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Delhi Kristallnacht 2020: Coexistence of Contradictory Cohabitation of (in)Tolerance and the Hindutva Ideology

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ABSTRACT

Voltaire, an eminent enlightenment scholar, posited that the notion of tolerance, besides ensuring peace and harmony in society, prevents the onset of a civil war. The assumption of power in India by the right-wing Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and ensuing policy and constitutional amendments have reinvigorated the Hindu nationalism and religious parties on the one hand, and an equal amount of criticism from those who want to preserve the secularity of the Indian Constitution, on the other. This paper examines the impact of these policies and constitutional amendments on the social fabric of India and finds that the notion of tolerance has eroded to a great extent in India. Further, that the minorities, especially Muslims are likely to be the victims of violence and statelessness. The paper concludes that the Delhi Pogroms during 2020 were also a logical outcome of ideological and religious intolerance, theoretically leading to a civil war.

Key Words: **Tolerance, Hindutva, Civil War, Muslims & Delhi Kristallnacht.**

Introduction

The notion of tolerance spans across the social fabric in every society, encompassing moral, ethical, political and religious spheres. The diverse theoretical and philosophical conceptions and paradoxes of tolerance make it one of the most complex and contested yet desirable attributes. Tolerance attains a centrality in pluralistic and diverse societies and defines the conceptualization of coexistence, whereby a majority in society decides to live alongside a variety of cultures, beliefs, religions, and norms.

Scholarship on claims of 'Unity in diversity' exists in modern Indian literature. Projection of India's image as a multicultural and multi-religious society has been part of the election manifestos of contending parties and has existed in Republic's Constitution, former for the domestic constituencies to win their hearts and minds, the latter for the international audience (*BJP Election Manifesto 2014*; Ganapathy, 2019).

It can nonetheless be argued that ever since the BJP government has assumed office, there has been a sharp rise in crimes against minorities, and it has been reported that almost 90% of religious-based hate crimes in India during the past decade have occurred under Modi's watch (Schultz, 2019). Multi-religious communities have been living in India for the past hundreds of years, if not more, tolerating each other's religious, cultural and social practices to a reasonable extent. However, it is generally believed that the rise of the religious and political right, in the shape of RSS and its political wing BJP, is changing this intricate balance.

Explicating the Hindutva ideology and from the existing literature associated with the religious right, this paper argues that the rise in religious-based violence, under multiple pretexts, has displaced the ethical and moral desirability of the notion of tolerance in India. To this end, this paper looks into the gradual rise of Hindu nationalism in Indian politics and well calculated and articulated constitutional amendments targeting Muslims and other religious minorities. More significantly, this paper questions the very existence of philosophical conceptions of tolerance in Hinduism and posits that the current events are a repetition of history, and the result might have only some unfortunate and unanticipated consequences.

Foregoing in view, the first section of this paper briefly links the literary underpinnings of the Hindutva ideology and modern Hindu nationalism to tolerance in the historical and contemporary Indian context. The subsequent section is the deconstruction of the citizenship construct as it has been wrought by successive Hindu nationalist efforts. The next section further explains the inherent dichotomies in the constitutional reformation and how the Hindutva ideologues want to shape the future Indian demography. The state-sanctioned elitist narratives and their impact on the latest round of the Delhi pogroms has been discussed in the sections before the conclusion.

Contextualizing the historical genre of the politics of tolerance in India and Hindutva ideology

Scholars have explained the notion of tolerance as something which may be borne or what "one can bear or endure" (Crick, 1971, p. 145). In its most basic philosophical sense, to tolerate means that we accept and allow certain behavior that we do not necessarily approve of because of our conceptions or beliefs. Crick (1971, p. 144) defines tolerance as the "degree to which we accept things of which we disapprove". Stemming from this is a paradox in the concept of tolerance, that we accept something that we do not accept. Such acceptance could be imposed through power, or in some cases, as a matter of choice or indifference. As explained by Williams (1996, pp. 18-20), the role of power, vested in each individual and society, to choose to exercise, or not to exercise tolerance, ironically makes the entire notion questionable. Similarly, King (1998, p. 9) contends that the concept of tolerance "concedes and promotes a power to tolerate

on the one hand, and simultaneously it also promotes and concedes a power not to tolerate on the other".

