

## India's Majoritarian Nationalism: Challenge to Pluralism and Inclusion

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### ABSTRACT

India, one of the most diverse and plural societies in the world, is witnessing a significant erosion of its liberal-secular foundations as enshrined in its Constitution. The explosive growth of radical right-wing forces poses a grave threat to pluralism, as attacks on Muslims, Dalits, Adivasis, and other marginalized groups often go unpunished. In a multicultural society, differences are inevitable, but these differences are increasingly being manipulated to incite organized conflicts and violent outbursts. Majoritarian ideologies are being imposed on minority cultures, exacerbating the insecurity of non-dominant groups through targeted violence such as mob lynchings. This study highlights the urgent need to confront these trends to safeguard India's democratic ideals, restore pluralism, and revitalize the nation's institutions against the rise of extremist forces.

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## INTRODUCTION

Because of its endless diversity in terms of religion, race, class, caste, culture, dress, food, music, and art, India is ideally suited for conducting an in-depth case study on pluralism. India is the second most populous country in the world, with a population of more than 1.21 billion people (according to the census from 2011). This represents 17.5% of the total population of the entire planet. The majority of the world's religions may be found in India, and religious practice, in its numerous manifestations, is exceptionally prominent in the country's public life. According to the census taken in 2001 (the analysis of the census taken in 2011 does not give any data regarding religion), 80.5% of the population identifies as Hindu. This is followed by Muslims (13.4%), Christians (2.3%), Sikhs (1.9%), Buddhists (0.8%), Jains (0.4%), and other religions, which include Baha'is, Jews, and Parsis (0.6%). Census data do not mention atheists, Marxists, or those who do not practice religious faith, despite India's sizeable nonreligious population. Religious communities cannot be considered a single entity because they exhibit a broad spectrum of diversity in all the forms described above. On the other hand, the demographic makeup of India can be understood in terms of its rigidly stratified caste system and its numerous ethnic groups. There are around 3,000 different castes and more than 25,000 different sub-castes. The caste system subdivides the bulk of the Hindu society into groups that are considered to be socially disadvantaged or scheduled castes. In many regions of the country, Muslims and Christians are likewise subject to the caste system's hierarchical restrictions. The pluralistic life of Indian society is reflected in this complicated combination of ethnicity, religion, and caste (Hudawi, 2015).

The diversity of spoken languages and cultures practiced significantly contributes to these variables. One thousand six hundred thirty-five different mother tongues are recognized in this country. Of those, there are 30 languages with more than a million speakers and 122 languages with more than 10000 speakers. There are 22 national languages, with Hindi and English serving as the administrative and official languages. Sociolinguistic factors are taken into consideration while drawing state boundaries. In addition, Sanskrit, Arabic, and Persian are taught in schools because of these languages' religious, historical, or economic significance. In the 1960s, when efforts were made to establish Hindi as a single national language, violent anti-Hindi riots broke out in several parts of the country. The call by a Hindu right-wing party to make Hindi, which has been highly Sanskritized, the sole national language is always met with opposition from the secular community, who label it as part of the Hindutva project. When it comes to culture, every location, religion, ethnicity, and social caste provides the groundwork for a wide range of food options, fashion choices, performances, rituals, artistic expressions, and musical genres. The result is the creation of a cultural symbiosis, as well as improved and more pleasant relationships between individuals. Nevertheless, the same event might produce cultural tensions in several different ways. Conflicts can arise when one culture's eating habits offend another community's beliefs or when the public exhibition of one community's cultural event is perceived as a nuisance by the other community, both of which can lead to the same result. (Hudawi, 2015).

The early leaders of the newly independent India were faced with the most complex and challenging responsibility: to acknowledge, manage, and channel the country's many diverse groups toward the integration and growth of the country. After much study and debate, they drafted a constitution that declared India to be a Democratic Republic that is both Socialist and Secular. This was the culmination of their efforts. The constitutional notion of "Socialism" argues for equal status and opportunities for all, with no discrimination based on religion, race, color, caste, sex, or language, whereas "Secularism" calls for equal treatment, respect, and freedom for all faiths.

