



# AL-SHAJARAH

ISTAC Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization

Published by IIUM Press

2020 Volume 25 Number 1

# AL-SHAJARAH

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# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN INDIA: AN EXPLORATION OF ITS ROOTS, RISE AND HISTORY

*Thameem Ushama*

## **Abstract**

*As a product of Hindu Fascists, Islamophobia in India is reviewed from the beginning of the twentieth century through to India's 2019 Parliamentary elections. A qualitative content analysis clearly shows that Hindutva proponents disseminated the ideology with a view to establish Hindu Rashtra to the exclusion of Muslims. The paper focuses on documented actions taken by individuals, political leaders, parties and various Hindu organisations to cultivate hatred for Muslims by endorsing communal violence, mosque and communal destruction, genocidal murders, and various political movements designed to remove Muslims from India.*

**Keywords:** Communal violence, Fascism, Hindutva ideology, Islamophobia, Nazism

## Introduction

Islamophobia is industrially fabricated in India. Cyber-social venues and print media with socio-political views avidly disseminate strategies and ideology that support operative animosity towards Muslims, particularly in regions where they are a minority. Malicious global propaganda adds to the flames by degrading, undermining, humiliating and frightening Muslims. The Oxford Dictionary says Islamophobia was coined in the late 1980s and first used in print in 1991: “[An] *unreasonable dislike, fear and hatred of or prejudice against the Islamic religion or Muslims generally, especially when seen as a geopolitical force*”<sup>1</sup> EMISCO, the European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion says the following:

Islamophobia is a form of intolerance and discrimination motivated by fear, mistrust and hatred of Islam and its adherents. It is often manifest in combination with racism, xenophobia, anti-immigrant sentiments and religious intolerance. Manifestations of Islamophobia include hate speech, violent attacks and discriminatory practices, which can be manifested by both non-state actors and state officials.<sup>2</sup>

Islamophobia is on the rise especially in the West where Muslims are a minority and most are immigrants after the *Arab Springs* in 2010 had facilitated mass migrations. Many a thesis and dissertation universally confirm that the phenomenon is supported by hidden hands with vested interests devoted to accelerating the animosity. Despite all efforts at curbing unwarranted hostility, the writer found it alarmingly increasing particularly since 9/11. Islamophobia is strongest in America because extremist Muslims were involved. Those who engineered the operation were punished to ensure another attack would not recur. The international community including Muslims had condemned the act. Since then, the West remains hypervigilant and has introduced tight surveillance and security

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<sup>1</sup> <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/islamophobia>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.emisco.eu/a-proposed-definition-of-islamophobia/>

measures. Terrorists of whatever religion or society must not roam freely or go unpunished.

### **Islamophobia in India**

Hatred for Muslims along with bias against the Islamic worldview have sparked hate speech, intolerance and discrimination in India from the beginning of the twentieth century. Hindu fanatics have variously advanced these positions with innumerable public diatribes and detestable acts. The situation decidedly worsened after the 2019 April/May parliamentary elections, during which Islamophobic slogans were noised abroad by hopefuls of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party<sup>3</sup> (BJP) that won a majority and formed its second central government.

Desperate to win, BJP had legalised the implementation of an ideology called Hindutva as advocated by militant organisations such as the Hindu Mahasabha, RSS, VHP and others. While canvassing, the most popular party slogan was “India for Hindus only” which provoked minorities in general particularly Muslims. During the 2019 campaign, Arjun Sampath of Tamil Nadu, a Hindu fascist and BJP supporter, called on Hindus to boycott Muslim businesses, isolate them and brand them as ‘pro-Pakistani’. He accused all Muslims of trying to create a mini Pakistan in Tamil Nadu. Similar unsubstantiated accusations circulated in Kerala. Arjun and others delivered hate-filled speeches telling Hindus not to vote for Muslim candidates. Hindutva elements in Tamil Nadu initiated direct confrontations in places where Hindus and Muslims were traditionally fraternal. H Raja, national secretary of the ruling BJP, contested the Shivagangai constituency in Tamil Nadu and delivered incendiary speeches that provoked hostile Hindu actions against Muslims by inciting communal riots. He was the source of all Hindu versus Muslim conflicts in Tamil Nadu, the land of Dravidian culture

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<sup>3</sup> The Bharatiya Janata Party is a major political party in India. Its origin lies in the Bharatiya Jana Sangh formed in 1951. After the State of Emergency in 1977, the Jana Sangh merged with several other parties to form the Janata Party. Later, the Janata Party dissolved in 1980 with the members of the erstwhile Jana Sangh reconvening to form the BJP. It grew in strength on the back of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. It is one of the offshoots of Sangh Parivar.

and civilisation where people are gentle and calm, a community detested by Hindus and not predisposed to Hindu mythology or the Brahmin version of the Vedas.

### **Alleged Roots of Islamophobia in India**

Hindutva<sup>4</sup> historians argue that Islamophobic roots are traced to Mughal<sup>5</sup> rule which they contend was a dark era of grave injustice towards Hindus. The bias allows slander against Muslim rulers as intolerant, rude fanatics who committed atrocities and forced Hindus to convert to Islam while also destroying Hindu temples to build mosques over those sites. Western historians fuel unsubstantiated theories that Islam was spread on the point of a sword. Thus, Islamophobic organisations existed already in the early twentieth century and held distorted views of India's history, particularly of Mughal contributions to India's development. This carried over to dismiss Muslim efforts that aided India's independence. Propagandists continued to project detrimental imaginations of Islam and Muslims while subscribing to the philosophy of Ram Raj. Akbar Ahmed explains this situation:

An average Hindu's prejudice is against the Muslim Community because of misconceived perceptions. Firstly, of attempts made by Muslim rulers in medieval times to destroy Hindu culture. Secondly, by a separatist Muslim role during the struggle for freedom. Thirdly, by a generic Muslim refusal to modernise and accept a uniform civil code and family planning, etc. Lastly by having extra-territorial loyalties. ... School texts unfortunately encourage anti-Muslim feelings by

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<sup>4</sup> An ideology seeking to establish the hegemony of Hindus and the Hindu way of life.

<sup>5</sup> The Mughal Empire was an early-modern empire in South Asia. For some two centuries, the empire stretched from the outer fringes of the Indus basin in the west, northern Afghanistan in the northwest, and Kashmir in the north, to the highlands of present-day Assam and Bangladesh in the east, and the uplands of the Deccan plateau in South India.



teaching and praising the culture and values of the majority community.<sup>6</sup>

Another root cause is Muslim demand for a separate national identity. Although Muslim participation in India's independence struggle was sincere and absolutely loyal to India, their efforts were placed in doubt by leaders of the Indian National Congress, a group that particularly disheartened Muslim freedom fighters. Consequently, Muslims began to plan for a safer future for their minority although their participation in the independence struggle was laudable. In addition to this untrustworthy Congress were Hindu Mahasabha,<sup>7</sup> RSS,<sup>8</sup> VHP<sup>9</sup> and other Sangh Parivar<sup>10</sup> groups.

After observing the behaviour and rhetoric of their Hindu leaders, Muslim elders began opting for a separate domain. This resulted in two nations: Hindustan for Hindus and Pakistan for Muslims. Mohamed Ali Jinnah, leader of the Indian Union Muslim League, called on Mahatma Gandhi and others to divide the country. This caused many misunderstandings between community leaders that gradually heightened Islamophobic sentiments among the masses

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<sup>6</sup> S. Akbar Ahmed, Jinnah, *Pakistan, and Islamic Identity: The Search for Saladin* (London: Routledge, 1997), 230.