Extensive scholarship discusses multiple conceptions of tolerance. For example, the "coexistence conception" allows two groups of almost similar social strength to tolerate each other (Forst, 2017). However, Rawls (1987) and Fletcher (1996) criticize this conception as unstable, as it makes the subject of tolerance the object of tolerance as well. "Respect and Esteem conceptions" also allow the notion of tolerance to exist with some possible restrictions on the tolerated (Raz, 2009; Sandel, 1989; Scanlon, 1996; Weale, 1985). The final, Permission Conception, allows the majority to tolerate certain objectionable practices by the minority, and in return, the minority must submit to the dominant authority. In this asymmetric relationship, the practices of the minority are conceived as unworthy of equal treatment and are tolerated in return for a mutually agreed unequal relationship. Goethe (1893, p. 137) referred to this conception or tolerance as offensive and argued that it must culminate in complete acceptance of tolerated practices.

The philosophy of tolerance also expands to religious tolerance, and Williams (1996, p. 18) argues that historically religion was the first reason creating a need for tolerance, as one religious group might think that the other is "blasphemously, disastrously, obscenely wrong". In the Indian context, Eck (2012, p. 50) argues that multiple religions coexist, and "unity in multiplicity" brings harmony, which is further supplemented by the geographic contiguity.

However, there are contradictory schools of thought regarding the existence of religious tolerance in India, although many of these ideas are marred by paradoxical contradictions. There are scholars such as Voltaire (1912, p. 23), who praised and cherished the tolerant Indian nature and appreciated "tranquillity" due to tolerance. There are others yet who, mostly due to theoretical and philosophical reasons, do not entirely concur. Tharoor (2016a, p. 48) claims that "every period of disorder throughout Indian history has been followed by a centralizing impulse", and this impulse acted as a catalyst to unite the people of India. Resultantly, such periods of disorder were also instrumental in the proliferation of religious, cultural, and social practices as a test of Indian tolerance. Citing H. S. Olcott, Tharoor (2016b, p. 117) also argues that "Aryans were indigenous people from India and they took the civilization from India to the west"; therefore, arguably, the reverse proliferation of the culture also happened. However, there is very little existing evidence claiming the Hindu religion is spreading to the West.

Tharoor (2016a, pp. 95-97) blames the British policy of "divide and rule" to create religious, identity, cultural and anthropological cleavages in the Indian society, which arguably acted as antecedents to intolerance. Gottschalk (2000, p. 162) has also substantiated this claim, who postulates a deliberate British strategy to use religion as a driving force among the Hindus and Muslims of the Subcontinent. The absence of unity among Indians was also an acquired and

probably a learned construct among the British authors, such as Strachey (1888, p. 5), who contended that "India was just a name" and there was no political, physical, social, or religious unity in this region before the British rule. This certainly is a gross underestimation of almost 800 years of Muslim rule over the region and other rulers who ruled for thousands of years before them. Similarly, challenging the notion of Indian nationalism, Seeley (1883, p. 235) argued that in contrast to the Europeans at the time, who were jealous of England's achievements, "India had no jealousy of foreigner because they had no sense whatsoever of national unity because there was no India, and therefore, properly speaking no foreigner".

However, contrary to the British claims, Indians were uniting against the English masters and were advocating tolerance around the same time. For example, the 1893 statements by Indian monk Vivekananda at *The World Parliament of Religions* claiming, "we not only believe in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true" (1989, p. 71). Similarly, almost four decades later, in August 1925, Gandhi (2010, p. 176), while talking about inter-religious harmony and tolerance, professed that the absence of love among all Indians signifies "cowardly fear or intolerance". Ironically, one can also notice the displacement of tolerance to intolerance during the same time. Muslims opted to follow the *Two Nations Theory*[1] (Majid, Hamid, & Habib, 2014) and parted ways with the Indian National Congress formed as a sole representative party of all Indians. Suffices to say that the concept of "religious unity" among the Muslims and Hindus, or the possibility of permission conception of tolerance to exist in this region, has always been illusory, failing even the Mughal King Akbar during the 16th Century (Chandra, 2007, p. 255).

Muslims parted their ways from Hindus in their efforts for independence from British rulers, consequently leaving Hindu nationalists worrying for (an unwanted) division of their land. There were also worries that Hindus are a dying breed. Authors such as Mukerji (1909, pp. 38-40) contended that Muslims are outnumbering Hindus, making them a minority in Hindustan. This claim remained popular among concerned Hindu nationalists, who wanted to preserve the geographical Indian unity. The striking feature of such writings was the religious divide in India. This religious divide segregated non-Hindu religions, such as Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, Jainism, and Buddhism, and, more importantly, infringed upon the caste and class system within Hinduism. Mukerji (1909, p. 40) posited:

> It seems that one thing that is common amongst us Hindus is an intense desire on the part of everybody to dissociate himself from the rest of our co-religionists. We have been trying to do it for thousands of years and have fairly succeeded with occasional breaks in perfecting it. What is more, we never feel happy until we succeed in establishing this

[1] A different version of this theory was also replicated in Ireland (Anderson, 1980).

