

Rise of Right-Wing Politics in India: Its Impact on Religious Minorities and our Response

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Abstract—This article deals with the emergent Right-wing politics in India, a phenomenon felt across the globe. As the article explains the origin and growth of Right-Wing Politics, it identifies the essence of it in Hindutva philosophy that guides the BJP, which rules India. The impact of Right-Wing politics deeply affects the people belonging to minority religions of this country. The minorities in India live in fear, anxiety and uncertainty of their life. The author emphasises that the rise of Right-wing politics poses a grave threat to the republic and the constitutional values of India such as secularism, democracy, pluralism, and the very existence of minorities in India. The author also proposes various ways and means to counter it.

Index Terms—Right-Wing politics, Hindutva, conservative ideology, hierarchy, democratic principles etc.

I. WHAT IS RIGHT-WING POLITICS?

The origin of the terms “right-wing” and “left-wing” came from the seating arrangement in the French National Assembly during the French Revolution in 1789. The supporters of the French monarchy sat on the president’s right, while revolutionaries sat on the left. Thus, the “right” came to represent traditional and conservative ideologies, while the “left” stood for liberal and reformist ones.

The general characteristics of right-wing politics include an emphasis on hierarchy, tradition, authority, nationalism, and nativism, along with opposition to liberal ideologies and immigration. Right-wing politics often grants undisputed authority to the state and creates or identifies an “enemy” for example, prior to the Second World War, the persecution of Jews in Germany started under Nazi regime. It creates a make-believe situation where “the other” is a threat and “the other” has to be eliminated by all means. However, both the World Wars were fought due to fascism, a right-wing ideology prevailed at that time. Historically

even the Catholic Church played a pivotal role in the promotion of right-wing politics, as leaders like Mussolini in Italy and Hitler in Germany were devout Catholics, and the Church at that time regrettably did not condemn their ideologies.

After the Second World War, three major political ideologies dominated the global scene Fascism, Communism, and Liberal Democracy. Over time, Liberal Democracy, emphasizing human rights and globalization became the preferred model until the 2008 Financial Crisis. The crisis in 2008 became a turning point that fuelled the resurgence of right-wing politics worldwide. Its main characteristics today include anti-establishment sentiment, anti-immigrant rhetoric, patriarchy, economic anxiety, inequality, and welfare nationalism—benefits reserved for “native citizens.” Right-wing movements have risen notably in the United States, Russia, Hungary, France, Italy, India, and many other European nations. In India, the rise of the right-wing politics is vivid the way BJP rules this country since 2014.

II. GROWTH OF RIGHT-WING POLITICS IN INDIA

An emphasis on conservative ideologies such as authority, hierarchy, order, duty, tradition, a reaction against liberalism and hyper-nationalism characterise right-wing politics in India.

The origins and growth of right-wing politics in India can be traced back to the formation of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1915, based on the ideology of V.D. Savarkar, followed by the founding of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in 1925 and the formation of its political wing, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, in 1951. After the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by Nathuram Godse, a Hindu nationalist on 30th January

1948, the RSS was temporarily banned due to its suspected involvement in the incident.

Savarkar outlined three key elements of Hindutva Ideology namely, a common nation, a common race, and a common culture. This idealistic understanding imposed by the RSS on people, is a real danger to India's "unity in diversity". The RSS gained wider acceptance after joining Jayaprakash Narayan's "Total Revolution Movement" (1974), against corruption, unemployment and misrule in the State Government of Bihar and later the Central Government led by Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi. This eventually paved way for the declaration of Emergency in 1975. Formation of the Bhartiya Jan Sangh (BJS) as the political wing of the RSS by Syama Prasad Mookerjee, Balraj Madhok, and Deendayal Upadhyaya in 1951-metamorphosed into Bhartiya Janatha Party (BJP) in 1980. The Bharatiya Jana Sangh's participation in the Janata Party coalition in 1977 further legitimized its presence in national politics as the representative of the right-wing ideology. Growth of RSS is identified with almost 50 affiliated organizations and large number of NGOs in 2020 forming a Sangh Parivar (BJP, RSS, VHP, Shiv Sena, Bajrang Dal). No wonder, the Hindutva ideology was deeply rooted in Sangh Parivar. The essence of Hindutva ideology is found in the following literature: a) Essentials of Hindutva by V.D. Savarkar, b) We or Our Nationhood Defined and Bunch of Thoughts by M.S. Golwalkar, and c) The ancient Hindu legal text, the Manu Smriti.