<sup>7</sup> The Hindu Mahasabha was formed in 1915 as an organisation. It became a political party in 1933. It is aimed at protecting the rights of the Hindu community to safeguard Hindu religion in the Indian subcontinent. Its ideology is Hindutva and Hindu Nationalism. It later became an anti-Muslim organisation.

<sup>8</sup> Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, abbreviated as RSS, is an Indian right-wing, Hindu nationalist, paramilitary volunteer organisation. The RSS is the progenitor and leader of a large body of organisations called the Sangh Parivar. (<https://www.google.com/search?q=rashtriya+swayamsevak+sangh&oq=Ra&aqs=chrome.0.69i59l2j69i57j0l3j69i60j69i61.3940j0j4&sourceid=chro>)

<sup>9</sup> The Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) is an Indian right-wing Hindu militant organisation based on the ideology of Hindu nationalism. It was founded in 1964 by M. S. Golwalkar and S. S. Apte in collaboration with Swami Chinmayananda. It is a member of the Sangh Parivar group, an umbrella of Hindu nationalist organisations led by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. It has been involved in the Ayodhya dispute with a role in the Babri Masjid demolition.

<sup>10</sup> Sangh Parivar refers to a "Family of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh" or the "RSS family." It is an umbrella term for the collection of Hindu nationalist organisations spawned by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and remain affiliated to it. The Sangh Parivar represents the Hindu nationalist movement of India.

after the manipulation by Hindutva elements who engineered communal violence throughout India.

### **Objective, Scope, Methodology and Content**

It is appropriate to quote a passage on the status of religious minorities in India as a preamble for this study. This is from Iqtidar Karamat Cheema's *Constitutional and Legal Challenges Faced by Religious Minorities in India*:

In recent years, however, religious minorities have witnessed a deterioration of their rights. The Indian government—at both national and state levels—often ignores its constitutional commitments to protect the rights of religious minorities. National and state laws are used to violate the religious freedom of minority communities. However, very little is known about the laws. Violence against religious minorities, discrimination, forced conversions and environments with increasing instances of harassment and intimidation of religious minorities are not a new phenomenon in India. They have occurred under both the Congress Party and Bhartiya Janata Party governments.<sup>11</sup>

This paper demonstrates the ongoing process of Islamophobia's development and inculcation in India. The author presents qualitative content analysis of propaganda, literature and speeches sourced from influential Hindutva proponents who spread the ideology with a view to establish Hindu Rashtra at the expense of India's minorities, particularly Muslims who are *bona fide* citizens. Admiration for Mussolini and Hitler by RSS and Shiv Sena<sup>12</sup> leaders of the Hindutva ideology had set the primary agenda for Hindu Nazis and

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<sup>11</sup> Iqtidar Karamat Cheema, *Constitutional and Legal Challenges faced by Religious Minorities in India*, (2017), 1.

<sup>12</sup> Shiv Sena is a Hindu nationalist political organisation in India founded on 19 June 1966 by Bal Thackeray. Although the party's primary base is still in Maharashtra, it has tried to expand to a pan-Indian base. In the 1970s, it gradually moved from advocating a pro-Marathi ideology to one supporting a broader Hindu nationalist agenda, as it aligned itself with the Bharatiya Janata Party.

fascists, in sync with the manufacture and dissemination of Islamophobia by Savarkar,<sup>13</sup> Golwalker<sup>14</sup> and Thackeray<sup>15</sup>.

### **Hindutva Ideology: A Foundation for Islamophobia**

Islamophobia founded a Hindu nursery in India after Savarkar introduced Hindutva, a philosophy taken up and propagated by Sangh Parivar. Pursuant to extensive discussions on definition and meaning, the term Hindutva was initially used in 1923. Since then, it has been debated, articulated, expanded and finally set in concrete to the exclusion of Muslims. According to Savarkar, Hindutva refers to a way of life and state of mind based on the Hindu cultural ethos of spirituality that uniquely derives from India.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, historians argue his formula is the result of extrinsic ideologies and influences. Setting their arguments aside, Savarkar differentiated between *Hindu*, *Hindustan* and *Hindutva*, claiming they are more than just words as he refers to the historicity and development of an entire civilisational enterprise that fundamentally embraces the spiritual or religious ethos of all Hindus. This extends beyond theocratic purview or specific religious dogma to include all branches of thought and praxis the entire Hindu race, avatars and zeitgeist; an inordinately elaborate worldview.<sup>17</sup>

Dev Pandhi, a journalist, defines *Hindutva* as follows:

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<sup>13</sup> Vinayak Damodar Savarkar was an activist, politician, and writer who formulated the Hindutva philosophy. Savarkar as President of the Hindu Mahasabha, during the Second World War, advanced the slogan “Hinduize all Politics and Militarize Hindudom”.

<sup>14</sup> Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar (1906 –1973) was the second chief of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. He has been widely noted to be the most prominent ideologue of Hindutva. He was one of the early leaders for the nationalist RSS group. Golwalkar authored the books *Bunch of Thoughts* and *We, or Our Nationhood Defined*. Both are used by Hindu fascists in their training programmes to indoctrinate common Hindus.

<sup>15</sup> Bal Keshav Thackeray (1926 – 2012) was an Indian politician who founded the Shiv Sena a right-wing pro-Marathi and Hindu nationalist party active mainly in the state of Maharashtra.

<sup>16</sup> [https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/84001/12/12\\_chapter%206.pdf](https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/84001/12/12_chapter%206.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

Hindutva, a word synonymous with the ‘psyche of people in India’ whose offshoots envelope the globe, is in the correct perspective, a philosophy, a way of life. Mysticism spread throughout the world from the Hindutva civilisation dating to the Aryan era.<sup>18</sup>

Savarkar believes Hindutva includes not only the religious bond of Hinduism but also social, moral and economic aspects that are melded by territorial, familial and cultural identities. Hindutva’s core thematic is the word ‘Hindu’. Thus, Hindu solidarity is fundamental to Savarkar’s propaganda. He preaches that “Hindus in Hindustan are a nation and other people are communities and numerically, therefore, mere minorities.”<sup>19</sup> This peculiar theory was translated into fascist politics by Sangh Parivar to include the BJP, India’s current ruling party. Consequently, numerous policy initiatives are now being introduced as a kind of crusade. Collectively, theoretical and political adherents of Hindutva work together to suborn the basic human rights of India’s minorities especially of Muslims.

Among numerous propositions, Savarkar held that both ancient and modern Hindu histories have commonalities and share the same friends, enemies and dangers. Hindus have thus become a communal meld through assimilation, elimination and consolidation to share the common bonds of fatherland (*pitrubhumi*) and holy land (*punyabhumi*).<sup>20</sup> This theoretical construct is rigorously explored, defended, expanded and spread by Hindutva devotees throughout all of India with a view to unite Hindus against all unbelievers who do not accept India as fatherland and holy land. Consequently, Muslims and Christians who cannot subscribe to such a view are branded ‘anti-India’ and ‘anti-Hindu’. Pedestrian Hindus and common rural folks are easily turned by this malicious propaganda. Sangh Parivar’s religious and political leaders emphatically write and speak of this theory and tirelessly generate hatred for minorities while provoking associates and adherents to plot and execute pogroms.