> difference. As things stand, it must be a rare combination where a dozen Bengali Hindus meet together and cannot discern something to disunite them. Disunion is the cornerstone of our community.

Such generalizations came as a realization of centuries of religious and cultural practices and jolted the very core of Hindu nationalism and their aspirations for a future where multiple religions could coexist. It would be appropriate to argue that the Muslim apprehensions regarding their future in a unified India were based on similar intolerant practices and evidence spread worldwide. Resultantly, Indian heterogeneity acted as a fragmenting catalyst rather than a uniting force. Polarization based on caste, religion, and ethnicity was so pronounced that nationalism could not be defined as a unification agenda. The caste system enshrined in the Hindu religious text created irreparable cleavages within the Hindu religion to the extent that Ambedkar (1935, p. 1) claimed that "it is not possible to break the Caste without annihilating the religious notions on which it, the Caste system is founded". Ambedkar[2] belonged to the Untouchable caste, and Mukerji (1909, p. 44) regarded untouchable as "a degraded man – degraded socially, mentally and morally. He knows it himself, everybody knows it, and it has been like this for thousands of years". Ambedkar defined the caste system on an "ascending scale of reverence and a descending scale of contempt" (Ambedkar, 2014, p. 17; Das, 2010, p. 25).

On the contrary, two approaches are visible in the literature on promoting Hindu nationalism in India during the first half of the 20th Century. The first - Hindutva ideology originated from Savarkar (1928), who published his treatise in 1923, titled Essentials of Hindutva, which was republished *Hindutva-Who is a Hindu*. The term 'Hindutva' claims the totality of cultural, historical, national and religious aspects of the Hindus in India. As contended by Savarkar (1928, pp. 3-4):

> The ideas and ideals, the systems and societies, the thoughts and sentiments which have centered around this name are so varied and rich, so powerful and so subtle, so elusive and yet so vivid that the term Hindutva defies all attempts at analysis… Hindutva embraces all departments of thought and activity of the whole Being of our Hindu race.

Savarkar claimed that Hindustan is represented by all those whose religion has grown out of Indian soil. Hansen (1999, p. 79) notes that his cultural nationalism

[2] Ambedkar went on to serve as the First Law Minister of India after partition, took active part in writing of the Indian Constitution. He opposed grant of Article 370 to Kashmir (Bhatia, 2019; Janjua, 2019), however, the Article has been revoked by the BJP government (Srivastava, 2019).

was communal, masculine and aggressively anti-Muslim and promoted Hindustan only for Hindus.

The second and probably more radical school professing Hindu nationalism came from Madhav Golwalkar. In his book *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, he explicitly claimed that it "is indisputably proved, that Hindusthan is the land of the Hindus and is the terra firma for the Hindu nation alone to flourish upon", and that all those who are not the followers of Hindu religion, "can have no place in the national life, unless they abandon their differences, adopt the religion, culture, and language of the nation and completely merge themselves in the National Race" (Golwalkar, 1939, p. 101). Central ideas and core philosophy originating from Hindutva vociferously violated the existence of tolerance towards any religions which were not indigenous to the Indian land, allowing no space even for permission conception. Islam and Christianity were the targets of the purity of religion. Golwalkar became the longstanding leader of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)[3], which rapidly became a prominent Hindu nationalist organization (Hansen, 1999, p. 80). India's current ruling Party BJP, was found in 1980 as a political wing of RSS, on the doctrine of Hindutva (Komireddi, 2018, pp. xvi-xvii).

The philosophical romanticism of Hindutva and Hindu nationalism with the religion were questioned by many secular Indians (Ajit, 2003; Heredia, 2009; Patnaik, 1993) and multiple non-Indian scholars (Falcone, 2012; Humes, 2012). Around the same time, when Indian nationalism and Hindutva were claiming literary and literal space, scholars such as Gooch (1920), Hayes (1926), Stocks (1920), etc., redefined the concept of nationalism. More lately, Dawkins (2006, p. 46) contends that "no real nationalism can be built up except based on secularity" as a political foundation for the philosophical notion of tolerance; the idea of secularism is part of the Indian Constitution.

The word "secularism" was added to the Indian Constitution almost three decades after partition in 1976 to ensure the nation's unity through secularism and preservation of human dignity (Heredia, 2009). During the initial decades of post-partition, Indian Congress Party remained in power, mainly through secular Gandhi – Nehru ideology. However, as Komireddi (2018) claimed, "after decades of imperfect secularism, presided over by an often corrupt Congress establishment, Nehru's diverse Republic has yielded to Hindu nationalism. India is collapsing under the weight of its own contradictions".

