

Savarkar claims that his definition is precise and it does not omit anyone nor includes any person who is not a Hindu (avyapti and ativyapti). But if we consider those Hindus who are dwelling in other countries for generations and considers that country as a fatherland are omitted. Also those foreigners staying in India, who have willingly accepted Hinduism cannot be called Hindus due to their ancestry.

Also, if Indian Muslims, Christians and others who got converted to Islam or Christianity from Hinduism, start considering this country India as their holyland also, will have to be considered as Hindus because their ancestral fatherland is anyway India. Punyabhu concept presumes that allegiance to religions established outside India makes a person non-Hindu because of extra-territorial faith. This is not correct. I deplore Islam not because it was established in Arabia, but because of its contents. Even if someone in India would have put forward such anti-humanistic ideology and established Islam as a religion, it would have been equally deplorable as it is now.

My intention is not to find fault with Savarkar's definition, but to stress that it is not wise to hang on to any precise definition "who is Hindu and who is not". Any person who wholeheartedly and very honestly considers himself as a Hindu must be accepted as a Hindu.

Because Savarkar specifically discerns Hinduism from Hindutva, he wants to keep Hindus' religions away from Hindutva. He keeps his concept of Hindutva completely secular. He succeeds in this, because in any case Savarkar never believed in any religious tenets to interfere in worldly matters. It was therefore both easy and natural for Savarkar to keep his concept of Hindutva completely and strongly secular. But ultimately Hindutva is an abstract noun formed from the word Hindu. Savarkar even preferred English word "Hinduness" as a closest alternative to Hindutva. The point is the word Hindutva is derived from the word Hindu and if "Hindu" is defined wrongly, Hindutva also is misunderstood.

Savarkar wants to stress only one point in his book - Hindus are a National Society in Hindusthan and others are not. "Others" include mainly Muslims and secondarily Christians. He does not very much bother about Jews (anyway a very small community in India) and feels sorry that Parsees, who are loyal to the land and people of this land, cannot be included in "Hindus". But frankly, there was no need to make such a precise definition of Hindus to exclude Muslims and Christians from Hindutva. No Muslim or Christian had ever made a claim to be called a Hindu.

But to prove his point, he went on to define who is a Hindu and therefore what is Hindutva. Unfortunately, he did not stop at that and went on to include Hindus settled in other parts of the world in the concept of Hindutva. It is worthwhile to give the extract from the book verbatim.

"There are hundreds of thousands of Hindus who have settled in all parts of the world. A time may come when these our Hindu colonist, who even today are the dominating factor in trade, numbers, capacity and intellect in their respective lands, may come to own a whole country and form a separate state. But will this simple fact of residence in lands other than Hindusthan render one a non-Hindu? Certainly not; for the first essential of Hindutva is not that a man must not reside in lands outside India, but that wherever he or his descendents may happen to be he must recognize Sindhusthan as the land of his forefathers.

Nay more; it is not a question of recognition either. If his ancestors came from India as Hindus he cannot help recognize India as his Pitribhu. So this definition of Hindutva is compatible with any conceivable expansion of our Hindu people. Let our colonists, continue unabated their labour of founding a Greater India, a Mahabharat to the best of their capacities and

contribute all that is best in our civilization to the up building of humanity. So long as ye, O Hindus! Look upon Hindusthan as the land of your forefathers and as the land of your prophets, and cherish the priceless heritage of their culture and their blood, so long nothing can stand in the way of your desire to expand. The only geographical limits of Hindutva are limits of our earth.”

The tone of the above passage is blatantly imperialistic. But we must realize one thing. Hindutva is not an intellectual property right of Veer Savarkar. We have our own talent and reason to make our own interpretation of the concept of Hindutva.

