

Hindutva Vs Islamophobia: Analysis & Way forward

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Abstracts: The purpose of the policy paper is to undertake an in-depth examination of the roots, expressions, and effects of Hindutva and Islamophobia on societal harmony. It aims to explain these phenomena and offers a course of action that encourages inclusivity, empathy, and peaceful cohabitation. Qualitative research method approach has been used which provides for comprehensive and complete understanding of the statement of problem and is based on reasons. However, wherever essential, significant empirical evidence has been blended to justify the arguments. This study is based on deductive approach and is descriptive and exploratory research to analyze the issue at hand. The study is based on unstructured approach, which helps in exploring the nature of the problem and describing the variation in Hindutva and Islamophobia in India. Application of historical research methodology has been made which involves the process of examining the significant past events in respect of the influence of Hindutva over the Indian policies and their impressions on Muslims in social and political spheres.

Keywords: Hindutva, Islamophobia, Societal Harmony, India

INTRODUCTION

Conflicts and heated disputes have frequently resulted from the clash of beliefs in the diverse and interconnected world we live in. Hindutva and Islamophobia have clashed frequently in the past. Hindutva, the umbrella word for Hindu nationalism in India, and Islamophobia, the fear and prejudice towards Islam and Muslims, have come under close investigation, highlighting important issues about identity, religious tolerance, and national cohesion. To move forward in a positive way as these problems continue to influence socio-political landscapes, it is essential to examine the underlying roots, effects, and implications of these ideologies.

The discourse surrounding Hindutva and Islamophobia presents a complex interplay of political, social, and religious dynamics in India. Hindutva, as a political ideology, has been associated with rising Islamophobia in the country [Administrator, I. W. (2022)]. Islamophobia manifests through discriminatory attitudes and actions targeting Islam and its adherents, often rooted in misconceptions and stereotypes [(Wikipedia contributors, 2024)]. Scholars have analyzed the rhetoric of political leaders, such as Donald Trump, who have exploited Islamophobia for electoral gains (Javaid et al., 2022). Research has delved

into the perceptions of Islam among non-Muslim communities, like Malaysian Indians, shedding light on the formation of Islamophobic sentiments (Siah et al., 2022). Understanding these phenomena requires a multidimensional approach that considers historical contexts, socio-political factors, and media representations.

Addressing Hindutva and Islamophobia necessitates a nuanced approach that promotes religious tolerance, cultural understanding, and social cohesion. Initiatives focusing on education, interfaith dialogue, and community engagement can play a crucial role in combating prejudice and fostering inclusivity (Administrator, I. W. (2022). Policy interventions aimed at safeguarding minority rights, promoting secularism, and combating hate speech are imperative (Wikipedia contributors, 2024b). Additionally, fostering inclusive governance structures that represent diverse religious and cultural backgrounds can help mitigate tensions and promote societal harmony (Javaid et al., 2022b). Furthermore, media literacy programs can empower individuals to critically evaluate information and challenge stereotypes perpetuated by mainstream media (Siah et al., 2022).

In navigating the complexities of Hindutva and Islamophobia, international cooperation and solidarity are essential. Collaboration between governments, civil society organizations, and religious institutions can facilitate the exchange of best practices and strategies for countering discrimination [Administrator, I. W. (2022)]. Furthermore, promoting economic development and social inclusion can address underlying grievances and reduce susceptibility to extremist ideologies (Wikipedia contributors, 2024c). Embracing diversity and celebrating pluralism are foundational principles in fostering a cohesive society that respects the rights and dignity of all individuals (Javaid et al., 2022c). Ultimately, the path forward requires collective efforts to uphold fundamental human rights, promote mutual respect, and build bridges of understanding across communities.

The concept of Hindutva first appeared in the early 20th century, and its proponents called for the creation of a Hindu-centric state. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its political wing, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), later popularized the word, which is frequently linked to Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (Jaffrelot, C. (1996)). While defenders claim that it promotes cultural and racial harmony among Hindus, detractors point out that it frequently marginalizes religious minorities and imperils India's secular fabric (Chatterji, A. 2004). Hindutva's ascent has sparked worries about the decline of religious diversity and its potential effects on minority communities.

On the other side, Islamophobia is a worldwide issue defined by the stigmatization and discrimination. Muslims experience because of their religious identity. It takes many different forms, such as hate crimes, biased media representations, and discriminatory laws (Runnymede Trust, 1997). According to Sayyid, S., and Vakil, A. (Eds.), (2010), instances like the 9/11 attacks and subsequent terrorist assaults have further inflamed anti-Islamic sentiments, spreading false stereotypes and creating a climate of fear and mistrust. Social concord and religious harmony are significantly threatened by the pervasiveness of islamophobia.