M S Golwalkar in his book – "We or Our Nationhood Defined", writes that the Hindu nation is one where "all those not belonging to the nation i.e. Hindu race, religion, culture and language, naturally fall out of the pale of real national life. The foreign races in Hindustan must either adopt Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence the Hindu religion must entertain no idea except the glorification of the Hindu religion and culture, i.e. the Hindu nation and must lose their separate existence to merge in the Hindu race or they may stay in the country wholly subordinate to the Hindu nation claiming nothing, deserving no privileges far less any preferential treatment not even citizens' rights."

The Sangh Parivar's ideological roots have strands in European fascism too. B.S. Moonje, mentor to M.S. Golwalkar, met Benito Mussolini in 1931, studied youth militarisation in Italy, and sought to replicate it in India. Golwalkar, in his book 'We or Our

Nationhood Defined' (1939), praised Nazi Germany's racial pride.

Shashi Tharoor, in his book Why I Am a Hindu (1980), succinctly summarizes the RSS-BJP ideology likewise, "non-Hindus can be tolerated depending on their loyalty to the land, but cannot be treated as equal to Hindus unless they acknowledge the superiority of Hindus in India and adopt Hindu traditions and culture. Non-Hindus must acknowledge their Hindu parentage or better still, convert to Hinduism in a return to their true cultural roots."

RSS-BJP combine has systematically taken control of India's democratic institutions, investigative agencies (CBI & ED), Universities, and even the Judiciary.

III. DRIVERS BEHIND THE RISE OF HINDUTVA MOVEMENT

The Hindutva movement's growth was accelerated during the Ayodhya Movement of the 1990s, which aimed to construct the Ram Mandir at the disputed site of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh (UP). It was a wilful ploy of BJP using religious polarization to consolidate the political support of the Hindus in India. From winning just two Lok Sabha seats in 1984 Lok Saba assembly election, the BJP achieved an absolute majority of 282 seats in Lok Saba in 2014 under the leadership of Narendra Modi. By using the trump card of Hindu nationalism BJP captured the power at the centre consecutively for three terms in 2014, 2019 and 2024. Some political observers argue that India has now evolved into an "electoral autocracy" a democracy in form, but not in spirit. The US commission on International Religious Freedom observed that religious minorities in India have been subjected to "violent attacks, forced conversions" and "Ghar Wapsi" campaigns by groups like RSS after the assumption of power by the Narendra Modi Government.

The Sangh Parivar belligerently promotes a narrative of Hindu victimhood and historical injustice. Such narratives views Muslims and Christians as "others" and "enemies" deserve to be eliminated from Indian soil. They control the media (Godi media) effectively with vested interest to deliver the news according to their whims and fancies. They bring out allegations of minority appeasement. They use Hindu religious and cultural symbols in the affairs of the State. They introduce legislations in the parliament targeting the

minorities. Hence, the rise of right-wing politics in India ultimately poses a grave threat to secular democracy, constitutional values, pluralism, and the very existence of minorities in India.

IV. ITS IMPACT ON RELIGIOUS (CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM) MINORITIES

The rise of the RSS-BJP has had profound and wide-ranging effects on India's religious minorities, particularly Christians and Muslims. Various laws have been used as weapons to harass minorities, including the stringent anti-conversion laws passed by BJP-ruled 12 states. Government policies and administrative actions have often reflected discrimination, hatred, revenge, and violence on minorities. Christians are accused of being interested only in religious conversions. Similarly, the Muslims are frequently branded as anti-nationals and terrorists with alleged ties to Pakistan. According to the United Christian Forum (UCF), there have been 4,694 attacks on Christians by Hindutva organizations over the last 11 years. Anti-conversion laws are used as a weapon to target the Christians. In Uttarakhand Anti-conversion Law is ruthlessly implemented. The accused will get Jail terms up to 20 years or life imprisonment in some cases. "Mass conversion" is defined as just two or more people. Glorifying a religion counts as "inducement". At times property confiscation is done by the BJP Government based on suspicion of foreign funding to promote religious conversion. Once the Christians are accused of converting others, the burden of proof is on the accused.