Individuals and communities in India have the right to profess, practice, and spread any religion they choose; nevertheless, India does not have a state religion. Despite this, India does not prohibit the exercise of any religion. The government may provide financial help to religious communities so that they can take advantage of opportunities to create their own religious, charitable, and educational institutions. The government will be responsible for the administration, regulation, and support of religious institutions such as historical or significant worship sites, pilgrimage centers, Hajj Cells, Wakf (endowment) Boards, etc. The state has recognized almost all the most influential religious holidays as official holidays. One of the most critical aspects of the secular state in India is the recognition of Hindu and Muslim personal law in addition to the standard and civil laws. These personal laws govern matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, succession, adoption, maintenance, guardianship, and custody of children, in addition to particular cultural and religious practices and the management of religious institutions.

While all of India's neighbours maintain their religious identities, India remains unwavering in its commitment to secularism. In contrast to Pakistan and Bangladesh, which are both considered Islamic governments, Nepal is a Hindu state, and Buddhism is the official religion of Sri Lanka. Many different examples show how unity thrives within diversity in India. Communities tend to respect one another in both the private and public arenas and cooperate with one another through celebrations, rites of passage, calamities, and other life events. Various communities' houses of worship often coexist peacefully next to one another; members of different faiths frequently work together, hold public office, provide mutual aid, and even collaborate on building new houses of worship in the same community. (Hudawi, 2015).

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

India's majoritarian nationalism, characterized by the dominance of a singular cultural identity often associated with Hinduism, presents profound challenges to the nation's long-standing commitment to pluralism and inclusion. This theoretical review examines the emergence of this form of nationalism in contemporary Indian society by exploring its historical roots, ideological foundations, and far-reaching implications for minority communities.

The rise of majoritarian nationalism in India is deeply intertwined with socio-political movements that have sought to redefine the nation's identity around a monolithic narrative. This narrative often marginalizes diverse cultural

expressions and communities, elevating a singular identity as the basis of national cohesion. Historically, such efforts can be traced to colonial-era and post-independence movements that linked national identity with religious and cultural hegemony. In recent years, this phenomenon has been intensified through political rhetoric, mass mobilization, and the pervasive influence of media, which collectively reinforce exclusionary ideologies. By valorizing one cultural identity, often at the expense of others, majoritarian nationalism undermines the foundational principles of India's democratic ethos, creating an environment where exclusionary practices flourish.

The consequences of this trend extend beyond social discord to institutionalized discrimination. Policies shaped by majoritarian ideologies often perpetuate systemic inequalities, hindering the socio-economic progress of marginalized communities. These policies exacerbate disparities by restricting access to essential resources such as education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. This institutionalized marginalization not only stifles individual potential but also erodes social cohesion, undermining collective progress and creating a fragmented society where unity and diversity are constantly at odds. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged and collaborative approach involving policymakers, community leaders, and citizens. At the core of this effort must be the recognition that diversity is a strength, not a source of division. Comprehensive strategies are needed to dismantle systemic barriers and promote equitable practices that ensure all communities have the opportunity to thrive. Prioritizing investments in education, healthcare, and economic empowerment is essential for creating an inclusive framework that addresses the root causes of inequality.

Targeted initiatives that actively involve underrepresented groups in decision-making processes can further enhance these efforts by fostering a sense of ownership and accountability. By encouraging collaboration among diverse stakeholders, India can build a cohesive society that leverages its cultural and social diversity as a driver of innovation and progress. Community-led programs that empower individuals to take active roles in shaping their environments are particularly important. These initiatives not only address immediate needs but also lay the groundwork for long-term resilience, enabling communities to adapt and thrive in the face of future challenges.