The dichotomy in indian citizenship construct

Hindutva and far-right Hindu religious nationalism looked at citizenship as a construct that drifted away from secularism. Jaffrelot (2007) notes that the

[3] RSS was found in 1925, on the doctrine of Hindutva, the organization was banned as one of its members murdered Gandhi in 1948, for allowing Pakistan to come into existence a year (Komireddi, 2018, pp. xvi-xvii).

collusion between multiple political parties shaped into *Sangh Parivar* (family of organizations) was a great extent a revival of the Hindutva ideology. Besides political parties and activists, Sangh Parivar also added workers' unions, diaspora, student unions, farmers' unions, academicians, occupational professionals, think tanks, women, children, etc., under its umbrella. BJP was found in 1980 as a political wing of RSS, based upon the Hindutva doctrine (Komireddi, 2018, pp. xvi-xvii).

After decades of struggle by the Sangh Parivar, BJP won the 1999 Elections in India to form a coalition government. Gatade (2007) and Nanjappa (2011) argue that the process of Saffronization (also referred to as *Saffron Terror* and *Hindutva Terror*) started during this period. Some far-right Hindu nationalists do not agree with the Hindutva critics (Jethmalani, 2015), while a vast majority of notable writers and scholars such as Romila Thapar (Maini); Bannerji (2006, pp. 362-390); Patnaik (1993, pp. 69-77); Sarkar (1999, pp. 655-666); Desai (2011, pp. 354-381); Sen (2015, pp. 690-711); Banaji (2018, pp. 333-350); Marzia (2000, pp. 218-228); and Kronstadt (2018) claim this to be *Hindu Fascism* and *Indian Fascism.* Hindutva ideology, from the beginning, has been inspired by Hitler's Nazi Germany policies (Marzia, 2000; Rao, 2017). Incidentally, Modi, the current Prime Minister of India, was the Chief Minister of Gujarat, and the 2002 massacre of almost 1000 Muslims occurred under his watch, making him an ape-leader for the BJP and Hindutva ideology (Missaglia, 2018).

BJP government conceptualized its construct of "citizenship" upon the concept of Hindu nationalism, as argued by Savarkar (1928). Roy (2019) refers to the 2003 Amendment in the Citizenship Act as a "hinge point" to the 2016 bill regarding the National Register of Citizenship (NRC). [4] Consequently, the two cardinal points of the Hindutva ideology were constitutionalized: firstly, of linking the citizenship to the blood lineage, specific to the Indian birth; and secondly, making nationality contingent upon the religion (and making India a Hindu only country).

BJP's national election victory of 2014 was a quintessential epitome in the continuation of the Hindutva ideology. It facilitated and expedited the third dimension of the atonement of BJP policies through constitutional amendments. As a first measure, the BJP government re-opened the NRC in the North Eastern State of Assam. Almost 33 million residents were asked to prove their presence in Assam before the 1971 War, which created Bangladesh pushing many refugees to India. Resultantly, almost 1.9 million, mostly Muslims, were left out of the final official list of citizens (Mohan & Barpeta, 2018). Incidentally, there is a disproportionate diversity in the Indian North East[5], based upon multiple religions,

[4] NRC was first made in 1951 and reopened in 2015 starting in Assam.

[5] These seven North Eastern Indian states are called the *seven sisters* and include Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura. An Inner Line Permit (ILP) is needed for Indians to visit these territories.

tribes, indigenous people and migrants, etc. Reactivating the NRC compensated the indigenous tribes to prevent and reverse migrants' arrival and necessitate the Inner Line Permit (ILP) for locals traveling to these states.

As an implementation of the second construct of the strategy, on 11 Dec 2019, the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 was signed into law by the president (BBC, 2019). This bill promised those (non-Muslims) facing religious persecution in neighboring Islamic countries a path to Indian citizenship. Simultaneously, it also ordains to remove the "illegal migrants" out of India before the 2024 elections (Agarwal & Salam, 2019).

Earlier in the year, Article 370 allowing special status to the State of Jammu and Kashmir was abrogated on 5 Aug 2019, and PM Modi argued that this special status of the State of Kashmir was hindering its "integration with the rest of India" (Janjua, 2019; Srivastava, 2019). Article 370 dates back to the British partition of the region, annexing major parts of Kashmir to India. This Article provided the residents of Kashmir the right to make their laws. Sub-Article 35a under Article 370 granted Kashmiris a right to decide who its permanent residents were, choices related to the government jobs, property rights and educational scholarships were permissible under this law. Following the revocation of Article 370, large-scale deployment of the Indian paramilitary forces ensured the lockdown of the entire Kashmir, which continues until the writing of this paper. Few months after the removal of Article 370, the Indian government announced the Citizen Amendment Bill, which offered a pathway to all the illegal immigrants of selected religious denominations (excluding Muslims) from neighboring countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan to register themselves. This bill also contradicts the secular Indian secular Constitution, making religion the base for citizenship. Large protests engulfed the entire country, and at the peak of this intolerant and asymmetric constitutional amendment, a standoff between massive protesters across India and the government forces ensued (Hussain, 2019).