This paper seeks to perform a thorough examination of both Hindutva and Islamophobia, looking at its intellectual foundations, historical antecedents, and socio-political ramifications. By analyzing these ideologies critically, we seek to shed light on how they affect democratic values, human rights, and intercommunal relations. We will also look into measures to encourage communication, dialogue, and coexistence among followers of these many religious systems.

We shall consult a wide range of academic publications, research studies, and professional viewpoints in order to accomplish this goal. We strive to give a thorough and unbiased examination of the subject by including viewpoints from specialists in the domains of religious studies, political science, sociology, and human rights. Respecting the opinions of all individuals concerned, it is crucial to address this subject with tact and objectivity.

We must understand the importance of fostering harmony and inclusivity in our various cultures as we examine the complexity of Hindutva and Islamophobia. We may better manage the difficulties they present and work towards a more tolerant and respectful world by comprehending the origins of these ideas and their extensive effects.

ANALYSIS AND FINDING

To present a clear understanding of the topic, the analysis and findings have been further divided into analysis of Hindutva and analysis of Islamophobia in the following manner:

Analysis of Hindutva

Emergence of Hindutva Ideology

The emergence of Hindutva ideology has its roots in the early 20th century in India, influenced by various historical, social, and political factors. These include the colonial context, Hindu reform movements, communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims, ideological pioneers like Vinayak

Damodar Savarkar, and the political mobilization of organizations like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). It has evolved over time and gained prominence through the influence of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which has promoted Hindutva principles in mainstream politics (Tuteja & Grewal, 1992) (Katju, 2019).

Minorities becoming more Hindu.

Muslims have not received equitable treatment in the social and legal sectors of life in recent years, as has been observed. Subramanian Swamy, a BJP member of parliament, added his support for it when he stated that "Muslims are not equal to Hindus" and that "the equality as given in the Indian Constitution is for the equals."

A leader of his standing making this kind of a policy declaration inflames anxiety and alienates India's Muslim majority.

Examination of Hindutva's impact on society:

Hindutva ideology's rise in India has had a negative impact on religious minorities, especially Muslims. The public has been actively discouraged from seeing films with Muslim actors by leaders like Prime Minister Modi and other Hindutva supporters, which has resulted in marginalization and discrimination against Muslims. Concerns have been made regarding the perception of Hindu majoritarianism in the nation as a result of incidents of religiously motivated violence and harassment against Muslim women as well as the erosion of the secular values contained in the Indian constitution (M. a. M. Khan & Lutful, 2021).

The mainstream media's contribution to the spread of Islamophobia is clear given how frequently they exaggerate specific terrorist attacks and give hardliner's controversial talk-show remarks a stage. This strategy widens the gap between Muslims, aggravating their sense of estrangement. Despite making up 14.2% of the population, Hindutva has substantially reduced Muslim political presence in India, with only 27 Muslim members of Parliament elected in the 2019 General elections. Additionally, propagandistic films that highlight the brutality of Muslim rulers and exalt Hindu resistance, as well as Bollywood's representation of Muslims as terrible characters, contribute to the unfavorable public impression of the Muslim community (Haque & Khan, 2023).

The aforementioned incidents show the difficulties and complexity caused by Hindutva and Islamophobia in India. To foster religious harmony, tolerance, and inclusivity in the nation's social fabric, these concerns call for a nuanced understanding and a concerted effort.

Analysis of Islamophobia:

Manifestations of Islamophobia:

Due to its severity and prevalence, islamophobia is a global problem that is particularly acute in India. When introducing a UN conference on "Confronting Islamophobia" in 2004, Secretary General of the UN Kofi Annan lamented the prevalence of Islamophobia, saying, "When the world is compelled to coin a new term to take account of increasingly pervasive bigotry, that is a sad and troubling development." The same is true with Islamophobia. (Aslam, January 8, 2021). Modi has constantly championed economic development as a top priority in India's political and social discourse throughout his time as prime minister. Even if Modi's Islamophobia is quietly expressed, it is a result of the way the Hindutva movement views Muslims as Hindus' inferiors. The slaughter of Muslims in Gujarat was never acknowledged by Modi as a terrorist atrocity. 2018 (D. S. Tharoor).

Voices against Islamophobia have been raised at international platforms as well. "The spread of Islamophobia, both in terms of the phenomenon's momentum and outreach, is particularly alarming these days, as it has emerged as a new form of racism characterized by xenophobia, negative profiling, and stereotyping of Muslims," said Ambassador Akram. (Dawn 2022).

