upliftment and glorification of the Hindu race and nation are truly nationalistic. In his view, anyone who does not align with this goal is either a traitor, an enemy, or, at best, a misguided individual. Golwalkar's ideas have been both influential and controversial, particularly in the

⁵ Ibid., p. 129

⁶ Ibid., p. 130

⁷ Pillai, M. S. (2024). *Gods, guns and missionaries: The making of the modern Hindu identity*. India. Penguin Allen Lane.(P.22)

context of India's religious and cultural diversity. His emphasis on the Hindu race as the foundation of the nation has been criticized for promoting an exclusionary form of nationalism that marginalizes non-Hindu communities.

RELIGION :

The claim being made here highlights the unique characteristics of Hinduism as a religion, particularly its vast diversity of sects and sub-sects, such as Shaiva, Vaishnava, Shakta, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, Lingayat, Arya Samaj, and others, all of which coexist within the flexible framework of Dharma. These great masters and founders of various religious practices created different forms of worship to cater to the diverse mental dispositions of the people. However, ultimately, all these practices aim towards the same goal of realizing the 'ultimate truth,' which is referred to by various names such as Brahma, Atma, Shiva, Vishnu, Ishwara, or even Shunya (the Void).⁸

In this context, 'Dharma' is a guiding principle for both individuals and groups, establishing a synthesis of conflicting claims. Proponents of the 'Hindu Rashtra' advocate for 'Prakramavad,' a concept emphasized in the book 'Bunch of Thoughts,' which calls for the revival of Prakramavad. This philosophy includes:

Rashtra Dharma: National responsibility

Samaj Dharma: Duty to society

Kula Dharma: Duty to ancestors

Vyakti Dharma: Personal faith

Raja Dharma: The role of the state as an agent for the common good, now referred to as Rajyaniti or Rajya Dharma

CULTURE :

Golwalkar describes the concept of 'Hindu Rashtra' as deeply rooted in Hindu culture, which he refers to as 'Sanskriti' (culture). He emphasizes that this cultural current instills in individuals qualities such as purity, character, fortitude, and self-sacrifice. According to him, these virtues help individuals achieve the highest goals of human existence. This cultural influence is evident in daily life, elevating ordinary experiences into something transcendent. In essence, Golwalkar views Hindu culture as a transformative force that enriches both personal growth and societal values.

LANGUAGE :

In the concept of 'Hindu Rashtra' (Hindu Nation), the idea of a singular, unified language is emphasized, rejecting the notion of multilingualism. It is argued that every nation naturally develops its own language, which embodies its unique culture, religion, history, and traditions. Introducing or supplementing this language with others is considered a threat to national identity. In this context, Sanskrit is regarded as the only true language of the Hindu Nation, from which all other regional languages are derived. It is seen as the ancient, divine language that connects all people within the nation, transcending regional differences. The modern languages are viewed as closely related offshoots of Sanskrit, making them practically one and the same. This unity in language is considered essential for preserving the cultural and spiritual integrity of the Hindu Rashtra.

⁸ Savarkar, V. D. (2003). *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* Hindi Sahitya Sadan. (PP.40-47)

Proponents argue that those who do not belong to the Hindu race, religion, culture, and language naturally fall outside the realm of the true "National" life. Golwalkar emphatically asserts that in Hindusthan, the land of the Hindu Nation, these elements meet all five essential requirements of the modern world's scientific nation concept.⁹

The term Hindutva (Hinduness) is not synonymous with Hinduism. V.D. Savarkar explains that "Hindutva is not just a word but a history." Hinduism is only a derivative, a fraction, a part of Hindutva. An "ism" generally refers to a theory, doctrine, or code, often rooted in spiritual or religious dogma. For Hindu nationalists, modern democratic laws and institutions do not define a nation; emotions and loyalty do. A comparative study by Ashutosh Varshney in his article "Contested Meanings" highlights that the pluralism of secular nationalism is embodied in laws such as personal laws and the protection of minority educational institutions, as well as in political institutions like federalism. However, Hindu nationalists argue that laws can always be politically manipulated, and the proliferation of pro-minority laws has not led to the creation of a cohesive nation. Instead, divisive tendencies have regularly emerged. Therefore, rather than distancing oneself from Hinduism, which is seen as the source of India's culture, it is suggested that politics should be explicitly grounded in Hinduism, not just in laws and institutions. The Hindu Rashtra is essentially cultural in its content, while the so-called secular concept pertains to the state and is limited to the territorial and political aspects of the nation. A mere territorial-cum-political concept, divorced from its cultural essence, cannot be expected to impart any sanctity to the country's unity. The emotional binding of the people is provided only by culture, and once that bond is severed, there remains no logical argument against any part of the country seeking separation.¹⁰