RSS’ Hindutva

Now we must consider second claimant to Hindutva i.e. Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS). Dr. Hedgewar established RSS in 1925. Savarkar had already written his book ‘Hindutva’ in 1923. Dr. Hedgewar had not only read it but also had a dialogue with Savarkar before starting RSS. The difference which I can see in thinking of these two great men is, Savarkar thought Hindu people are actually a Nation, whereas Dr. Hedgewar was convinced that unfortunately Hindus never lived as one national society (this inspite of tall claims of ‘this nation of last 5000 years etc’). That was the reason all aggressors could easily succeed in their aggression. For centuries, Hindus could not push the aggressors out of the country.

Dr. Hedgewar therefore decided to form an organization to establish Hindus as a Nation. However, he scrupulously avoided to bring in religion and therefore named the organization as National Volunteer Corp. He behaved in his personal life in such a manner that none could charge him as a religious bigot. He also scrupulously kept Hindu religion and religious practices away from RSS daily shakhas. Thus the concept of Hindutva as put forward by RSS was also a secular national concept, clearly independent of Hindu religion.

The picture definitely changed after Guruji Golwalkar became Sarsanghchalak in 1940. Guruji was a Sanyasi himself and therefore had long hair and flowing beard. He used to carry Kamandalu always along with him. His personality was of a staunch religious Hindu from top to bottom. He used to perform Pratah Sandhya and Sayam Sandhya regularly. Such a behaviour of the Head of an organization inevitably attracted a criticism that RSS was an orthodox religious organization.

It is true that he believed in many antiquated practices like Chaturvarna and believed in pristine Vaidic Sanatan Dharma. If one reads his books “We” and “Bunch of Thoughts”, it is not possible to repel the charge of religious bigotry and generally reactionary and regressive attitude. However again, whatever way, Dr. Hedgewar or Guruji Golwalkar might have interpreted Hindutva, it is not their intellectual property right either.

Before leaving Savarkar’s and RSS’ Hindutva, I must state one common objection taken against Savarkar’s Hindu Mahasabha and Dr. Hedgewar’s RSS. If the basic idea was to achieve a national resurrection in a secular way, why their membership was not open for non-Hindus. On the face of, it appears to be an insurmountable objection. But it is not really so.

After all, it was due to aggressive nature of Muslims that these organizations were started in self-defense. It was but natural that non-Hindus were not allowed to become members. That in itself does not make these organizations “Communal”. The basic condition to make any organization communal is that the organization must be working not only in the interest of that community but also against the legitimate interests of other communities. Hindu Mahasabha and RSS were organizations made for self-defense (although it may sound amusing that a majority community should be doing so) due to the strong communal character of Muslims and Christians.

Common Enemy – Islam and Christianity

Now let me come to redefining Hindutva in my own way. Before we do that, we must understand Islam and its philosophy. We should understand why Muslim psyche is so intolerant and perpetually aggressive.

Islam divides the mankind in two parts – One who believes in Allah, his last prophet Muhammad and Quran as the divine book of command i.e. Muslims; and those who are non-believers (i.e. those who do not believe in Islam) who are called Kafirs in Islam. Islam commands all Muslims to either convert the non-believers into believers i.e. Muslims or eliminate them. By obeying their religious command, Muslim population has increased from 200 believers in 622 A.D. i.e. at the time of Hijrat to Medina (the world population was 20 crores then i.e. Muslims constituted of 0.001 percent), to 126 crores at present in a world population of 804 crores i.e. 15 percent; a phenomenal increase indeed.

Muslims have developed a peculiar mentality. Where in majority, they have an Islamic state with total rights for Muslims and no rights for non-Muslims. Where in minority, they must have special rights over and above the rights of majority community. Muslims just cannot peacefully live with equal rights with non-Muslim community.

In spite of this coercive Muslim mentality, there is no doubt that Hindutva must remain a secular concept. This simply means that religious commands of Hindu religion should not interfere in worldly matters. But that should not mean that various indigenous religions of Indian people should have no space in worldly life. In fact, it is necessary to strengthen the pride in our own religion and keep that self-esteem high.