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<sup>18</sup> Dev Pandhi, “Forward” to *MG Chitkara’s Hindutva*, (New Delhi: APH Publishing, 1997)

<sup>19</sup> Savarkar, *Hindutva, Who is a Hindu?* (New Delhi: Bharati Sahitya Sadan, 1989),

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

Savarkar once asserted that:

Hindustan is a Fatherland and Holy land to us, not because it is a land unlike any other land in the world, but because it is associated with our history and has been the home of our forefathers wherein our mothers gave us the first suckle at their breast and our fathers cradled us on their knees from generation to generation.<sup>21</sup>

Forgetting Aryans were invaders in a much older saga, he made a distinction between the state and nation and rejected any notion that Arabs, Jews, Russians, Germans, Portuguese, Greeks or others came to India and had any hand in forming the nation now called India. This implies that immigrants or their descendants cannot be regarded as part and parcel of the nation. He firmly advocated that a new Indian State would be formed without common religious, social, cultural and historical ties to non-Hindu communities. Of greater interest is his depiction of the *Hindu Raj*. It is not based on the Hinduism that stands upon the Vedas as understood by common Hindus of all castes and social strata. To the contrary, his neo-*Hindu Raj* is founded on Hindutva, a purist political ideology that excludes all others.

Savarkar devoted his entire life to his peculiar view of Hindu nationalism and the struggle to realise his neo-*Hindu Raj*. He defended Hindu nationalism by arguing that if a community defends just rights against unjust demands made by another community it is justifiable nationalism. This interpretation provides blanket approval for his followers to reclaim so-called rights at the expense of others, especially non-Hindu minorities.

Savarkar extensively propounded that India's Hindu majority, after whom the country is named must follow its traditions and thereby naturally evolve according to blood ties that reconcile the past and present, thus shaping the future. The implication here is an abject refusal to acknowledge contributions from other communities

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<sup>21</sup> Dhananjay Keer, *Veer Savarkar*, (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., Dec. 1966), 265-266. Taken from [https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/84001/12/12\\_chapter%206.pdf](https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/84001/12/12_chapter%206.pdf). Chapter 6, Hindutva ideology.

that helped form and develop post-modern India. Accordingly, no one can justifiably or even possibly question, intimidate or ‘terrorise’ the nation’s majority (Hindus). They alone must shape India’s present and future, thus transforming secular India into his peculiar *Hindu Raj*. Hence, Muslims for example have no legitimate voice or even claim to have been or be an integral component of national historicity, or to have had or have transgenerational socio-political commerce or contemporary relevance. This absurd proposition holds serious implications for India’s Muslim residents.

Because Savarkar endorsed India as both Fatherland and holy land for Hindus, he also opposed any division of the country. Hence, he accordingly appealed to his people and campaigned against any plan to bisect India. Even now the Hindu Mahasabha, his brain child, subscribes to *Akhand Bharat* or ‘Greater India’ but without prescription for reunification with Pakistan. Hindutva’s many elements argue that Hindus *are the nation* because they share a common culture and religion. Thus, they assert that religious minorities must submit to the cultural and political dominions of the majority Hindu community. This implies accepting the Hindu faith and culture.

### **Mussolini and Hitler: Hindu Admirers**

Hitler and Mussolini sacrificed democratic principles to commit atrocities and remain condemned for their autocratic, ultra-racist governance. Hitler advocated Judeophobia which led to the genocide of millions of Jews. Likewise, Mussolini applied totalitarian fascist policies. However, after their fall no decent supporter of democracy could admit them to the halls of good governance. They are still despised by human rights advocates but eulogised by dictators. Yet they became role models for Hindu fanatics in India who established, supported and led militant organisation(s). An overview of two such groups now follows. The first is the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh), Hindu militants who influence Indian politics. The second is Shiv Sena, a prominent Hindu fascist group from the state of Maharashtra with branches throughout India. In the extant climate of India’s political eco-system, they are decision makers for the country’s future. This is no exaggeration.

Is RSS unique? Did its founder design its philosophy? Was he inspired by Indian culture and religious tradition? Did RSS propagate anti-Muslim sentiment? Is it peace-loving or violence prone? Our research revealed that RSS ideology does not align with India's indigenous peace-loving culture. To the contrary, it was inspired by Hitler's Nazism and Mussolini's Fascism. Marzia Casolari, an Italian researcher of Indian politics, found exceptionally strong links between Moonje, the first Hindu nationalist, and the Italian Fascist regime of Mussolini. Moonje<sup>22</sup> was Keshav Baliram Hedgewar's<sup>23</sup> mentor and intimate fellow. Casolari describes fraternal links between RSS founders, Fascism and Nazism and unearthed direct contacts between Italian fascists including Mussolini and Hindu nationalists. Thus, Hindu nationalism has far more than abstract interests in fascism. According to her:

The interest of Indian Hindu nationalists in fascism and Mussolini must not be considered an occasional curiosity confined to a few individuals. Rather, it was a culminating result of focused attention paid by Hindu nationalists, especially in Maharashtra, on the Italian dictatorship and its leader. For them, fascism appeared as an example of a conservative revolution.<sup>24</sup>

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (Vir/Veer Savarkar, henceforth Savarkar) (1883–1966), was the activist, lawyer and writer who

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<sup>22</sup> Moonje was a strong supporter of Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Following the death of Bal Gangadhar Tilak in 1920, Moonje dissociated from Congress. Following his departure from Congress, Moonje was the All India President of the Hindu Mahasabha from 1927 until he handed over the charge to Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in 1937. Until his death, he was very active in the Mahasabha and toured all over India.

<sup>23</sup> Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, also known as "Doctorji" within his organisation, was the founding Sarsanghachalak of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. Hedgewar founded the RSS in Nagpur in 1925, with the intention of promoting the concept of a united India rooted in the Hindutva ideology. (<https://www.google.com/search?q=Keshav+Baliram+Hedgewar%E2%80%99s&oq=Keshav+Baliram+Hedgewar%E2%80%99s&aqs=chrome..69i57j0l7.2592j0j4&sourceid>)

<sup>24</sup> Marzia Casolari, "Hindutva's Foreign Tie-up in the 1930's: Archival Evidence", *The Economic and Political Weekly*, January 22, 2000, 228.

formulated *Hindutva* philosophy.<sup>25</sup> As an eminent personage and principal founder of Hindu Mahasabha, it was he who popularised the term Hindutva. A mentor of the RSS cadre, Savarkar admired Hitler's Nazism and Mussolini's Fascism and supported the anti-Jewish pogroms. While Hitler promoted Judeophobia in Germany, Savarkar promoted Islamophobia in India, gradually suggesting the same final solution on 14 October 1938: "A Nation is formed by the majority living therein. What did the Jews do in Germany? They, being a minority, were driven out from Germany."<sup>26</sup> Muslims in India were to be dealt with like Jews in Germany.

Moonje belonged to Hindu Mahasabha. Oriented towards Italian and German models, he wanted to apply Mussolini's approach when dealing with minorities particularly Muslims. Impressed by first-hand experience, he proposed that India imitate Germany's youth programs and Italy's Balilla, adapting them to "special conditions". When observing contemporary RSS philosophy, objectives and activities, one sees an interaction of Hitler's Nazism and Mussolini's Fascism, a spirit counterintuitive to India's traditional culture and temperament.

Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar (1906–1973) (henceforth, Golwalkar), was a prominent ideologue who became a leader of the RSS after the death of its founder, Hedgewar (1884–1940). Senior mentors engendered his deep love of Fascism and Nazism. He idolised Hitler's ideas especially 'ethnic cleansing' — a cruel policy used to rid Germany of Jews. Golwalkar wrote:

German racial pride is now the topic of the day. To maintain purity of race and culture, Germany has shocked the world with her purging the country of the Semitic races — the Jews. Here is racial pride at its highest manifestation. Germany has also shown how well-nigh impossible it is for races and cultures—with differences running to the root—to be assimilated as a

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<sup>25</sup> Bipin Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1989), 145.

<sup>26</sup> Casolari, "Hindutva's Foreign Tie-up in the 1930's: Archival Evidence," 223.



united whole. This is a good lesson for us in Hindustan from which to learn and profit.<sup>27</sup>

Hitler's Judeophobia led to the unjustified extermination of millions of Jews. Golwalker implied that Hindus should also be proud of their Aryan superiority especially since Aryan Brahmins had been created from the head of Lord Brahma. Hence, just as Hitler dealt with his Jew minority, Hindus were to deal with their minorities, both Muslims and Christians. The suggestion (propaganda) of ethnic cleansing by proponents of Hindutva aided the application of Hitler's model in so-called 'Aryan India'. Thus, Muslims were targeted as antagonists of Hindu culture, traditions, myths and religion. RSS and other Hindutva ideologues were clearly inspired by totalitarian ideologues of the modern world. Any political, social or cultural theory linked to totalitarianism was and remains highly acclaimed by their supporters. A contemporary example is Israel where political Zionists are cleansing the land of Palestinians.

Like Savarkar and Golwalker, Bal Keshav Thackeray (1926–2012) (Balasaheb Thackeray, henceforth Thackery), the founder of Shiv Sena, a Marathi regional and Hindu nationalist political organisation in India (founded on 19 June 1966) also admired Hitler. This Shiv Sena has been referred to as an "extremist", "chauvinist", as well as a "fascist" party. When once accused of this, he remained silent. An Indian aphorism says silence is a sign of approval. He later proclaimed:

I am a great admirer of Hitler and am not ashamed to say so! I do not say that I agree with all the methods he employed, but he was a wonderful organiser and orator, and I feel that he and I have several things in common. ... What India really needs is a dictator who will rule benevolently but with an iron hand.<sup>28</sup>

This sentiment mirrored the views of RSS and Shiv Sena. Their autocratic constructs and fascist principles have the same sources. An exalted personage in Mumbai (formerly Bombay) in the state of

<sup>27</sup> M.S. Golwalker, *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (Nagpur: Bharat Publications, 1939), 34-35.

<sup>28</sup> TIME TV, "The Page", 19 November 2012: 21.

Maharashtra, Thackeray was a “shining star” of Hindu fanaticism who advocated all forms of violence against Muslims until he died. He feared no government administrators or police. Indeed, he was an unkind, harmful-minded vociferous species of a Hindu elitist who patronised Islamophobia and collaborated with BJP and other Hindutva movements for this cause. In 1993 he said, “There is nothing wrong if Muslims are treated as were Jews in Nazi Germany.” This statement is a frank incitement of lawlessness, yet authorities took no legal action even after it caused riots in several Mumbai communities.

Thackeray also stated, “If you take *Mein Kampf* and replace the word ‘Jew’ with ‘Muslim’, this is what I believe in.”<sup>29</sup> Thus, he had made up his mind to implement Hitler’s blueprint. *Mein Kampf*<sup>30</sup> explains a process by which Hitler became a militant anti-Semite. It outlines his harsh political ideology and plans. Hitler’s thesis was The Jewish Peril, in which he posited a Jewish conspiracy to obtain world dominion. Like Hitler’s deconstruction of Jews, Thackeray held that Muslims were planning to seize power. Hence, he announced The Muslim Peril with hopes to advance a final solution in India. Although violent incidents occurred as a direct result of his calls for genocide, the scale of what took place in Germany never materialised. Nonetheless, the sentiment remains and percolates through all of Hindu society in Maharashtra.

### **First Occupation of the Babri Mosque**

An example of polarising hatred sowed much dissension and apartheid terror shortly after India’s independence. The sub-continent was partitioned between India and Pakistan in August of 1947 and violence erupted between Muslims and Hindus. Thousands were killed and riots continued for months with innumerable casualties. The creation of Pakistan was disliked by the Hindu majority.

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<sup>29</sup> D’Souza, Dilip, “Hitler’s Strange Afterlife in India”, *The Daily Beast*, 30 November 2012.

<sup>30</sup> *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle* or *My Fight*) is a 1925 auto-biographical manifesto by Nazi Party leader Adolf Hitler. The work describes the process by which Hitler became anti-semitic and outlines his political ideology and future plans for Germany.

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of India's independence, was blamed by Hindu Mahasabha and RSS. He was assassinated by Godse,<sup>31</sup> a proponent of Hindutva and member of RSS.<sup>32</sup>

After the assassination, Hindu Mahasabha fanatics illegally occupied the Babri Mosque. On 22 December 1949, 40 to 60 Hindus entered the mosque and installed idols of Rama, Sita and Hanuman in its centre. They scribbled slogans of *Jairam* and *Sitaram* on the walls and drew portraits of Lord Rama and Sita in yellow and saffron. During their brief occupation, they recited Hindu mantras, hymns and songs claiming that same site was where Lord Rama was born.<sup>33</sup> On realising the potential for further violence, security personnel notified the armed forces who expelled the illegal occupants but left the idols. The next day a report was made to the Ayodhya police station. The duty officer wrote the First Information Report (FIR) and mentioned the 50 to 60 intruders but only three people responsible for placing the idols: Abiram Das, Ram Sahal Das and Sudarsan Das.<sup>34</sup> News of the occupation quickly spread. Muslims were annoyed. Everyday Hindus were perplexed. Subsequently, both Muslims and Hindus surrounded the mosque but Muslims seemed to cause fear. Poorly informed Hindus believed Lord Rama had responded to their supplications by miraculously placing his idol in the mosque which for them was his birth place. In their simple-minded view they saw Lord Rama coming home. Hence, arrangements were made to worship him. However, Muslims claimed the "miracle" was the work of Hindu fanatics. Tensions rose and minor violence followed.<sup>35</sup>

At this point, Karo, a leader of Hindu Mahasabha had organised a conference at which he delivered a speech appealing for

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<sup>31</sup> Nathuram Vinayak Godse (1910 – 1949) was the assassin of Mahatma Gandhi, who shot Gandhi in the chest three times at point blank range in New Delhi on 30 January 1948. Godse, an advocate of Hindu nationalism, from Pune, Maharashtra, believed Gandhi had favoured the political demands of India's Muslims during the partition of India.

<sup>32</sup> R. Muthukumar, *Hindutva Iyokka Varalaru (History of Hindutva Movement)* (Chennai: Sixth Sense Publications, 2015), 226-228.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

Hindu support of *Ram Janma Bhoomi*<sup>36</sup> (The Ram Temple Movement). He then proposed an ideal Hindu Rashtra as follows:

We need to set aside the concept that India is a secular country. Since Hindus constitute 85% of India's total population, their culture should remain a culture of Hindu India. Muslims should be regarded as second-class citizens. In line with this concept, India's constitution should be amended. This is our stand.<sup>37</sup>

Other Hindu Mahasabha leaders were harsh, violent, prejudiced and aggressive in their public statements. They instilled hate for Muslims and vowed that on coming to power they would withdraw Muslim voting rights.