Cancellation of FCRA Registration of many philanthropic and Charitable Trusts, Societies and Organisation run by the Christians substage their growth and involvement with people of the minority communities. However, there are incidence of abuses of anti-conversion laws. On October 17, 2025 in a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court of India quashed five FIRs filed under the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act, 2021, citing legal infirmities, procedural lapses, and lack of credible evidence. While delivering the verdict the court observed that "the criminal law cannot be allowed to be made a tool of harassment of innocent persons".

The situation of Muslims has been even more alarming—marked by mob lynchings by cow vigilantes, demolition of homes and establishments under so-called "bulldozer justice". Reportedly, since 2022, more than 150,000 homes across the country have been razed through bulldozer action, leaving 738,000 people homeless. The destruction is carried out before the accused has an opportunity to challenge the allegations through the criminal justice system. It's also clear that 'bulldozer justice' has disproportionately targeted Muslims. Rounding up of Bengali speaking Muslims in the BJP ruled states and keeping them in detention camps slowly and systematically crushes the Muslim population in India. Love Jihad legislations: "Love jihad" is a term used to describe a suppositious situation where Muslim men target non-Muslim women for conversion to Islam through pretence love or marriage. The term has been used by some Hindu nationalist groups to accuse Muslim men of luring Hindu women into relationships with the intent of converting them to Islam. However, the concept of 'love jihad' has been widely discredited and there is no evidence to support the existence of such a phenomenon. It has been criticized as a politically motivated and Islamophobic campaign with the intention to demonize Muslims and create religious tensions.

Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) 2019: The Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) aims to grant citizenship to illegal migrants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan who belong to the Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, and Christian faiths. But the Muslims are left out. Hence the law is discriminatory and conflicts with the secular values given in the preamble. Citizenship shouldn't depend on faith, as it opposes the core principles of equality and non-discrimination in the Constitution. Waqf Amendment Act, 2025:

Waqf refers to an endowment made by a Muslim for charitable or religious purposes, such as building mosques, schools, hospitals, or other public institutions. It is inalienable i.e., it cannot be sold, gifted, inherited or encumbered. But the Act grants the government the authority to regulate Waqf properties and determine their status, thereby reducing the autonomy of Waqf Boards. The 2025 Act aims to enhance transparency, prevent misuse, and streamline dispute resolution through legal and technological reforms. However, concerns over government control,

representation, and property rights must be addressed through dialogue with the Muslim community. The rules for the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025 are yet to be released and are expected to address ambiguity and other concerns.

Contemporary Historian Ramchandra Guha says, what the BJP-RSS promotes, is a newer model of nationalism called jingoism not patriotism. “The difference between patriotism and jingoism is that patriotism is love for the country and respect for the Constitution, while jingoism is motivated by hate and revenge.” He further adds, “Hindutva is the opium of the people, used by politicians who are unable or unwilling to offer their electors a dignified and secure life.”

In fact, the right-wing political parties, in general, fail to represent the poor and tend toward majoritarian and authoritarian governance. The concerns of the poor and the marginalised communities have no place in the agenda of Right-Wing politics. Many neoliberal right-wing movements, especially since 2008, have supported market economies, deregulation, and lower taxes, aligning with corporate interests. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the wealth of many billionaires multiplied. The mainstream and populist right-wing parties often prioritize resource extraction and national self-sufficiency over environmental protection. The right-wing governments tend to allocate more funds to military spending than to welfare measures such as poverty alleviation, education, or health care.

Right-wing regimes often reinforce patriarchal norms and undermine women’s rights through policy and rhetoric. Many right-wing movements oppose abortion and reproductive rights, restricting women’s autonomy and their independence. Such governments frequently attempt to dismantle equality-promoting institutions, curb women’s rights legislation, and vilify feminists. Right-wing populist leaders often use sexist and misogynistic language to mobilize supporters and attack female opponents.