A holistic approach that integrates diverse perspectives into policymaking is critical for fostering sustainable progress. This model ensures that voices from all segments of society are heard and valued, creating an inclusive environment where everyone can contribute to and benefit from collective development. Collaboration across sectors—government, civil society, private organizations, and grassroots movements—can harness the unique strengths of each community member, transforming challenges into opportunities for growth and development.

Such a transformative process fosters innovation, pride, and shared responsibility, reinforcing social bonds and cultivating a culture of mutual accountability. Communities that embrace this spirit of collaboration are better equipped to navigate the complexities of an ever-changing world. By nurturing

diverse talents and perspectives, these communities can create innovative solutions to their unique challenges, ensuring that no one is left behind on the path to progress. Ultimately, this commitment to inclusivity and cooperation lays the foundation for sustainable development and collective well-being, securing a resilient and unified future for all.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a qualitative and interdisciplinary approach to analyze the rise of India's majoritarian nationalism and its impact on pluralism and inclusion. It mainly relies on secondary data sources, including historical records, academic literature, media reports, and institutional documents, to trace the historical roots, ideological underpinnings, and socio-political consequences of majoritarian nationalism. Utilizing historical, sociological, and political frameworks, the research critically examines key events, policies, and movements that have contributed to the dominance of a singular cultural identity. Ethical considerations are prioritized, ensuring a balanced and respectful analysis of sensitive issues. While focusing on India, the research also acknowledges limitations, such as the reliance on secondary data and the challenge of capturing regional variations, while suggesting avenues for future empirical and comparative studies.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Indian Majoritarianism: Its Historical Roots***

In the post-colonial world, India offers crucial insights into state dynamics and majority nationalism. Since its independence in 1947, India has maintained its status as a democratic state, in contrast to most postcolonial governments (except for a period of Emergency rule between 1975 and 1997). India, although not being a liberal democracy, compares favorably to other nations in the area in terms of political and civil liberties (Democracy in Retreat | Freedom House, 2019). Even though a great deal of focus has been placed on both the achievements and the flaws of the Indian democratic system, not as much consideration has been given to the role that nationalism has played in consolidating democracy while also contributing to the instability of certain regions (Lijphart, 1996). When India gained its independence, it was not apparent who "the people" were for the sake of building a political community. The region once known as British India was a diverse patchwork of territories, princely states, languages, and ethnic groups. It was debatable whether all people who lived in India could adequately identify themselves as of Indian descent (Girvin, 2020).

Even before India gained independence, the Indian National Congress began developing a state-based nationalism. Both Jawaharlal Nehru, who served as India's first Prime Minister, and the Congress party were sure that the nation's frontiers should be identical to those of the land occupied by the British. This claim was rendered invalid due to the partition. However, the remaining land was now considered inviolable by Congress, and this notion was supported by the prevailing assumptions held within the Constituent Assembly (Brown, 2003). Congress also built a pre political national community from 5000 years of Indian

history. For authority, the party appealed to an imagined community that predated the existing political society. The thought was primordialist, despite many modernist assumptions. Using this ancient historical record, Congress came perilously close to equating India with its Hindu population, claiming that "all attempts to trace back the nation's unity to the early empires contributed to identifying the entire Indian history with that of the Hindus" (Gottlob, 2007).

Balkanization remained a significant concern even after independence was achieved. The leaders of the Congress pushed to establish a strong centre to control secessionists' demands and preserve territorial integrity. The Constitution provided both institutional and political support for centralization. Article 356 granted the central government the authority to subjugate individual states and control the states from a centralized location. In addition, Article 352 granted the government emergency powers to use in times of crisis, particularly those threatening the state's ability to maintain its territorial integrity. These abilities have seen a significant amount of use. The center integrated the resistant princely territories into the new state through military force. Additionally, Prime Minister Nehru aggressively engaged counterinsurgency forces against Naga insurgents wanting self-determination. This conflict is one of many that have continued to afflict the Northeastern region of India until today (Roy, 2005).