Impact on Muslim community and individuals

Due to Islamophobia, the Muslim minority in India has experienced numerous sorts of persecution. Muslims now feel insecure and fearful due to physical assaults, mosque destruction, and verbal abuse. This prejudice affects equal treatment, promotions, and career opportunities, resulting in prejudice. Constant media exposure to anti-Islamic language has had a negative psychological impact, leading to higher levels of tension, anxiety, and sadness. The feeling of marginalization among Muslims encourages a "us vs. them" mentality and self-censorship. Even well-known people like Javed Akhtar and Naseeruddin Shah have encountered restrictions on their ability to express themselves freely. Muslim children also endure harassment in schools, resulting in academic struggles and emotional distress, affecting their integration into society. Ultimately, Islamophobia erodes trust between Hindus and Muslims, posing significant challenges to social cohesion in India (Shah 2021; Team 2022).

Findings:

The sensitive issues of Hindutva and Islamophobia have a tremendous impact on both the Hindu and Muslim communities in India. Because of discriminatory policies like the Citizenship Amendment

Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC), Hindutva, which is backed by the BJP, has ostracized Muslims. The doctrine promotes division and hostility amongst groups, and some political figures take advantage of anti-Hindu prejudice for their own political gain. On the other hand, Islamophobia has historically been praised, and occasionally both local and secular political parties have used rhetorical attacks against Muslims to further their own political objectives. Hindutva's expanding influence has led to limitations on Muslims' capacity to reproduce, which has hindered their freedom and population growth. As a result of the divisiveness and prejudice that have harmed India's social and secular fabric, worries about human rights and diversity have emerged. India's reputation for upholding human rights around the world is impacted by the rise of Hindu nationalism and Islamophobia. When these beliefs come together, they assist the country lose its pluralism and help to reinforce negative perceptions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Empathy and Humanization:
 - Promote storytelling, cultural events, and personal narratives to humanize individuals from different religious backgrounds.
 - Engage people in an empathetic manner to foster understanding and respect.
2. Education and Awareness:
 - Encourage inclusive education that teaches about many religions, emphasizing shared values and contributions to society.
 - Organize interfaith conversations, workshops, and events to build bridges of understanding and cooperation among students and communities.
 - Debunk myths and stereotypes through awareness campaigns and seminars.
3. Media's Social Responsibility:
 - Encourage media outlets to report religious issues objectively, fairly, and accurately, avoiding sensationalism and stereotyping.
 - Promote ethical reporting that fosters mutual respect and understanding between Hindus and Muslims.
4. Political Leadership and Legislation:
 - Discourage hate speech, religious discrimination, and divisive rhetoric by political leaders.
 - Enforce constitutional provisions to protect religious freedom and equality.
 - Encourage media to promote inspiring stories of people from various religious backgrounds.
5. Countering Misinformation and Stereotypes:
 - Promote initiatives to counter stereotypes and misinformation about Hinduism, Islam, and other religions.
 - Encourage fact-checking organizations to address and debunk false narratives and conspiracy theories.
 - Sensitize social media platforms to combat hate speech and religiously motivated misinformation.
6. Grassroots Initiatives and Community Empowerment:
 - Support grassroots organizations that promote interfaith dialogue and peaceful coexistence.
 - Provide funding for community-led projects that address common social issues and promote harmony.
 - Empower local leaders and organizations to advocate for religious tolerance.
7. International Collaboration:
 - Learn from successful initiatives in other countries to address religious tensions and promote interfaith harmony.
 - Support international organizations that work towards countering religious discrimination.
 - Establish a framework for continued dialogue and understanding among Hindus and Muslims.

By implementing these measures, India can take significant steps towards promoting religious harmony, countering Hindutva and Islamophobia, and building a more inclusive and tolerant society for all its citizens.

CONCLUSION

Communal politics have persisted for a very long period in India. But under the current Modi administration, it has reached unprecedented heights, and government programs now priorities Islamophobia. This policy paper demonstrates that Savarkar's simplistic view of the self and the other is the source of Islamophobia in Hindutva ideology and its practical manifestation. Muslims are permanently viewed as an outsider under Hindutva ideology, and extremists see them as a danger to Hindus and their religion. Indian Muslims have been portrayed as an internal adversary who are determined to weaken India and stand in the way of the Hindus' ambition for dominance in the above-mentioned Islamophobic conclusions. So that the topic of Hindutva against Islamophobia could be comprehended in the modern world, it was appropriate to examine it in detail. To lessen the effects of the hostility brought on by Hindutva ideology, political parties, the Indian government, members of civil society, and the media can work together and have a very good impact. The negative effects of Hindutva will eventually be balanced out by rising globalization and technological development. Social media has made it very simple for individuals to connect with one another across groups and learn from one another's experiences to be understanding and respectful of the difference based on religion.

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