I feel that too much stress on Secularism has come to mean that concept of religion itself is something mean, substandard and outdated. To be a proud secular person has automatically come to mean a progressive person. To be religious has come to mean (in Hindus at least) to be retrograde, backward and behind times. This feeling must go. Hindus must be given to understand that being secular is a minimum condition of present day life and not something great achievement, not something lofty.

Secularism does not mean deriding Religion. A wide diversity in Hindu religious ethos is normally ridiculed by secular rationalists intellectuals. But this in fact was a strong point due to which Hindus and their religions did not get wiped out in Islamic onslaughts. A loose religious organization proved to be a strong point for survival.

Hindus have a unique problem, which no other religionists have to face. Hindu word had a geographical context in the beginning. It has become a religion later. There were several religious faiths in India, co-existing peacefully for ages. There were dissents, friction, even armed conflicts but never a total enmity. This was not a big issue until a totally alien religion aggressively entered India with an intention to destroy indigenous religions and convert the people to their intolerant religion. Hindus unfortunately could not judge the seriousness of the calamity fallen on them and considered Islam (and also Christianity) as just one more way of praying just one more God

Hindus – Their own enemy

Actually Hindus are their own enemies. Hindu intellectuals take great sadistic pride in making fun of Hinduism. Saffronisation is considered as worst form of communalism. But have you heard anything like Greenisation? Because for rationalists, Hinduism is a great danger to liberal civic society of India, not Islam or Christianity. The word Hindutva is used as a pejorative.

Now we must understand Hindu mindset also. Somehow Hindus are tolerant of external aggression though intolerant internally. Hindus must have inculcated this trait right from mythological period. The stories of Raja Harishchandra, Ram, Yudhishtir, Bhishmacharya, all depict this pervert mindset and still they are all considered great heroes. Whatever may be the historical background, Hindus must painstakingly change their nature, should realize who their enemies are and learn to behave with them as enemies.

The diversity amongst Hindu fold can be bridged only due to existence of a common enemy of all Hindus transcending caste, creed, language, ethnicity, etc. Fortunately Hindus have a common enemy in Islam and Muslims led by Mullah and Maulvis are really deadly, virulent and wicked enemy at that. As far as Muslims are concerned, they do not distinguish between Brahmins and Dalits, between Begalis and Maharashtrians, Aryas and Dravids, between Adivasis, Vanvasis and Nagarvasis, all are just Kafirs for them and hence all equally deserve extermination. This was very well experienced at the time of partition in 1946-47-48. All leftist Hindus got the same treatment like the rightists. All Manmohans, Indrakumars, Khushwantsinghs, Kuldeepsinghs, and Jyoti Basus, had to run away inspite of their leftist leanings, along with rightist LalKrishnas. Atleast such an enemy should help Hindus unite.

With eyes wide shut, Hindus are meekly observing their numbers dwindling and land shrinking. And progressive intellectuals of today and philosophers of yesteryears do not feel perturbed nor concerned. Hindus are by nature and also by its philosophical doctrine against spreading their religion. This has proved to be suicidal. As a religion, Hinduism either considered to be too great only to be admired but not be followed by others or some consider it out-dated and therefore not apt for spreading. Although these points are contradictory, they are put forward as they are.

Non-proselytizing nature of Hindu religion and Hindu people has turned out to be suicidal to Hindus. It is bound to be a permanently shrinking religion. It is not only that Hindus do not spread their religion, they even oppose taking back people in Hindu fold, who were forcibly converted to Islam or Christianity. Hinduism at one level is considered too sacrosanct to accept "fallen" people back in its fold, lest it may be contaminated. At another level, Hindus plead that, after all, all paths lead to the same God. Therefore one can be good Muslim or a good Christian and achieve the same goal of Mukti (emancipation) or Swarga (heaven). But Muslims or Christians do not think that way. Therefore there is only a one-way traffic, Hindus getting converted to Islam and Christianity.