Coexistence of contradictory cohabitations and the constitutional changes

As argued above, Hindu nationalists have been steadily bringing in constitutional changes, which are the doctrinal duplication of the Hindutva ideology. Political India has been changing ever since the BJP government took office, and major parts of political order are changing in unexpected ways. Relatedly, philosophical conceptions of tolerance, which are dynamic and tend to evolve or change spatiotemporally, are getting displaced. However, recent changes in the political and social order, such as the rise of the religious right, effectively contribute to India becoming an intolerant society, which is a perturbing phenomenon both domestically and for the larger regional and world peace. It is important to note here that the dominant political elite has pushed a wave of change in a major segment of Hindu polity and the public. Intolerance has been increasing in intensity, volume and number of events.

Hindu nationalism has attained its aspired goals to "de-Muslimize" and "Hinduize" India. This has been done through progressive yet contradictory constitutional cohabitation of delegitimizing some of its citizens, simultaneously legitimizing some religious migrants. Some of the contradictions include:

First, by abrogation of Article 370 in Kashmir, granting a tacit approval for inland migration of Hindus for a favorable change in the demography of Kashmir. *Second*, putting Ladakh under the 6th Schedule (Bakshi, 2020) would segregate it from Kashmir, whereas the abrogation of Article 370 was based on the argument of better Kashmiri integration into Indian society. *Third*, the implementation of ILP for the North-Eastern region, fearing the chances of perceived demographic change through migration from Bangladesh. *Fourth*, Sikkim in the far north has 61% Nepalese (Hindus) and 29% indigenous population. A demographic nationality imbalance exists in this region, but this State has not been added to the 6th Schedule, nor ILP is required for Indians (Gupta, 2019). This infers that the existence of a demographic imbalance is acceptable in the case of Sikkim, with only about 1.6% Muslims and "a population overwhelmingly Nepali by ancestry, and Hindu by religion" (Hiltz, 2012).

Fifth, as mentioned above, during 2015, almost 33 million residents of Assam were asked to provide proof of their citizenship dating back to 1971, failing which Delhi was to declare them as illegal immigrants. Most Indian Muslims, including those in Assam living in extreme poverty, did not have any form of identification or paperwork and could not prove the desired credentials. As a result, almost 4 million people (mostly Muslims) delisted from the National Register of Citizens (Perrigo, 2019). This step was taken in concomitance with the other constitutional changes to slow down the changing demography in favor of Muslims, in whichever State it was applicable (Bhat & Zavier, 2005; Shah, 2007). The population of Assam is 61% Hindu and 34% Muslims (the largest concentration of Muslim population in India outside Kashmir), which is a serious concern and needed to be addressed by delegitimizing them through the constitutional amendment. The Indian government crushed the Assam movement back in 1985, which then demanded that all the non-Assamese speakers and, more specifically, the Bengali speakers should not be allowed in the State; language and not religion was the leading cause of their agitation and anxiety against demographic change (Baruah, 1986; Monirul, 1992). However, the BJP constitutional amendment addressed the same issue, and the demography is being preserved through religious segregation as a prerequisite for citizenship.

Consequently, one can notice that most North-Eastern India also protested against the 2019 Citizens Act because of the dichotomy of approach towards solving the central issue. Assam Movement demanded the removal of all non-indigenous people. Now there is a fear of the same movement relapsing and standing up against the BJP central in Delhi. *Six*, the practice of religious conversions was restricted after the rise of Hindutva ideology by the British

through Anti –Conversions Laws during the 1940s (Coleman, 2007). These laws exist in eight out of 29 Indian states and make it a punishable crime to convert anyone to another religion fraudulently or by force (Congress, 2018). However, contrary to these laws, the states of Rajasthan and Arunachal Pradesh allow for such conversions back to the *original* or *native* faith (Hinduism). *Finally*, as posited by Tharoor (2016b, p. 119), Hindutva ideology also claims that almost "60,000 Hindu temples were razed to the ground by Muslims during centuries of their rule in India as many as 3000 mosques were built on the same foundations". One such example is the rebuilding of Ram Temple in Ayodhya at the site of the 16th Century Babri Mosque, demolished by Hindu nationalists in 1992 (Joshi, 2018). Although these figures of (raising 60,000 and 3000 mosques based on Hindu temples) may not be accurate, and reviving past grandeur is culturally an appreciable practice, however, in case of India this has a controversial religious dimension resulting into intolerance.