### **The Hindutva Movement**

The Hindutva movement promoted by RSS and BJP has effectively imprinted Islamophobic ideations to Hindus for decades. They use sophisticated high-tech schemes and archetypes that later caused the demolition of the Babri Mosque in 1992 and the mass Gujarat Muslim genocide in 2002. Both incidents marked crucial turning points in India's "secular" history. They are now discussed in some detail.

The Hindutva movement aims to establish a Hindu Rashtra (Hindu State). Its most notable advocates, proponents and ideologues were Savarkar and Golwalker. Their vision and movement are not permitted by India's constitution:

The preamble of the Indian Constitution disallows the formation of a theocratic state and precludes the state from identifying itself with, or otherwise favouring, any particular religion. Additionally, the constitution

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<sup>36</sup> Ram Janmabhoomi is the name given to the site that is hypothesized to be the birthplace of Rama, believed to be the seventh avatar of the Hindu deity Vishnu. The Ramayana states that the location of Rama's birthplace is on the banks of the Sarayu river in a city called "Ayodhya". (<https://www.google.com/search?q=Ram+Janma+Bhoomi&oq=Ram+Janma+Bhoomi&aqs=chrome..69i57j0l7.1535j0j8&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF>)

<sup>37</sup> R. Muthukumar, *Hinduthuva Iyakka Varalaru*, 226-228.

encompasses several provisions that emphasise complete legal equality of its citizens irrespective of their religion and creed and prohibits any kind of religion-based discrimination between them.<sup>38</sup>

As mentioned earlier according to Savarkar, Hindutva differs from Hinduism.<sup>39</sup> Its proponents believe in a comprehensive universalism, a theory that Hindutva embraces all aspects of life including politics while emphasising the superiority of the Hindus especially the upper castes. This is the same belief of political Zionists. They think Jews are superior and use this fascist ideology plus scripture to justify their occupation of Palestine. Zionists also believe in Greater Israel and subscribe to expansionism by terror to achieve this objective. Savarkar believes that Hindus are of superior bloodlines specifically, the Aryan race. Accordingly, Hindus follow a religion that regards the land of Bharatavarsha (from the Indus river to the sea) as its sacred fatherland. Hence, Hindutva devotees regard Muslims and Christians as enemies, ideologically and politically. Like all fanatics they use this to justify any form of violence against them.<sup>40</sup> Lal Krishna Advani,<sup>41</sup> another Hindutva ideologist, proposed that if there are Arya Samaj Hindus and Sanatani Hindus, why not Mohammadi Hindus or Christian Hindus.<sup>42</sup> This only added fuel to the flames.

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<sup>38</sup> Cheema, Constitutional and Legal Challenges faced by Religious Minorities in India, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu*, 2017. see: <https://www.amazon.com/Hindutva-Hindu-Vinayak-Damodar-Savarkar-ebook/dp/B073KQ72L8>

<sup>40</sup> N. Jamal Ansari, "Hindu Rashtra in Bharat under Constitution Perspectives", *Radiance Views Weekly*, Vol. 37, No. 41, 2002, 13.

<sup>41</sup> Advani joined the RSS in 1941 when he was 14 years old and became a member of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, a political party founded in 1951 in collaboration with the RSS. He served as Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Minister of Coal and Mines, Minister of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Minister of Home Affairs and seventh Deputy Prime Minister of India. He also served as Leader of Opposition Party in Lok Sabha as well as Rajya Sabha. He was one of the main accused in the Babri Masjid case.

<sup>42</sup> Zeenath Kausar, "Communal Riots in India: Hindu-Muslim Conflict and Resolution," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 2006, London, 26:3, 362, DOI: 10.1080/1360200060114132.

## **Savarkar, Golwalker and Thackeray: Manufacturers of Islamophobia**

The Islamophobic industry had good returns on investments in Hindu fanatics. Savarkar, Golwalker and Thackeray never hesitated to hurl allegations against Muslims and brand them as enemies of Hindus and secular India. Savarkar said that Hindus should be cautious of all Muslims: “I warn Hindus that after Britishers leave India, Mohamadans will be harmful to our Hindu Rashtra.” He added that, in the absence of efforts to rid India of Muslims, Hindus will again surrender Hindu Rashtra to Muslims who will resort to all violent means to rule over them. Thus, in his mind it was imperative that Hindus assess Muslim conspiratorial strategies and make concerted efforts to re-establish Hindu Rashtra based on traditional Vedic culture whereby Hindus could live with pride and dignity.

Savarkar framed his Hindutva ideology in response to the “pan-Islamic Khilafat movement”<sup>43</sup> that caused Indian Muslims to pledge support to the Ottoman Caliph. He engendered profound hostility for Islam and Muslims. Accordingly, just as Muslims pledged loyalty to the Ottoman ruler, Hindus must pledge their lives and efforts to pan-Hindu unity with a view to establish Hindu Rashtra — a ‘Hindu Only’ nation. According to Savarkar, “Muslims were the real enemies, not the British ... because Islamic ideology posed a threat to the real nation, namely, Hindu Rashtra.”<sup>44</sup> The bias completely ignores Muslims who not only enhanced India’s legacy through Islamic rule, art and architecture, but also maintained profoundly fraternal relationships with Hindus by living in peace and harmony for centuries without communal disorder.

Historians including Rachel McDermott, Leonard A. Gordon, Ainslie Embree, Frances Pritchett and Dennis Dalton have recorded that Savarkar promoted an anti-Muslim form of Hindu nationalism.<sup>45</sup> Vinayak Chaturvedi states that Savarkar was known

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<sup>43</sup> The Khilafat movement, also known as the Indian Muslim movement (1919–24), was a pan-Islamist political protest campaign launched by Muslims of British India.

<sup>44</sup> Christophe Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 14–15, 86–93.

<sup>45</sup> Rachel Fell McDermott, Leonard A. Gordon, Ainslie T. Embree, Frances W. Pritchett, Dennis Dalton, eds. *Sources of Indian Traditions: Modern India, Pakistan,*

for his anti-Muslim writings.<sup>46</sup> Savarkar saw Muslims in the Indian police and military to be “potential traitors”. He advocated that India reduce the number of Muslims in the military, police and public service and ban Muslims from owning or working in munitions factories.<sup>47</sup> He criticised Gandhi for his concern for the well-being of India’s Muslims.<sup>48</sup> He emerged as the most controversial Indian political thinker of the twentieth century by gaining notoriety for his program to “Hinduise Politics and Militarise Hindudom”, for his anti-Muslim and anti-Christian politics, and for his advocacy of violence in everyday life.

Prior to the establishment of Hindu organisations such as Arya Samaj<sup>49</sup> and others during the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, no serious communal riots were reported. British colonials profoundly changed Indian education with permissive cultural norms and secularism, representing occidental traditions and values as more respectable and nobler than Islamic or Hindu legacies. Thus, either Savarkar’s disposition, character and ignorance made him portray Muslims as enemies, or perhaps he was disappointed with a few medieval Muslim rulers of India who in their day were decidedly unjust. Blaming the entire Muslim community for the wrongs of a few rulers shows remarkable ignorance of Islam’s many contributions to India and shows exceptionally unjustifiable bias and hatred.