We can learn a thing or two from Buddhism. It is a proselytizing indigenous religion. However there are no instances of individual or mass conversions of Muslims or Christians to Buddhism. Either indigenous religionists of Srilanka, China, etc eastern countries accepted Buddhism two thousand years back or in recent times it is only a mass conversion within Hindu fold.

There are two aspects of proselytizing. One accepting Indian Muslims and Christians back to Hindu fold. Those Hindus, who were converted to Islam, fell in Stockholm syndrome. They started feeling love and affection for captors because Hindus considered those who were forced to accept Islam or Christianity as "fallen" people and not "aggrieved". It is necessary to appreciate the circumstances in which they were converted and bring them back to Hinduism with all honour and not by "Shuddhi" process as if they were polluted. In fact Hindus must declare that Hinduism is purified to the extent more and more Muslims and Christians come back to Hindu fold.

While considering proselytizing, we should not rule out Sikhism. Although Sikhism has some similarities with Semitic religions like one founder, one book, strict worldly dress and behavioral codes, strong community life, that may in fact help in getting Muslims back to a similar alternative as Sikhism.

We should rope in spiritual Gurus also in our attempt to de-Islamise Muslims and bring them closer to Hindu ethos, if not a total conversion to Hinduism, Yoga, Meditation, Vipashyana, Art of Living, Swadhyay, etc. Rationally speaking, there is no reason why Hindus should find a counter answer for every Muslim religious symbol. Therefore Hindus need not invent an Avtar to counter a Prophet, invent a book Bhagwad Geeta as an answer to Quran or Swastik and Om to counter Star and Crescent.

But at the same time, creating, accepting and revering such symbols cannot be under-rated. Not only intellectuals, even common Hindus do not consider such symbols or even superstitions necessary to bring the people around some intangible mark of religion to sacrifice their life for. This has proved to be a disadvantage for making Hindus unite. A little irrational faith in religion is perhaps a practical requirement.

I do not see any point in perpetually whining against Muslim behaviour, their aggressive nature and their loyalty towards world Ummah. Hindus must develop a cogent policy for Hindus in various countries. Developing a Hindu commonwealth is not against any nationalism or patriotism towards a country. For centuries, Hindus have not given any thought in that direction. It is necessary to develop a well thought out policy.

Decolonizing Hindutva

Hindutva has nothing to do with any economic theory. There is a general feeling that Hindutva stands for rightist policies. This impression must be removed. With socialist and left leaning views, one can be a "Hindutva" wadi. A Bardhan or a Yechuri must ridicule Hindu customs to prove that he is a Marxist. But have you come across any Muslim Marxist who has blamed Islam for its anti-liberal views? No. Never. Because even for a Marxist Muslim, he is a Muslim first and Marxist afterwards.

Also, Hindutva is not any political theory. It has nothing to say, for or against, democracy, globalization, SEZs, big dams, etc. Bhartiya Janata Party or Shiv Sena has no right to claim an exclusive right on Hindutva. A Hindutvavadi can be a

member and leader of any other political party like Congress, Janata Dal, etc for various other issues, keeping his Hindutva in tact.

Hindutva also does not have any sociological viewpoint. Hindutva need not subscribe to a joint family system and other conservative ideas. Even to the extent of accepting free sex relationship, same sex relationship should not come in the way of one being a Hindutvawadi. Hindutva is not Puritanism. It is, considering all Hindus as one people and protecting their worldly interests. So take courage in both hands and listen “Hindutva is not a way of life”.

Now we must come to the last point of the meaning of Hindutva in different contexts.

Savarkar had enunciated Hindutva before independence i.e. before partition of British India which Savarkar called Bharatbhumi. The country was partitioned entirely on the basis of religious nationalism. Pakistan became a Muslim nation-state and India (named as India i.e. Bharat in Indian Constitution subsequently as a Hindu nation, howsoever secular the state might be.)