There is a noticeable fluctuation between the meanings of "Hinduism" as a culture and "Hinduism" as a religion. Proponents often argue that "Hindu" is not a term for a religious faith like Islam or Christianity, but rather denotes a way of life or national identity. For instance, L.K. Advani, the former President of the BJP, once contended that "since Hinduism is a description of the nation, Muslims could be called Muslim Hindus, Sikhs could be called Sikh Hindus, and Christians could be called Christian Hindus." However, when making speeches for the liberation of Lord Ram's birthplace, the language used is steeped in religious imagery, and the rituals practiced are deeply rooted in Sanatan traditions (idol worship). This raises questions about the distinction Hindu nationalists make between religion and culture. While they are correct that the term "Hindu" originally referred to the inhabitants of Hindustan (a common name for India in much of the north), over the centuries, "Hindu" has evolved into a religious term, and "Indian" has come to replace "Hindu" in its civilizational context. For secular nationalists, religion and culture are clearly separable. Syncretism and tolerance are features of all religious communities in India, not just Hinduism. Celebrating Indian culture does not require one to be exclusively Hindu. However, for Hindu Rashtravadis (Hindu nationalists), the terms "India" and "Hindu" are synonymous. They do not make significant efforts to incorporate Muslim symbols into their conception of culture, and their attitude toward great monuments like the Taj Mahal is often ambiguous. Some even object to the Muslim names of North Indian cities, advocating for changes like renaming Aligarh to Harigarh, Allahabad to Prayag, and Lucknow to Lakshmanpur.

⁹ Ibid., PP.48-50

¹⁰ Brown, D. M. (1953). *The white umbrella: Indian political thought from Manu to Gandhi*. University of California Press. (p. 132)

HINDU RASHTRA AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE :

Hindu nationalists argue that Hindu society originated from the "Purush" (supreme person), with its four-fold social divisions symbolizing the mouth, arms, thighs, and feet of this cosmic being. This analogy promotes the idea of an interdependent, hierarchical society, where each individual performs their duties (Dharma) for social harmony. Proponents of "Hindu Rashtra" believe that the society has weakened over time due to a failure to understand and observe Dharma, and external threats like Islamic invasions and the influence of Christianity. However, sociologists argue that internal factors like the rigid caste system, characterized by domination and subordination, have been more damaging. While Hindu Rashtra is philosophically presented as open and tolerant, in reality, it has been socially closed, perpetuating inequality and powerlessness, particularly among Dalits, who historically endured severe oppression, often living in conditions worse than animals.

The argument posited by Hindu nationalists asserts that external forces have not been the primary disruptors of the Hindu nation; rather, its own internal contradictions have led to its challenges. They identify two main disruptive forces: Muslims and Christians, who are perceived as promoting values that might lead to denationalization, and the 'westernized' elite, who advocate for ideologies like capitalism, socialism, or communalism. Critics argue that Christians, with their distinct cultural practices and historical separation from the national essence, pose a threat to the unity of the nation. This viewpoint is echoed by Prof. Shankhdher, who suggests that Hindu politics should dominate, while secularism should be promoted to rescue the state from pseudo-secular influences. Similarly, Islam is viewed as a significant threat to national integration and the concept of a 'Hindu Rashtra,' which fundamentally opposes multiculturalism. The text critiques the modern scientific and philosophical ideas of democracy, capitalism, and socialism from a Hindu nationalist perspective. According to these nationalists, Western concepts focus too much on material gratification and physical wants, leading to societal issues like greed and class conflict. They argue that these philosophies lack spiritual content and fail to address human conditions effectively. Instead, they promote Hindu philosophy as a solution, emphasizing an integrated approach that minimizes social conflict and binds society together.¹¹

Hindu nationalists advocate for a revitalization of the nation through individual virtues. They propose four key virtues for an ideal Hindu individual: invincible physical strength, strong character, intellectual acumen, and fortitude. Physical strength represents a disciplined commitment, while character signifies a personal resolve for noble causes. Intellectual acumen guides these virtues, and fortitude allows perseverance in a virtuous life. They believe that tackling societal disorder and anarchy requires disciplined energy and systematic effort, inspired by classical Hindu traditions. Critics, however, argue that this perspective neglects materialistic philosophies like Lokayat and Charvaka, which offer alternative viewpoints that are not addressed in the discussion.