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*and Bangladesh* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 483.

<sup>46</sup> Vinayak Chaturvedi, “Rethinking knowledge with action: V. D. Savarkar, the Bhagavad Gita, and histories of warfare”. *Modern Intellectual History*. 7 (2), (2010): 417–435 [420].

<sup>47</sup> Lise McKean, *Divine Enterprise: Gurus and the Hindu Nationalist Movement*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 89.

<sup>48</sup> Joseph W. Elder, In Cowen, Robert, Kazamias, Andreas M. (eds.). *Hinduism, Modernity and Knowledge: India* (Springer Netherlands, 2009), 880.

<sup>49</sup> Arya Samaj is a monotheistic Indian Hindu reform movement that promoted values and practices based on the belief in the infallible authority of the Vedas. The Samaj was founded by Dayanand Saraswati on 10 April 1875. Members believe in one God and reject the worship of idols. (<https://www.google.com/search?q=arya+samaj&oq=Arya+Samaj&aqs=chrome.0.0l8.7311j0j8&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>)

Golwalker proposed that “whatever Hindus believe Muslims oppose.”<sup>50</sup> From the Islamic perspective, this is pure speculation and completely untrue. Personally, Golwalker was never convinced of Muslim integrity and always remained sceptical of their patriotism. He said Muslims criticised Hindu worship in their temples and that their processions (*yatras*) and *mantras* only irritated Muslims. Hindus also worshipped the cows that Muslims slaughtered and ate. Hindus regarded women as incarnations of Mother India - *Bharat Mata*<sup>51</sup> - which Muslims ridiculed. Just as cats are natural enemies of rats, he claimed the Hindu-lifestyle inclusive of religion, culture and society opposed Muslim lifeways and that the antagonism was deeply rooted in Muslim blood.

We therefore assert that Golwalker represented the apex of ignorance regarding the God-fearing character, culture and attitude of Muslims as humanitarians who believe in a common human parentage as stated in Verse 13 of *Surat al-Hujurat*<sup>52</sup> of the Qur’an, the Muslim’s Holy Book. Truly, Muslims do not oppose Hindus and they neither criticise the ritual religious practices nor are against Hindu *mantras* and hymns. It is also improper to say that Hindus and Muslims fought like cats and rats. To the contrary, Muslims and Hindus commonly manifest composed caring and cordial concern for one another. Compassionate coolness in social life showing genuine consideration for mutual needs and solutions for shared problems was ordinary fare. Common Hindus and Muslims are gentle tender-hearted beings who for centuries upheld religious, social and national harmony. Only dangerous indoctrinated fanatics and extremists are problematic. Hence, it is bigoted to accuse Muslims in such a fashion. Nevertheless, Golwalkar showed both a clear bias and questionable judgement. Instead of promoting India as a united and

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<sup>50</sup> R. Muthukumar, *Hindutva Iyakka Varalaru*, 226-228.

<sup>51</sup> *Bhārat Mata* meaning ‘mother’ is the national personification of India as a mother goddess. She is usually depicted as a woman clad in a saffron sari holding the Indian national flag and sometimes accompanied by a lion.

<sup>52</sup> “O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).”



potentially great super-power, Golwalkar divided the nation with mundane parochial visions of unilateral hatred.

Golwalker, as a consequence of Islamophobia had declared that “no power on earth could keep Muslims in Hindustan. They shall have to quit this country”; Mahatma Gandhi wanted to keep Muslims in India so that the Congress may benefit from their votes at the time of election.<sup>53</sup> The Hindu Religious Awakening Council, an RSS-VHP affiliate proclaimed, “Muslims and Christians don’t have any right to stay here [in India],” one of its leaders said in December 2014 “Our target is to make India a Hindu nation by 2021... Muslims and Christians must convert to Hinduism “if they want to stay in this country.”<sup>54</sup>

Thackeray declared he was “not against every Muslim, only those who reside in this country (India) and do not obey the laws of the land ... I consider such people traitors.”<sup>55</sup> The implication is, of course, that Muslims should leave India. If not, Hitlerian rendering was in order. If Muslims do not obey Hindu law and adopt Hindu culture then they were traitors. During the time he led the Shiv Sena Party, he was essentially Monarch of Maharashtra. Even the Congress Party could not manage him or put an end to his malicious propaganda and mischief making. Thackeray literally conflated Islam with violence and called on Hindus to “fight terrorism by fighting Islam”. In an interview with *India Today*, he said the following:

[Muslims] are spreading like a cancer and should be operated on like a cancer. The country should be saved from Muslims and the police should support Hindu *Maha Sangh* in their struggle just like police in Punjab were sympathetic to the Khalistanis.<sup>56</sup>

His statement implies calling on police to not enforce the law but remain silent when Muslims were attacked. Such things did occur

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.timesheadline.com/india/rss-chief-golwalkar-threatened-kill-gandhi-1947-cid-report-19968.html>.

<sup>54</sup> <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/dharm-jagran-samiti-leader-vows-to-create-hindu-rashtra-by-2021/1/407660.html>.

<sup>55</sup> Sherman Hollar, “Bal Thackeray Indian journalist and politician”, *Britannica Online Encyclopaedia*, 23 January 1972, Retrieved 15 November 2012.

<sup>56</sup> “Shiv Sena leader of Bombay”, *India Today*, 15 June 1984.

and when Muslims sought the police's help during communal riots they never responded. In many cases, police joined hands with rioters to remove the Muslim cancer. Perhaps Hindu militants who sympathised with Hindutva completed their training and infiltrated the police force as did German Nazis.

In 2008 Thackeray wrote: "Islamic terrorism is growing and Hindu terrorism is the only way to counter it. We need suicide bomb squads to protect India and Hindus."<sup>57</sup> Thackeray clearly called for Hindu "suicide bomb squads" to eliminate Muslims similar to Zionist operatives in Palestine. It therefore appears that leaders of Hindutva promoted terrorism instead of peace, moderation, tolerance, justice, compassion and perseverance. Manic operations and operatives were inspired by Thackeray, founder of Shiv Sena whose influence still permeates BJP, India's current ruling party. Statements such as his, if issued by Muslim organisations would have created havoc and Muslims would have paid a huge price. Nothing happened to Thackeray.

Muslims remain tolerant and do not provoke or inspire violence. Instead they promote peace and leave these matters to the law. Moreover, terrorist dogma does not exist in authentic Islam. Nevertheless, whenever India's Muslims take a defensive approach through peaceful discourse and dialogue, they are called terrorists, traitors and anti-nationals. Muslim patriotism in India is beyond doubt. They sincerely love their nation as part of their religious faith and never participate in or organise para-military training, as do Hindutva followers who cultivate hatred, prejudice and revulsion towards Muslims. Such brainwashing is typical of the RSS. Thackeray demanded that Hindus should unite across linguistic barriers so that all might see "a Hindustan for Hindus ... [that would] bring Islam in this country to its knees."<sup>58</sup> Although he incited violence the authorities were silent as his Islamophobia peaked during election campaigns. This is evident in the following excerpts taken from the Shiv Sena campaign speeches:

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<sup>57</sup> *IBN Live*. "Leaders deliver hate speech with impunity," 07 April 2009.