Even though most people in the country do not speak Hindi, the decision made in Article 342 to make Hindi the official language is another example of majority nationalism. Nehru and Congress were adamantly opposed to any compromise being reached on this matter and any demands about the reorganization of states according to linguistic lines. It was felt that the most excellent way to serve the interests of national unity and solidarity was to have a national language and to refuse to accept congruence between language, ethnicity, and territory on the level of sub-states. Instead of more pluralistic models, Congress had come to believe that a single language was necessary for political and national cohesion (Stepan et al., 2010).

Nehru had to retreat from his original position in the 1950s due to persistent and widespread opposition. Within a decade, the notion of ethnolinguistic states was acknowledged, ushering in what has been called "the largest and most peaceful reconfiguration of political space under the rule of law, without recourse to mass violence in the history of liberal democracy" (Lacina, 2014). Additionally, English has emerged as the de facto lingua franca for interstate and intrastate communication. The political desire to force Hindi on the population in the role of the national language was abandoned. As Guha sarcastically observes, imposing Hindi on India might have resulted in 'one language, twenty-two nations,' but India has twenty-two languages and a single nation (Guha, 2007). What India accomplished throughout the 1950s was unprecedented in terms of comparison. It has been said that ethnofederalism is the most liberal form of federalism; nevertheless, it has also been said that ethnofederalism is "perhaps also the most reckless" when it comes to successfully maintaining the integrity of the state. However, in India, ethnofederalism served as a tool that was instrumental in putting an end to separatist and autonomist movements within the state (Girvin, 2020).

In contrast to other instances of ethnofederalism, the linguistic compromise served as a powerful and effective way of integration, which “solidified support for the Indian state and the Indian nation” (Adeney, 2017). A pan-Indian majority emerged and became more stable throughout the twenty years that followed 1947. Even though it did not include all of the people who lived in India at the time, it is reasonable to assume that between eighty and ninety percent of the population at the time felt themselves to be not just citizens but also co-nationals (Adeney & Lall, 2005). Despite its ideal inclusiveness, the attractiveness and integrative drive of pan-Indian nationalism were not without their limits. In Kashmir, the Northeast, and Punjab, attempts at nation-building and integration proved much less successful. In most instances, however, the political groundwork for compromise was laid through accommodation within the framework of pan-Indian state nationalism. The Indian experience validates the unitary nation-state paradigm typically associated with France. While the Indian state fostered pan-Indian nationalism through the Constitution, institutions, and political practice, ethnofederalism allows most linguistic and ethnic groups to collaborate with the state rather than compete against it in a zero-sum separatist game (Girvin, 2020).

On the other hand, the fact that some secessionist conflicts have not been resolved shows that ethnofederalism will not be successful in resolving these issues if the fight is over nationality and religion (Capoccia et al., 2012). By adopting Brendan O’Leary’s view that a successful federation needs a dominating ethnicity, or *Staatsvolk*, to anchor and maintain its institutional continuity, the paradox between success and failure can be reconciled. There are two choices in India: Hinduism, which is practiced by 80% of the people, or Hindi, which is spoken by 40% of the population (Religion Data - Population of Hindu / Muslim / Sikh / Christian - Census 2011 India, 2011). The Hindi alternative was unsuccessful politically or institutionally, but it provided a fundamental ethnic foundation for Indian state nationalism. A stronger argument may be made that Hinduism serves as a meta-ethnicity and that this, not language, holds a *Staatsvolk* together politically and culturally (O’leary, 2001). This metaethnicity’s political expression takes an ethnodemocratic shape (Singh, 2000). While there is a dominant language, religion, or ethnicity in the majority of Indian states, this is not the case in the more stable states where there are fewer than two languages and religions. The fact that states like Nagaland, Manipur, and Kashmir, which have a greater variety of people and cultures inside their borders, are more likely to experience violence lends credence to the notion that a certain level of dominance is essential for maintaining peace. In states and locations where Hindus are a minority or do not predominate, there is a higher likelihood of conflict. As has been demonstrated time and again since the 1950s, the shared culture of Hinduism is an essential factor in facilitating compromise. In the absence of this and in the presence of people of various religions and nationalities, there is an increased likelihood of conflict (Adeney, 2017).