SOURCES OF HINDU RASHTRA:

The concept of Hindu Rashtra, or Hindu nation, has deep roots in ancient Indian scriptures, notably in the philosophical stream of Advaita Vedanta. This philosophy, systematically formulated around 800 A.D. by Shankara, revolves around the non-dualistic monism of the Upanishads. It posits that the material world is an illusion (maya) created by spiritual energy from the universal soul (Brahman), with only Ishwara being the ultimate reality. The pursuit of knowledge (jnana) and enlightenment is achieved through meditation, which is preceded

¹¹ Chandra, B. (1979). *Nationalism and colonialism in modern India*. Orient Longman. (p. 71)

by adherence to dharma (moral duties). In Hindu tradition, society is structured around three intrinsic qualities: Satva (clarity), Rajas (activity), and Tamas (darkness), which are believed to shape individual nature and talents. Dharma guides individuals to fulfill their societal roles with detachment, aligning with the principle of Nishkama Karma—acting without attachment to results, as discussed in the Bhagavad Gita.

Hindu nationalism, as advocated by organizations like the Sangh Parivar, redefines Indian nationalism in terms of Hindu identity, equating the nation with divine concepts such as Goddess Jagamata and Dharmabhumi. This perspective views the nation and its sacred geography as manifestations of divine power, aiming to inspire loyalty through religious symbolism. M.S. Golwalkar, a prominent figure in this discourse, extended the concept of sacred geography to include regions beyond contemporary India, advocating for a unified "Brihatar Bharat." He argued that India's cultural heritage, rooted in a common source and Sanskrit, binds its people together. According to Golwalkar, sages, as interpreters of higher law, hold ultimate authority, contrasting with modern democratic ideals that emphasize individual rights and public participation. In essence, the idea of Hindu Rashtra seeks to merge traditional metaphysical beliefs with nationalist sentiments, presenting a vision that blends spiritual and political elements to shape modern Indian identity.¹²

THE HINDU SELF AND OTHERS:

The politics of Hindu Nationalism is grounded in the majoritarianism of a specific religious community and has evolved with its own unique context. This ideology is deeply rooted in the historical attempt to define the 'self' in India, a process that has evolved over centuries but took a distinct form during the colonial period. As Christophe Jaffrelot notes, the concept of Hindu nationalism began to crystallize between the 1870s and the 1920s, shaped by socio-religious movements initiated primarily by high-caste Hindus. One of the most influential organizations from this period was the Arya Samaj, founded in 1875. These socio-religious movements emerged as a response to British colonial rule and Christian missionary efforts, aiming to preserve the traditional social order and culture of Hindus. They sought to reconcile Indian traditions with the changing influences of Western society by creating an idealized 'Golden Age' that was both rooted in indigenous culture and aligned with modern values. This 'Golden Age' concept became a cornerstone of Hindu nationalism, serving to construct a Hindu majority identity.¹³

Contemporary communal politics draws heavily on historical interpretations and selective appropriations, using an imagined past to justify its present stance. Hindu nationalists often invoke historical narratives and myths to legitimize their views, and when history is insufficient, they turn to faith, which they regard as sacred and beyond logical scrutiny. This faith is seen as an ultimate, unquestionable truth, exemplified by controversies such as the Ram Janmabhoomi and Babri Masjid disputes. Thus, Hindu nationalism blends historical revisionism with a metaphysical commitment to faith, creating a framework that both legitimizes and perpetuates its ideology.¹⁴

¹² Kapila, S., & Devji, F. (Eds.). (2013). *Political thought in action: The Bhagavad Gita and modern India*. Cambridge University Press. (PP.43-49)

¹³ Jha, D. N. (2009). *Rethinking Hindu Identity*. Equinox Pub. (P.67)

¹⁴ Joshi, S. (2004). V.D. Savarkar and the rise of Hindu Nationalism. *Indian Historical Review*, 31(1), 27-42.

HINDU NATIONALISM AND THE POLITICS OF COMMUNALISM:

During the 1857 Revolt, Hindus and Muslims united against British rule, with the press focusing on their shared identity as Hindustanees rather than any communal discord. However, by the 1860s, the rise of communalism was evident, particularly with figures like Syed Ahmad Khan expressing fears that democratic elections could jeopardize Muslim interests, comparing it to an unfair game of dice where Muslims were at a disadvantage. His opposition to the Congress's democratic demands highlighted growing insecurities within the Muslim community.