<sup>58</sup> *Indian Express*, 29 January 2007.

We are fighting this election for the protection of Hinduism. Therefore, we do not care for the votes of Muslims. This country belongs to Hindus and will remain so. Hinduism will triumph in this election and we must become the honourable recipients of this victory to ward off the danger to Hinduism... You will find Hindu temples beneath all the mosques if they are excavated. Anybody who stands against Hindus should be showered or worshipped with shoes. ... We have the ideology of Hinduism. Shiv Sena will implement this ideology. Although this country belongs to Hindus, Rama and Krishna are insulted. ... The result of these elections will not depend upon solutions for problems of food and clothing, but whether or not the State flame of Hindustan will grow or will be extinguished. If in Maharashtra the flame of Hinduism is extinguished, then anti-national Muslims will be powerful and they will convert Hindustan into Pakistan. In the flame of Hindutva... anti-national Muslims will be reduced to ashes.<sup>59</sup>

Thackeray was not at all interested in the Muslim vote. His bias and prejudice evince the notion that Muslims intended to help Pakistan annex Hindustan. During the April–May 2019 elections in many parts of India, BJP and RSS workers called on Hindu voters not to vote for Muslims using the slogan “Hindu votes only for Hindu candidates”. The polarisation was also seen in the state of Tamil Nadu. If Muslims were to write or speak like Thackeray, i.e. to say that India was for Muslims, it would culminate in a savage genocide of Indian Muslims. Hindutva forces would gladly destroy Muslim homes and places of worship. The pathetic wickedness and emotive provocations of contemporary Hindutva speech and literature has caused thousands of murders and incidents that go unregistered, unrecorded and unreported by the Indian media.

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<sup>59</sup> K. G. Kannabiran, *The Wages of Impunity, Power, Justice and Human Rights* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman Private Limited, 2004). 150-151.

### Active Condemnation of Muslims by VHP, HJM, BD and RSS

From 1997, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Hindu Jagran Manch,<sup>60</sup> Bajrang Dal<sup>61</sup> and other affiliates of RSS began using Gujarat — where Narendra Modi was Chief Minister — as a laboratory for the cleansing of minorities, particularly Muslims and Christians. After successful trials, they spread their tentacles throughout India by distributing leaflets with provocative statements such as follows:

Muslims are filth of the gutter, don't let them enter your homes. Awaken Hindus and struggle against these thieves who lie and rob you of your rights. Come to your senses. Even one more addition of a Christian or Muslim to the population is not only anti-Hindu but also anti-national.<sup>62</sup>

Golwalker's statements are blatant provocations. He says Muslim and Christian births only add to anti-Hindu or anti-national constituencies and that Hindus should not allow Muslims to enter their homes because they are filth. Are such remarks proper for an upper caste Hindu leader? Do we require other examples to substantiate official fascist Hindu positions? His view is similar to the Hindu view of *Chandalas*<sup>63</sup> (untouchables), the lowest Hindu caste. Such rhetoric can never host peaceful relations and will only cause misunderstanding, irreconcilable rivalry and open hostility. Unfortunately, urban Hindus are already fanatically spellbound. Zealots sedulously move into rural areas to continually plant hatred

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<sup>60</sup> Hindu Jagran Manch is an Indian Hindu activist group affiliated to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. It works for the reconversion of Muslims and Christians to Hinduism.

<sup>61</sup> The Bajrang Dal is a Hindu religious militant organisation that forms the youth wing of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. Its ideology is based on Hindutva. One of its main goals is to build the Ramjanmabhoomi temple in Ayodhya, the Krishnajanmabhoomi temple in Mathura and the Kashi Vishwanath temple in Varanasi. Another goal includes protecting India's "Hindu" identity from the perceived dangers of Muslim demographic growth.

<sup>62</sup> M.S. Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (Nagpur: Bharat Publications, 1939), 185.

<sup>63</sup> *Chandala* is a Sanskrit word for someone who deals with disposal of corpses and is a Hindu lower caste, traditionally considered to be untouchable.

and brainwash blameless rustics who befriend Muslims. Gradually, the naïve are carried away by tides of false propaganda. Eventually, they act out against peaceful Muslim neighbours who hold no rancour.

The book *Bunch of Thoughts* by Golwalkar has a chapter called “Internal Threats” in which Muslims and Christians are described as number one and two enemies, respectively. Communists are number three. It begins with: “It has been the tragic lesson of history for many a country that hostile elements within pose a far greater menace to national security than external aggressors.”<sup>64</sup> Contemporary authorities say there is no Muslim threat and that riotous elements who once supported Pakistan have vanished and remaining Muslims are devoted to India. After all, they have no place to go and are bound to remain loyal. Nevertheless, Golwalkar elaborates on the ‘Muslim Menace’ as follows:

It is suicidal to delude ourselves into believing that they [Muslims] have become patriots overnight after the creation of Pakistan. To the contrary, the Muslim menace has increased a hundredfold by the creation of Pakistan, which has become a springboard for all future aggressive designs on our country.<sup>65</sup>

His ‘Muslim Enemy Number One’ thesis was devotedly used by VHP goons to destroy Muslim properties in Gujarat in 2002. To quote him:

Within the country there are many Muslim pockets or ‘miniature Pakistans’ where the general law of the land can be enforced only with certain modifications, and the whims of miscreants have been given the final say. This acceptance, indirect though it may be, implies a very dangerous theory fraught with the possibility of the destruction of our national life altogether. Such ‘pockets’ have verily become centers of a widespread network of pro-Pakistani elements in this land. ... The

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<sup>64</sup> MS Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts* (Bangalore: Sahitya Sindhu, 1996), 177.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 177-178.

only conclusion is that practically and everywhere there are Muslims in constant touch with Pakistan using transmitters ...<sup>66</sup>

The accusation was never proven, yet the lie remains and is used to advance Islamophobic sympathy from Hindus for the current ruling party, BJP (2019). Even Hindus who never believed such rumours in the past are now perplexed and slowly turning due to the lie's repetition.

As for 'Internal Threat Number Two' (Christians), Golwalker says those who reside in India plan to demolish the religious and social fabric of Hindu life and establish political dominion 'when opportunity permits'.<sup>67</sup> This affront to Christians ignores numerous educational institutions and hospitals by which Hindus profit and are cared for throughout the nation.

Based on the above narratives and diachronic highlights, it can be asserted that right from Savarkar, Golwalker, Thackeray to Amit Shah, Indian Muslims are branded as "terrorists", "anti-India", "anti-Hindus", "enemies of India", "pro-Pakistanis", "filth of the gutter", "termites", "foreign spies" and what not. These branding of India's Muslims has one century of history with the founding of RSS in 1925. However, the real hero? behind the development and inculcation of Islamophobia in India was none other than Golwalker. He promoted intolerance and discrimination motivated by fear, mistrust and hatred of Islam and Muslims combined with racism, xenophobia and religious intolerance. He was well-known for his hate speeches and writing which are reflected in his *Bunch of Thoughts* and *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, the sources of the founding principles, objectives, vision and mission of Sangh Parivar and the BJP.

## Conclusion

This paper reveals the roots and rise of Islamophobia in India, beginning with the admiration for Mussolini and Hitler by RSS and Shiv Sena leaders. The first attempt to occupy Babri Mosque

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 193.

reflected Hindutva's manufacture of Islamophobia per Savarkar, Golwalker and Thackeray. Realising the alarming and present circumstances, the author suggests some measures to help improve Hindu–Muslim relations based on some common grounds.