### *Majoritarianism's Politics*

The Bharatiya Janata Party has made significant progress. Hindu nationalism has made its way from a place in the party system that was clearly on the margins to one that is more mainstream. The fact that the BJP successfully won elections in both 2014 and 2019 provides evidence that an electoral realignment has taken place in favor of Hindu nationalism and the BJP (Palshikar et al., 2014). This outcome was never predetermined. The Bharatiya Janata Party has developed itself as a significant source of opposition to the Congress party, and on multiple occasions it has held the position of being the largest party in the political system. In addition, the party reaped the benefits of an increased electoral appeal on both the national and state levels and the growing significance of cultural problems (Yadav, 1999). The Bhartiya Janata Party achieved its first significant success in 1998–1999 when it was accepted as a coalition partner by other political groups. However, the coalition limited its ability to accomplish its political goals. While in government, the Hindutva party's leadership maintained a moderate and conciliatory policy despite its unwavering dedication to the Hindutva ideology and its goals (Seshia, 1998). In addition, its electorate remained confined to the region known as the Hindi belt, and it drew support from highly educated, upper-caste Hindus who worked in professional occupations. Even as recently as 2014, 67% of BJP seats were based in states where Hindi was the primary language (Mitra & Singh, 1999).

Widespread concern for interreligious violence due to the Ayodhya conflict was another barrier to the BJP's expansion. There was significant pushback against the mosque demolition, even though 40.5% of BJP followers believed it justifiable. When asked if "every community should be allowed to have its own laws to govern marriage and property," 46% of Congress supporters and 40% of BJP supporters said they agreed. Between 1996 and 2004, the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) saw an increase in the number of votes it received from all castes. Despite this, Congress and its allies were able to get more significant support than the BJP from all other castes and groupings, except the higher castes. In 2004, a plurality of Hindus, comprising 42.3% of the voting population, supported the BJP, whereas most Muslims and Christians voted for Congress. Mitra has called the BJP's "ambivalent moderation," which he attributes to the necessity to win over moderate voters in an environment where Congress and its allies might successfully win over lower caste and minority voters. It seemed likely that the BJP would lose these moderate voters if it embraced more radical policies in response to pressure from its more radical supporters (Mitra, 2013). The party's electoral losses in 2004 and 2009 indicated that it had reached a tipping point in terms of its ability to win over voters and create a governing coalition. According to appearances, the BJP was a majoritarian party that didn't have a majority vote (Girvin, 2020).

On the other hand, this period is also linked to the development of a "majoritarian middle ground" in public opinion and politics. Even though majoritarians are split between the two major parties, the BJP is more appealing to this segment of the voters due to the nature of majoritarianism and the Hindutva policy mix. Even though the BJP has been out of power for ten years, majoritarian sentiments

have continued to expand. This is shown in the widespread acceptance of preserving caste and religious distinctions. In 2004, thirty-five percent of those polled agreed that "in a democracy, the opinion of the majority community should prevail." About one-third of respondents did not agree with the statement, while another significant third did not offer a response to the question. By the year 2009, these values had not altered by a substantial amount. However, by 2014, the number of individuals who agreed with the notion rose to 51.6%, while 21.7% disagreed with it and 26.7% did not have an opinion (Palshikar, 2004).