The British administration, under figures like Viceroy Dufferin and Lieutenant-Governor A. Colvin, further exacerbated communal tensions by attacking the Congress and fostering a sense of division. This period saw the formation of communal organizations from both Hindu and Muslim communities. In 1907, the All India Muslim League was established by prominent Muslim zamindars and ex-bureaucrats, including Aga Khan and Nawabs, who feared that Hindu dominance would threaten their safety and identity. Hindu communalism also gained traction, particularly among upper-caste Hindus, zamindars, and moneylenders, who accepted the colonial narrative of 'tyrannical' Muslim rule and 'liberation' by the British. The debate over language and issues like cow slaughter fueled communal tensions, leading to the creation of organizations like the Punjab Hindu Sabha in 1909 and the All India Hindu Mahasabha in 1915. Leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai and Madan Mohan Malviya advocated for Hindu interests, and under Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in the 1920s, the Hindu Mahasabha adopted a more radical communal stance. Savarkar's warnings about the dangers of Muslim domination reflected a deepening sense of insecurity among Hindus¹⁵.

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), founded by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar in 1925, played a significant role in this ideological shift. Golwalkar, his successor, promoted the vision of a 'Hindu Rashtra' and warned of the risks posed by minority demands. This ideology influenced the formation of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh in 1951 by Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, who aimed to create a party independent of communal organizations. However, the Janata Party's merger with the Bharatiya Jan Sangh led to a split over dual membership issues, eventually resulting in the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1980. Today, the BJP, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, continues to align with RSS ideals, reflecting an ongoing commitment to the concept of a 'Hindu Rashtra.' This focus remains central to its political strategy, as it navigates the complexities of governance and the pursuit of its agenda, including the controversial Ayodhya issue.¹⁶

WAY FORWARD:

The issue of Hindu nationalism, or *Hindutva*, is complex and multifaceted, involving historical, cultural, and political dimensions. To address and navigate the complexities surrounding this ideology, several approaches can be considered:

➤ **Promoting Dialogue and Understanding:**

Encourage open and respectful dialogues between different communities, including Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and others. This can help build mutual understanding and address misconceptions or stereotypes. Bhikhu Parekh recognizes that

¹⁵ Jaffrelot, C. (2021). *Modi's India: Hindu Nationalism and the Rise of Ethnic Democracy*. Westland Publications Limited.(P.34)

¹⁶ Sarkar, T. (2021). *Hindu Nationalism in India*. C. Hurst (Publishers) Limited.(P-46-47)

intercultural dialogue isn't always feasible. In these instances, he suggests that minorities should use alternative political strategies, like protests, to confront and challenge exclusionary and xenophobic notions of national culture.

➤ **Emphasizing Inclusivity and Secularism:**

Reinforce the principles of secularism and pluralism that are enshrined in the Indian Constitution. This involves ensuring that the rights and identities of all religious and cultural groups are respected and protected within the framework of the state.

➤ **Historical Reconciliation:**

Promote historical research and education that provides a balanced view of India's past, acknowledging the contributions and experiences of various communities. This can help counter selective or revisionist histories that may fuel communal tensions.

➤ **Encouraging Civic Engagement:**

Foster a sense of shared citizenship and collective responsibility among all communities. Civic engagement initiatives can help bridge gaps and build a sense of unity based on common national interests and values.

➤ **Supporting Education and Awareness:**

Promote educational programs that highlight the diversity and richness of Indian culture and history. Educating the younger generation about the values of tolerance, respect, and inclusivity can contribute to long-term social harmony.

➤ **Addressing Socio-Economic Inequalities:**

Work towards addressing socio-economic disparities that can exacerbate communal tensions. Economic development and social justice initiatives can help reduce the sense of alienation or disenfranchisement among marginalized communities.

CONCLUSION :

Navigating the intricate landscape of Hindu nationalism calls for a nuanced approach that harmonizes respect for cultural and religious identities with a steadfast commitment to democratic values and social justice. This balanced strategy involves several key elements.

Firstly, promoting inclusive dialogue is essential. Encouraging open conversations among diverse groups can help bridge gaps and foster mutual understanding. Revising educational content to reflect a more comprehensive and inclusive history can also play a crucial role in addressing historical biases and promoting a broader perspective among students. Engaging in broad-based political participation is another critical aspect. Ensuring that all communities have a voice in the political process can help mitigate tensions and build a more equitable society. Celebrating the rich diversity of India's cultural and religious landscape through public events and media can further strengthen societal cohesion and mutual respect.

Lastly, fostering international cooperation can provide valuable insights and support for managing internal challenges. By learning from global best practices and maintaining a focus on universal democratic principles, India can navigate the complexities of Hindu nationalism while striving for a harmonious and just society. Overall, by balancing respect for cultural identities with a firm commitment to democratic values and social justice, India can work towards a more inclusive and equitable future.

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