The constitutional flouting and amendments brought in by the BJP government are deeply rooted in the Hindutva ideology. In its majoritarian and authoritarian hubris, the Modi government has not kept their ambitions secret, and statistically, the targeting of Muslims has been on the rise, in cases such as cow lynching (HRW, 2019; IndiaSpend, 2018; Mark, 2018); religious conversions through *Ghar Wapsi*[6], *Shuddhi*[7], as advocated by the Hindu nationalist Dayananda (Gooptu, 2001, p. 155; PTI; Saraswati, 1975, p. 16); and Love Jihad including its spiritual dangers, and preparation of hit lists of those Muslim men and Hindu girls marry and indulge in love jihad (Bhatia, 2017; Gowen, 2018; PTI, 2017; Roth, 2018, p. 263); saffronisation and name changes (Azam, 2018; Singh, 2001) with the State's institutional aloofness. The Delhi Pogroms of 2020 (Sharma, 2020) are a testimonial to the asymmetric policies which are causing a religious-based superstitious polarization, resulting in erosion of tolerance.

Elitist narratives and stigmatization

To curb the lynching across the country, the Supreme Court of India issued directives of "punitive, remedial and preventive measures", recommending that lynching should be made a separate offense with adequate punishment. The Court explicitly stated that "horrendous acts of mobocracy cannot be permitted to inundate the law of the land", and directing the states to take concrete steps in preventing lynching; the Court ordered, "to protect the citizens from recurrent pattern of violence which cannot be allowed to become the new normal" (India Legal, 2018). Unfortunately, very little if any heed was paid to these directives, conversely the mob mentality worsened, and intolerance culminated in the shape of Delhi pogroms.

[6] Literal meaning "returning home"
[7] Purification

Ironically, the operationalization of ideology through the Constitution has not been an occult confiding among the ruling elite, rather a well-pronounced policy framework. The political elite in India has been propagating this anti-Muslim rhetoric openly (Editorial, 2020; Varma, 2020).

Theoretically, Wright Mills (1956) postulated the power elite theory, which claims that a group of select elite and not the multiplicity of competing groups decide the serious issues, such as life and death for the whole nation and almost nothing is decided by the minorities or a common person. In the case of India, the BJP political and Hindu nationalist elites have been taking national-level decisions by following the Hindutva ideology. The induced incitement among the masses, who have cohabitated in amalgamated religious communities for decades, if not more, has only promoted an erosion of tolerance through government-sanctioned elite narratives. Political elite such as the Home Minister of India, Amit Shah, has been stigmatizing the illegal immigrants, labeling them "termites", pledging to rid the country of these pests (PTI, 2019). In the latest Delhi elections held on Feb 8, 2020, BJP's slogan was "shoot the traitors", which possibly became one of the major causes of its defeat (PTI, 2020). This defeat in elections ideally should have necessitated an introspection in retrospect, but instead, the losing Chief Minister candidate Amit Mishra became the mastermind behind anti-Muslim Delhi pogroms a few days later.

Pointing to the significance of human rights and dignity, Vatter (2019) posited that "the legal conception of human dignity carries a universal legal obligation to respect the 'innate' right to independence". However, the Indian human rights record has been marred by an excessive number of violations. Lack of credible investigation, inhumane detentions, and other violent crimes against minorities, "incited and carried out by the ultra-nationalist Hindus", in states of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Chhattisgarh and Jammu and Kashmir have been documented in detail by the Human Rights Watch (Roth, 2018, pp. 261-269). Some critics had referred to this as the worst display of repression against the dissent during Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's era when the Constitution remained suspended, and a decree ruled the country between 1975 and 1977 (Swamy, 2018). Violation of fundamental human rights is in clear contrast to any conceptions of toleration. Criticizing both Pakistani and Indian religious policies, Komireddi (2018, p. 68) argued that the hanging of a Kashmiri reminded the Muslims of Kashmir that "this was their reward for choosing secular India over Islamic Pakistan in 1947".

An important question arises here as to how the diverse cohabitating communities can turn against each other? Theoretically, this is an indicator of the latent communal tensions which have been simmering for a long time. This religious exclusion can also be argued to have existed historically, mainly when an outsider minority (Muslims) ruled over India for many centuries. This also means that the permission conception of tolerance was a temporary phenomenon, practiced by every ruler, and which, just like unity in diversity, only existed in

secular aspirations. Further, the concept of homogeneity (McPherson & Smith-Lovin, 1987) within one religious group is also an ironic measure of the (dis)unity, and by extension, the (in)tolerance.