People who subscribe to the ideology of majoritarianism are more inclined to back the BJP. Minorities are more inclined to oppose the beliefs of majorities because adhering to them would require them to adopt Hindu traditions, which minorities do not value. However, there is some confusion regarding who the majority is; just 39% of people believe they are a part of the majority group, while 30% claim they are a part of a minority community. This suggests that there is room for improvement. Over forty percent of respondents believed that members of minority communities should not conform to the traditions of the dominant community, while approximately thirty percent supported this position. On the other hand, most people thought that the national or state government should deal with minorities in the same way as they do majorities (Girvin, 2020).

Furthermore, majoritarianism can be seen mirrored in a variety of other ways. The majority of respondents (about two-thirds) agreed that movies that offend the feelings of any community should be prohibited. More than 43 percent of respondents concurred that the country should be governed by "a strong leader who does not have to worry about winning elections." In comparison, under 40 percent of respondents had the same opinion regarding non-elected experts. By the year 2017, the majority of Indians supported the idea of government by the military, while an additional 65 percent supported the rule by experts. 55% of those polled favored having a strong leader run the country. As a result of the conflict in Kashmir, opinions have become increasingly rigid. In earlier polls, there was strong support for a peaceful settlement, yet there was also support among a minority of respondents for heavy repression. In 2017, approximately two-thirds of respondents said that the government should use 'more military force than it is using now,' while just 8% agreed that the government should be using less military force than it is already employing (Stokes et al., 2017). Based on these data, majoritarianism appears to be quite prevalent, but support for democracy appears to be less robust than is commonly believed (Hansen, 2019).

### ***Threat to Pluralism***

The efforts being made to channel religious intolerance for power and political advantage present India with significant difficulties threatening its secular credentials and potential for religious pluralism. Vested interests take extensive advantage of the religious diversity of the country as well as the high level of religious consciousness possessed by the populace to incite religious

strife. There have been conflicts between Christians and Muslims, Hindus and Christians, and Sikhs and Christians. There have also been conflicts between Hindus and Christians. However, the hostilities between Muslims and Hindus are greatly influenced by politics. The communalism of the majority always tries to portray Muslims or Hindus as invaders who overpowered the majority and attempted to eradicate their beliefs and culture. This is something that they often do (Hudawi, 2015).

In India, "Communalism" is often used to describe attempts to turn religious intolerance into a political issue and to create tensions and violence between different religious groups by misusing religious symbols, beliefs, and rituals. Numerous studies have been conducted on communalism in India. The general consensus is that colonial perceptions of Indian communities, which tended to view them in terms of religion, are still present today. Dick Kooiman claims that "Under colonialism, the religious definition of community has become so predominant that in common discourse, communalism has become more or less synonymous with communalism of the religious variety" (Kooiman, 2002). According to the findings of a recent study conducted by Surya Prakash Upadhyay and Rowena Robinson, "Communalism is commonly understood as conflicts over secular issues between religious communities, particularly between Hindus and Muslims. Though there were such struggles in the pre-colonial period, full-blown communalism took place in the colonial period" (Upadhyay & Robinson, 2012). They connected communalism, in all its political, economic, and social elements, to the search for community identity and to the propensity of communities to either oppose or seek control.

### ***Future Research Directions***

To build upon the findings of this study and address its limitations, future researchers can explore several promising avenues. One potential direction is conducting comparative studies that examine India alongside other nations facing the rise of majoritarian nationalism. Countries such as Turkey, Hungary, and the United States, among others, have witnessed similar ideological shifts, and a comparative approach could identify common patterns, global factors, and unique national influences driving exclusionary nationalism.

Another key area for future research is the exploration of regional and community-specific impacts of majoritarian nationalism. India's cultural and demographic diversity ensures that the challenges to pluralism and inclusion vary across regions, states, and communities. A more localized analysis can shed light on how socio-political dynamics and historical contexts influence the extent and forms of exclusion faced by marginalized groups in specific areas, such as the northeastern states, tribal regions, or urban areas.