Seldom we are aware that both right-wing and left-wing tendencies exist within every human being. The right-wing mindset, tends to displace people, foster intolerance, create micro-conflicts, and invade cultures—it is exclusive and builds walls. Ultimately right-wing politics brings conflicts among diverse people living in unity. It disturbs the prevailing peace, where pluralism and differences coexist harmoniously.

V. HOW TO COUNTER THIS MENACE? - A RESPONSE

As responsible citizens of India, we need to show our collective resistance against patriarchy, privatization, and corporate monopolies. Integrate the Indian Constitution into value education in educational institutions emphasising political education for the youth, encouraging them not to reject politics but to engage in it constructively and ethically.

As a collective response, we stay informed, networking with like-minded individuals and organizations and we need to develop a thinking pattern beyond boundaries.

The citizens of this country especially the minorities should become aware of socio-political developments and need to engage in critical political analysis. We need to instil constitutional values and principles among students.

We have to establish regional and national legal-aid networks and Crisis-Management Cells to support victims of violence and harassment perpetrated on minorities. We need to promote pluralism, peace & justice, reconciliation and harmony among communities and in educational institutions by introducing peace clubs through creative media outreach.

The root cause of many problems the world faces today is lack of enough enlightened leaders in various spheres. The minority community has to participate actively in every political process. We need to encourage critical analysis of government policies. Train and support youth to engage in political parties committed to secular democracy. Make them understand that minority rights are not favours but structural correctives.

Recognize that civil services are often influenced by RSS ideology today. Hence, through proper education we should train many more enlightened leaders by encouraging minority youth to join IAS, IPS, IFS, IRS, etc. and become lawyers also.

We need to collaborate with secular and faith-based organizations to promote democratic values and human rights. Celebrate Constitution Day/Week with seminars, quizzes, competitions and cultural programs. Launch “Constitution Circles” in schools, colleges and workplaces.

We need to initiate interfaith interactions during festivals such as Christmas, Pongal, Diwali, Ramjan and Eid to strengthen the secular fabric of our country.

As a response to communal polarization, irrespective of our religious affiliation we should condemn communal violence and caste-based discrimination, while promoting harmony through media and education.

Our involvement in education should become a tool for social transformation by instilling constitutional values, building leadership, and strengthening our networks among the alumni. Media Literacy is very important. Educate people on identifying fake news, deepfakes, and misinformation. Train them to respond to falsehoods with authentic facts and figures with calm, and compassion. Create awareness campaigns by training minority youth to make use of media for spreading the message of secularism, pluralism and our unity in diversity.

Representation matters for justice and equity. We should not shy away from making representations to authorities. Minority youth need Legal Empowerment. Hence create regional and national legal-aid networks & Crisis Management Cells. Offer early legal intervention FIR, bail, documentation against victimisations of minorities at once the crime is brought to our notice. Train para-legals in communities. Maintain a helpline and standardized response protocols and publicize case outcomes for reliability, transparency, authenticity and credibility.

VI. CONCLUSION

Though Right-wing politics badly affects the peaceful coexistence of the populace around the world and in particular the minorities in India, we are not completely left with hopelessness and dismay. Every singly citizen of this country has the right to know what is happening around them. The responsible leaders of this country should realize their sole responsibility of bringing before the people the problems and challenges which erodes the harmony and peaceful coexistence of people. We need strong, daring and committed leaders ever ready to unmask the hidden agenda of the right-wing politics to the public. This move has already started here and there around the globe. For example, its symptoms are already felt in New York city in USA. New York has become a counter – narrative to the faltering democracies and the tightening grip of authoritarianism worldwide. Zohran Mamdani's ascent as the Mayor of New York marks a generational

shift – ample proof that courage, conviction and compassion can still redraw the maps of power and possibility. Its echo is felt in India too in a clarion call given by Mr. Rahul Gandhi.

“We are confident that ‘we, the people of India’, will take "the shop of love in the market of hatred" to every corner of the country. India's fragrance of love and peace will permeate the world. This is what this great country needs most at this time”. (Rahul Gandhi by Dayashankar Mishra). In fact, Right-Wing politics need not be always Right! rather ‘correct’. Corrective mechanisms bound to evolve when responsible individuals show their resistance not to be swayed by Hindutva ideology but to stand firm on the principles of Indian Constitution.

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