Delhi kristallnacht 2020

Multiple scholars argue that the Hindutva totalitarian motivations have excessively drawn on from the 1930s Nazi Germany (Rao, 2017), and the archival evidence for that has amply been explicated by the scholarship (Marzia, 2000). Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan (2020), echoing Gopal (2020), drew a striking parallel between Feb 2020, anti-Muslim pogroms at Delhi, calling the event Delhi *Kristallnacht*, and the ones carried out by the German Storm Detachment in Nov 1938 against the Jews (Gilbert, 2006). Although the theory of profound structural violence postulated by Galtung (1971) posits that generally, the perpetrators behind the violence are invisible, however, as mentioned above, the Delhi model of violence has a well-known elite behind this violence. The state structures assisted this violence, which killed scores and wounded hundreds of Muslims. The role of the Delhi police was intentionally restricted by Home Minister Amit Shah (Kamdar, 2020), in aiding and abetting the attackers, instead of resisting the violence and helping the victims (Gettleman, Yasir, Raj, & Kumar, 2020). In some videos, police can be seen pelting the mourning Muslim youth, demanding them to sing the Indian national anthem (Patel, 2020). Such gross hatred displayed by a state institution towards the Muslims is a clear indicator of the State's connivance in this intolerance. The mandatory singing national anthem under the force of state power is also an indicator of the State demanding allegiance from its citizens, who have been residing in the same place for decades but followed a different faith. To worsen the misery of the victims, the judge who initiated police brutality investigations was posted to Punjab the next day (Kamdar, 2020).

Incidentally, religious-based riots have been a recurring phenomenon in contemporary India, such as the Sikh genocide of 1984 (Komireddi, 2018, p. 31; Kopf & Hansen, 1999, pp. 516-517), religious unrest and insurgencies in the North-East (Bhaumik, 2004, pp. 219-244), tearing down of the 16th Century Babri Mosque (Joshi, 2018; Tully, 2002), Gujarat 2002 anti-Muslim riots (Berenschot, 2011), and anti-Christian violence (Bauman & Leech, 2012; Bauman, 2013). It is also an evidenced phenomenon that the authorities generally assist the violence in Delhi (Komireddi, 2018, p. 31), and the "violence is more likely in the neighborhoods where inhabitants gain access to state institutions through patronage networks that derive electoral gains from communal violence" (Berenschot, 2011). Delhi pogroms were theoretical replication of the past.

As mentioned above, protests in Delhi, and other parts of India, were organized by almost all religious denominations against the Citizenship Act, which was altercated as the erosion of secularism from the Indian Constitution. Consequently, the displacement of religious tolerance. After losing the February Delhi elections, Kapil Mishra, a far-right Hindu nationalist, warned and instigated

the Hindu mobs to remove the protesters by force. Consequently, on 23 February 2020, Hindu nationalist mobs attacked the Muslim neighborhood in Delhi, ransacking, torturing, burning houses and humans (Gettleman & Abi-Habib, 2020). Delhi pogroms were the ne plus ultra of the Hindutva ideology implementation in modern Indian history. The protests continued across India till the government locked down the country, fearing the spread of the COVID-19. However, this cosmic intervention has proven beneficial for the BJP government, which had to remove the protesters by using State force (Reuters, 2020).

The iconoclastic communal tendencies have been instrumental in eroding the concept of tolerance from society. As argued by Renn, Jovanovic, and Schröter (2011), theoretically, there are few possible outcomes of such state-sanctioned societal changes, opportunistic and marginalizing policies and constitutional amendments resulting in a heightened degree of communal violence. Some of the possible outcomes are being discussed in the culminating paragraphs below.

First, the Hindutva ideological landscape is unlikely to be changed in the foreseeable future, even if the secular Congress party wins the next election. Implementation of core Hindutva ideology granting Hindus a "master status" (Hughes, 1945), and inciteful "elite" narrative (Khan, 2012) backed by the State signatures, have converted the minorities (especially Muslims) into a "marginal man" (Park, 1928), in whose mind conflicting cultural, social and religious ideologies disperse and diffuse.