Additionally, institutional analysis warrants deeper exploration. While this study briefly touches on state complicity and institutional inefficiencies, future research can specifically examine how key institutions—such as the judiciary, law enforcement agencies, and media organizations—either resist or enable the rise of majoritarianism. Assessing institutional responses can help

identify opportunities for reform and accountability to safeguard democratic values.

Another promising direction for research lies in investigating the role of social media in the proliferation of majoritarian ideologies. Digital platforms have become a powerful tool for spreading hate speech, mobilizing exclusionary narratives, and fuelling communal polarization. Future studies can analyse how these platforms amplify extremist voices while also exploring mechanisms to promote digital accountability and counter-hate campaigns.

Longitudinal studies represent another crucial area of inquiry. The evolving nature of majoritarian nationalism in India requires sustained research over time to assess its long-term impact on democracy, inclusion, and social harmony. By analysing trends over decades, researchers can identify how majoritarian movements adapt to political and social changes, as well as their broader implications for national identity and governance.

Future research can also focus on the emergence of resistance and counter-movements, such as grassroots activism, civil society initiatives, and political responses that aim to counter majoritarian forces. Understanding the strategies, challenges, and successes of these movements can provide a roadmap for revitalizing pluralism and strengthening inclusive democratic values.

Finally, an intersectional approach is necessary to explore how majoritarian nationalism interacts with other forms of discrimination. The overlapping axes of caste, gender, class, and religion often create multi-layered exclusions for marginalized groups. For instance, Dalit-Muslim communities or tribal women may face compounded vulnerabilities that require focused analysis. An intersectional perspective can offer a more comprehensive understanding of exclusion and inequality in the context of majoritarian dominance

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Because of the religious intolerance between Hindus and Muslims in the Indian subcontinent, the region was divided into two regions along religious lines. This struggle became more intense with the partition of India and Pakistan, and during that time, the country saw communal genocide across both countries. This hostility steadily increased during independent government as a result of the advent of Hindu nationalism as a significant political force. This nationalism only accepted people whose ancestors were Hindus since it adhered to the principles of the Hindutva ideology. In addition, it was intertwined with Hindu tradition and religion, which barred participation by Muslims and Christians. At the beginning of the 1980s decade, these political forces and several Hindu nationalist outfits came together to form the Bharatiya Janata Party, also known as the BJP. Over time, they progressively achieved a powerful political position. 2014 was the year when this party took control. Even though the party gave the impression of adhering to a "soft" version of the Hindutva doctrine, they actively supported the violent activities of their extreme nationalist partners, the RSS, directed against various minority groups. In addition, these minority religions, in the eyes of the Hindus, threaten their social caste system. As a result, religious and ethnic minorities are

persecuted and discriminated in India, despite the country's secular status. In order to prevent Hindutva extremism, India must assimilate the minorities while enabling them to keep their own identities rather than adhering to either soft or hardcore Hindu nationalism.

### **FURTHER STUDY**

The rise of Hindu nationalism in India, particularly under the influence of Hindutva ideology, has had profound implications for the country's secular fabric and its treatment of religious minorities. Originating as a movement rooted in Hindu traditions and religious exclusivity, Hindutva has gained political legitimacy, especially after the formation and electoral success of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1980 and its ascension to power in 2014. Although the BJP outwardly projects a moderated "soft" Hindutva stance, its alignment with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and other extreme nationalist organizations has emboldened discriminatory practices and violence against Muslims, Christians, and other minorities. This environment is further exacerbated by fears among some Hindutva proponents that minority groups challenge the traditional social caste hierarchy, which remains integral to Hindu orthodoxy. To counteract this extremism, it is imperative for India to foster a truly inclusive national identity, where minorities are integrated as equal stakeholders without being compelled to relinquish their distinct cultural and religious identities. Strengthening secular governance, promoting interfaith dialogue, and enforcing anti-discrimination laws are critical steps toward safeguarding India's pluralistic democracy against the divisive forces of hardline nationalism.

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