It is necessary to fresh up the memory that it was Indian Muslims i.e. the Muslims in that part of India which never could have become Pakistan, who fought tooth and nail to create Pakistan under the leadership of an Indian Gujarati Muslim - a domicile of Bombay - Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

It is inappropriate here to narrate the entire story of partition. But it must be noted that All India Muslim League was not automatically partitioned on 15th August 1947 along with India’s partition. A special session was called to split Indian Muslim League at Karachi in December 1947. In this session by a special resolution, All India Muslim League was split into two – Pakistan Muslim League (with Liaqat Ali Khan elected as special convener) and Indian Union Muslim League (with President of Madras Provincial Muslim League, M. Mohammad Ismail, elected as special convener.) The resolutions adopted in Karachi session are worth studying in totality. But I reproduce below (in part) resolution no.3.

Resolution no. 3 (All India Muslim League, Karachi Session, 14-15 Dec 1947) –

"The Council of All India Muslim League views with great satisfaction the attainment of its great objective, namely, the establishment of Pakistan, and congratulates Musalmans of the Indian subcontinent on sacrifices they have made for achievement of their national goal. The council feels confident that the unique struggle of Muslim League for establishment of a fully independent sovereign state, under the superb leadership of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, and its ultimate triumph in the birth of largest Muslim State and fifth largest of all States of the world, will go down in history as the most outstanding world-event of modern times."

The tenor of the above resolution will make it amply clear that Muslims in partitioned India could not sever their relationship with brother Muslims in Pakistan. After expressing their pride in partitioning the country on religious basis, they could not be expected to be loyal national of Bharat.

But Indian National Congress just automatically ceased to exist in Pakistan. Congress was not required to be partitioned. It was always a Hindu organization irrespective of what Congress pleaded. Therefore none ever thought what happened to Congress houses in Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, Multan and Dhaka.

Therefore we must redefine Hindutva in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh too as Pakistan was further dismembered and Bangladesh became a separate nation-state in 1971.

As far as India is concerned, the Hindutva concept remains unchanged i.e. same as before partition. But we must remember after complete independence from British rule and any left hangovers of Muslim rules, the responsibility of Hindus is increased. Not only they must remain as united national people in India, but they must be able to bring all non-Hindus and particularly Muslims in the main national stream, leaving behind their ambition of creating Muslim State. The onus is on Hindus to integrate Muslims in territorial and cultural Nation-State as Bharat and not look to making India a Hindu Nation-State.

The clock cannot be turned back. What Hindus could not achieve in thousand years, cannot be achieved now. If Hindus can turn all Muslims into loyal Indian nationals with no attachment to Muslim Ummah, it will be a big achievement. And it should be possible. After all, every Muslim is as much a homosapien as any Hindu. To turn a Muslim as a true national, he will have to be weaned away from Mullah, Maulavis who keep on harping on the old ideas of Dar-ul-Harb and Dar-ul-Islam. Muslims will have to be liberated from their blind faith in Islam and treating remaining humanity as Kafirs.

How do we define Hindutva for Bangladesh? Even today Bangladesh has 16 percent Hindu population. What is the meaning of Hindutva to them? Their Hindutva should aim at making Bangladesh a true secular Nation-State. In fact, it was born as a secular state in 1971. but due to lack of Indian diplomacy and lack of fighting spirit of Bangladeshi Hindus, Bangladesh became an Islamic State in 1975 and also a member of Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC). Hindus of Bangladesh can still aspire to take more and more active part in political life to turn the country back to a secular state and press for their rights within the legal and constitutional framework.

Pakistan (then West Pakistan) solved the Hindu issue just by pogroms and squeezing Hindus out of Pakistan. The percentage of Hindus came down from ten percent at the time of partition to just one percent at present. So we are relieved of the issue of defining Hindutva of Pakistani Hindus.

To sum up, Hindutva is a still relevant secular, non-communal, non-political concept. Just defining nationalism of Bharat keeping it open for non-Hindus to assimilate in a territorial cultural nationalism. In Bangladesh, it means attempts to turn the Islamic Republic to Secular Republic in which Hindus can live honourably and flourish as equal citizens.