Second, if the protests are not as well organized as the responding state institutions, the chances of diffusion and ultimately dying down increase. The state security institutions, such as police, were used asymmetrically and effectively to diffuse the Indian protests and will leave a lasting diminishing impact on the minority protesters. *Third*, what remains to be seen is that would the protests relapse after 21 days of state closure ordered by the government to prevent the spread of coronavirus (Reuters, 2020). The possible fear of unknown economic downturn and extended-time duration causing forced dispersal will undoubtedly have a diminishing effect on the stealth of protest resumption. *Fourth*, the changes in the Constitution and promotion of Hindu nationalist narratives have created an environment of mistrust, hatred, fear, and as argued by some, the conditions ripe for another Muslim genocide in India (Nussbaum, 2009, pp. 17-51; Pirbhai, 2008; Rajshekar, 2004).

Finally, Voltaire (1912) argued that erosion of tolerance is likely to become the cause of a civil war. Displacement of this vitally realizable value, targeted against one community, when added to the current economic downturn in India (Kazmin, 2019), is likely to ripen the ground for civil unrest. As argued in this paper, there has been very little evidence of unity in Indian diversity, and such social problems can widen the communal cleavages, which could result in another geographical division referred to by Jaswant (2016, p. 370) as a "third partition" in the region. On abrogation of the discriminatory laws from the Constitution of India

(such as Article 370), citing Chidambaram[8], Singh (2019) contended that "the worst day in the constitutional history of India…which could lead to the dismemberment of the country". Historical evidence needs to be contextualzied by the ideologues of Hindu nationalism as a cautionary predicament for times to come.

Conclusion

Emphasizing the significance of tolerance as a socially desirable construct, this paper argues that Hindutva ideological implementation by the Hindu nationalists has eroded the notion of tolerance from Indian society. Crick (1971, p. 152), citing J. W. Gooch, defines religious tolerance as the "liberty allowed by the government of a country where a particular form of religion is established or recognized, to practice some other form of religion or no religion at all". Although, as pointed out by Paz (1997, p. 33), there is an inherent religious incompatibility between Islam and Hinduism, referring to this as a "historical paradox, a deep wound", only adds to the misery of the Muslim minority and acts as an incitement for the Hindutva dogmatists.

However, as argued in this paper, Indian religious sentiment engrossed in Hindutva ideology is, on the one hand, falling into 'empty anti-minority clericalism', and a nostalgic and (un)attainable longing for Hindu religious reformation on the other, both of which seek to convert India into a Hindu only state. To do this, BJP, as the political wing of RSS, has been shrinking the space for other religions, especially the Muslims. One can observe the progressive policy implementation through various modes, including demolition of mosques, cow lynching, saffronization of the Indian textbooks, curbing inter-religious marriages, curbing love jihad, and most importantly, incorporation of multiple constitutional changes to demean the secularism in the Indian Constitution. The presence of structural violence, such as the State's use of security institutions against its citizens, forceful removal of the protesters, and months-long lockdown in the Muslim majority region of Kashmir, are the indicators of a fascist regime, whose ideology was inspired by Nazi Germany (Marzia, 2000).

The Muslim connection with neighboring Pakistan is portrayed as a factor of fear, and as argued by Joshi (2018), nationalism in India is now defined in anti-Muslim terms, where "Muslim" and "Pakistan" are being used as synonyms. Consequently, the proverbial secularist, rationalist and moderate – the highlights of the Indian Constitution — have been effectively marginalized, and the diminishing tradition of tolerance has eroded significantly.

Closely linked to the consolidation of Hindutva ideology and intolerance in India is the enactment of some religious laws such as *Anti Conversion Laws* (Congress, 2018), Citizenship Act (BBC, 2019), removal of Article 370 from Kashmir (Bhatia, 2019; Janjua, 2019), and infringing upon the liberty and human

[8] A Congress Party leader who served as Finance and Home Minister of India.

rights in the North-Eastern states (Perrigo, 2019). Erosion of the tolerance and the combined effect of the Hindutva policies is a preparation for an anti-Muslim genocide in India (Nussbaum, 2009, pp. 17-51; Pirbhai, 2008; Rajshekar, 2004), least of all addressing the deteriorating socioeconomic and religiopolitical plight of the Muslims as suggested by Sachar Report (Parker, 2006).

More than 90% of religion-based hate crimes during the last decade have been under the RSS auspices under Modi's watch (Schultz, 2019). Contradicting the fundamental Hindu religious belief, ironically, the land of intolerant cow protectors has been the largest beef exporter for the past many years and as argued by Komireddi (2018, p. 107), "measurably the life of cow has become more valued as compared to the life of humans of the offending faith". Incitement caused by the elite narratives – "if they kill one Hindu, we will kill 100" (Crabtree, 2017), has been vocal and consequential. In this age of scientific reason and philosophical logic, religious slogans such as "humans are important but cows are not less important" (Singh, 2018) can only reduce the Muslims as a stateless "marginal man" (Park, 1928), for whom life is likely to get more violent.

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