A kind of truce and dialogue with fair, kind, noble-hearted Hindus with a moderate view of Islam is needed to inform and bilaterally reject the politics of caste and unsubstantiated bias. Other initiatives can involve Hindutva leaders with respect to misconceptions of Islam and anti-India/Hindu propaganda. The latter allegation needs a proper review and complete contextual assessment. Hindutvawadis must be convinced of Muslim loyalty to India and all doubts that were historically misconstrued must be eliminated in light of actual facts.

Muslims should initiate peaceful dialogues with Hindutva exponents especially RSS, VHP and BJP leaders with a view to revise their misunderstanding of the Islamic worldview. Non-productive acts by fascists need to be buffered by an Islamic position of moderation and mercy. Islam's compassionate wisdom can rectify all misconceptions and propositions held by Hindutva ideologues by formal review. This will help maintain national harmony and sustainable pacific relations between various religious groups. Muslims can lead the way.

It is imperative that Muslims bear in mind their designation as *khayra ummah* in the Qur'an, meaning a 'community of excellence' or 'best community'. Equally, the Qur'an calls them *ummatan wasatan* which means a 'moderate' or 'just' community. Both attributions cannot be ignored and are best actualised with appropriate scholarly interpretations, descriptions, illustrations and elucidations. It is a Muslim's responsibility to manifest these qualities per Qur'anic dictums. When accomplished, the Hindu population would be exposed to a remarkable manifestation of Islam. Equally, Hindus must also be made to understand that Islam never condones violence, extremism and terrorism and that Muslims are directed to live the lifestyle of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). In other words, Muslims must restructure their lives based on the Prophet's example and tradition.

If Muslims are to uphold, practise and advocate both of these

concepts they would reserve a place in the hearts and minds of millions of people including those who are presently hostile. Foes would turn to friends, hostility would cease, harmony would flourish, hate would transform into comforting assistance, non-violence would rise and compromise all conspirators with virtue, greed would turn to generosity, those averse would become appreciative, criminals would be vanquished by compassion, liars silenced, discrimination tuned towards justice, rudeness removed by respect, arrogance abolished, dissent would have no platform and murderers no darkness to cover their deeds. On and on the benefits would flow if Muslims become truly Islamic.

Muslims must also contemplate and cross check both facts and hearts? before uttering anything regarding persons, religions, cultures and rituals. They must be vigilant in their choice of words and criticisms, finetuning their language and expression before making pronouncements and evaluating knowledge content, knowing right from wrong and positive from neutral or negative. They should foresee or anticipate the consequences of what they say to determine whether or not they can bring constructive or destructive outcomes.

In addition to religious commitment, the Muslim vision must be directed towards upholding India's unity and social harmony within the far broader Islamic context and worldview. Provocative, offensive or sensitive statements invite tension and only frustrate the entire community. All five principles of *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* (Objectives of the Islamic Revealed Law) should prevail in all Muslim activities for everyone's good. Any discourse or activity that harms harmonious Hindu-Muslim relations must be avoided. Muslims are to educate all others without fail and inform them by word and deed that Islam is egalitarian and just, thus showing the Prophet (SAW) as *Rahmatan li'l Alamin*, i.e. mercy for humanity. This is the Muslim mercy for all of mankind.

There is a need for a unanimous blueprint that prioritises the support and approval of Islamic scholars in India. Instead of emulating theories and readings of Muslim scholars in other regions, it is time they develop their own theories, systems, principles, institutions and organisations within the Indian context from a genuine holistic Islamic perspective of a multi-religious



multi-cultural landscape. Theories and interpretations in other contexts, whether cultural or civilisational, may not be suitable for the contemporary situation in India which is hostile to Islam. Hence, one must be very cautious and relevant. Otherwise, consequences can be disastrous.



AL-SHAJARA  
Vol. 25, No. 1, 2020  
Contents

**ARTICLES**

- ISLAMOPHOBIA IN INDIA: AN EXPLORATION OF ITS ROOTS, RISE AND HISTORY 1  
*Thameem Ushama*
- REPRODUCING THE HUMANITIES: MEVLANA RUMI'S CORPUS 31  
IN RESTRUCTURING THE STUDY OF MAN AND SOCIETY  
*Ahmad Murad Merican*
- PROBING THE THEORY OF SUBJECTIVE DEVELOPMENT IN MULLĀ ṢADRĀ'S 59  
EPISTEMOLOGY  
*Abbas Kharabi*
- NEITHER CREATED NOR DESTRUCTIBLE: IBN SĪNĀ ON THE ETERNITY OF 85  
THE UNIVERSE  
*Syamsuddin Arif*
- THE STUDY OF SPIRITUAL EDUCATION IN SEYYED HOSEIN NASRS' 107  
WORKS AND COMPARING IT WITH SOME CURRENT DEFINITIONS  
*Babak Shamshiri, Saeed Rahimian & Hosein Ali Tajali Ardekani*
- MORE THAN TOLERANCE: THE ISLAMIC CALL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS REVERENCE 127  
*Tarik Quadir*

**MANUSCRIPT STUDIES**

- INTRODUCTORY NOTES ON ABDULLAH MUNSHI'S *HIKAYAT BINATANG* 155  
*Baharuddin Ahmad*
- 'TREASURES OF SCIENCES IN THE LOVELY REALM OF SIGHTS': AN INVESTIGATION 163  
INTO ĀMULĪ'S MANUSCRIPT OF *NAFĀ'IS AL-FUNŪN FĪ 'ARĀ'IS AL-'UYŪN*  
*Amir H. Zekrgoo*

**BOOK REVIEW**

- KRISTIAN PETERSEN, *INTERPRETING ISLAM IN CHINA: PILGRIMAGE, SCRIPTURE, &* 191  
*LANGUAGE IN THE HAN KITAB*, NEW YORK: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS.  
2018. 285 PP  
Reviewer: *Min Ke-qin @ Omar Min*
- KOYA, P. K., *ISLAM IN CHINA: HISTORY, SPREAD AND CULTURE, A PICTORIAL BOOK,* 196  
KUALA LUMPUR: ISLAMIC BOOK TRUST. 2019. 193 PP  
Reviewer: *Min Ke-qin @ Omar Min.*
- SYED FARID ALATAS & ABDOLREZA ALAMI, EDS., *THE CIVILISATIONAL AND* 201  
*CULTURAL HERITAGE OF IRAN AND THE MALAY WORLD: A CULTURAL DISCOURSE,*  
PETALING JAYA: GERAKBUDAYA ENTERPRISE. 2018, 187 PP  
Reviewer: *Zaid Ahmad*
- MUHAMMED HARON, *CONNECTING SOUTH-SOUTH COMMUNITIES:* 206  
*A NARRATIVE OF SOUTH AFRICA-MALAYSIA RELATIONS*, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE:  
CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS PUBLISHING, LADY STEPHENSON LIBRARY. 2018.  
Reviewer: *Danial Yusof*
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*TIME*, KUALA LUMPUR: THE OTHER PRESS SDN. BHD. 2018.  
Reviewer: *Imtiyaz Yusuf*
- NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS 215

WoS-Indexed under Arts & Humanities Citation Index, Current Contents/Arts and Humanities and Scopus

ISSN 1394-6870



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