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**Thesis -MA International Relations**

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## Chapter 1

### 1.1 Introduction

Globally, there has been a resurgence of right-wing political parties, from Brazil to the U.S., to the U.K., to India. The right-wing often employ nationalist rhetoric against the ill effects of neoliberalism,<sup>1</sup> instead of challenging the economic structures and neoliberal elite, they shift the blame to the ethnic and religious minorities of the state, connecting two seemingly opposite ideologies- neoliberalism and nationalism.<sup>2</sup> Once considered antithesis of each other these ideas have a co-dependent nature which will be studied in the thesis.<sup>3</sup>

For the sake of this thesis the case of India up until 2019 would be studied in detail. Since the beginning of their general election campaign of 2014, the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and the face of the party, Narendra Modi, have advocated the implementation of neoliberal capitalist policies. Modi has shown strong support for the open market and the opportunity it brings for the middle class.<sup>4</sup> He introduced programmes and policies in his first tenure that were aimed at improving the of the domestic market and attracting FDI through Make in India, advancement and formalisation of the economy through Digital India and generating human capital and curbing unemployment through Skill India. The results so far have not created a significant positive impact on the economy. While the economy has attracted additional FDI equity inflow from USD 24.3 billion in 2014 to USD 44.9 billion in 2017,<sup>5</sup> the GDP growth rate has been dipping since 2014,<sup>6</sup> reaching 5.8% in Jan-Mar, 2019.<sup>7</sup> Skill India campaign claims to have trained and educated 3,50,000 in 2016 to 1.6 million in 2017-18, the number of people getting employment has decreased from 50% to less than 30%.<sup>8</sup> The economy is facing a rise in unemployment which has been the highest since the past 45 years, at 6.1%.<sup>9</sup> The demonetisation in 2016 which highlights a time when the Modi led Indian state inexplicably and controversially intervened in the economy by banning large currency notes, in turn

<sup>1</sup> Kaul, Nitasha. "Rise of the Political Right in India: Hindutva-Development Mix, Modi Myth, and Dualities." *Journal of Labor and Society* 20, no. 4 (2017): 523–48. <https://doi.org/10.1111/wusa.12318>.

<sup>2</sup> Adam Harmes (2012) The rise of neoliberal nationalism, *Review of International Political Economy*, 19:1, 59-86, DOI:10.1080/09692290.2010.507132

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> George, Varghese K. "A Hindutva variant of neo-liberalism", *The Hindu*, April 04, 2014

<sup>5</sup> FDI Statistics, Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Government of India

<sup>6</sup> Upadhyay, Rajeev Kumar, *Slowdown Creeps in Indian Economy* (August 25, 2019). Available at SSRN:

<https://ssrn.com/abstract=3442600> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3442600>

<sup>7</sup> "Report for Selected Countries and Subjects." IMF

[https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2019/01/weodata/weorept.aspx?pr.x=61&pr.y=6&sy=1980&ey=2024&scsm=1&ssd=1&sort=country&ds=.&br=1&c=534&s=NGDP\\_RPCH,PPPGDP,PPPPC,PPPSH,PCPIPCH,GGXWDG\\_NGDP&grp=0&a=](https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2019/01/weodata/weorept.aspx?pr.x=61&pr.y=6&sy=1980&ey=2024&scsm=1&ssd=1&sort=country&ds=.&br=1&c=534&s=NGDP_RPCH,PPPGDP,PPPPC,PPPSH,PCPIPCH,GGXWDG_NGDP&grp=0&a=)

<sup>8</sup> Jaffrelot, C., & Jumle, V. (2019). Modi's Skill India needs to address these concerns to solve India's unemployment problem. *Financial Express*, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> Periodic Labour Force Survey, NSSO, 2017-18

decreasing liquidity in the economy.<sup>10</sup> Some policies of the BJP government, like the one stated above are questioning the state's involvement in the free market which will be discussed further. In his re-election campaign in 2019, Modi used the slogan of 'Minimum government, maximum governance' in order to lure the free markets to his side.<sup>11</sup>

A new India envisaged by Modi which also includes increasing "Hindu nationalism" and the need of India to be a Hindu state, an idea the middle class public is subscribing to because of the image portrayed by the charismatic nationalist leader Narendra Modi. Modi has been able to sway the people with his determination to present India as a new-born yet traditional, industrial yet cultural nation where driving ideology remains to be Hindutva.

In this rhetoric, India is considered the land of Hindus and the religions which have been born out of the Indian mainland. In 1991, the Indian economy opened to the world and made a move towards neoliberalism. This was accompanied with another discourse of the rebirth of the Hindu-supremacist organisations on the national scale in 1992 with the fall of Babri Mosque.<sup>12</sup> With a globally recognisable middle class aided by the promise of economic reforms, the Hindutva forces called for a unification of the Hindu majority. The ideology of Hindutva was coined in 1923, by Vinayak D. Savarkar in his pamphlet 'the essentials of Hindutva'. Basu (2016) states Savarkar's definition, "Savarkar makes Hindutva a cultural, historical and political essence, which, only as such a congealed singularity, could function as grounds for his imagining of the strongly militarised national form of Hindustan".<sup>13</sup>

In this thesis the narratives of neoliberalism and Hindutva would be studied in their relation to each other in India. I would do a historical analysis of Hindutva, establishing an understanding of local discourse of Hindu nationalism, analyse its relationship with and move towards the global trend of neoliberalism. The research question that this thesis revolves around is: ***How has Narendra Modi been able to marry the two seemingly opposite ideologies – neoliberalism and the Hindutva – as an alternative for his 'New India'?***

Sub-questions to be studied in this thesis will be:

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<sup>10</sup> Augendra Bhukuth, & Bernard Terrany. (2019). Why demonetize the Indian economy? Journal of International Studies, 12(4), Journal of International Studies, 01 December 2019, Vol.12(4).

<sup>11</sup> PM Modi explains minimum government and maximum governance", India Today, April 27, 2019

<sup>12</sup> Basu, M. (2016). Introductory Matters: The Strange Case of Secular India. In The Rhetoric of Hindu India: Language and Urban Nationalism (pp. 1-34). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781316576540.002

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

1. How has the Modi government used the Hindutva rhetoric to overshadow the economic and political problems it has faced in its first tenure since 2014?
2. After 70 years of independence, how does a post-colonial state like India handle a move towards a de-westernized image, forming a new image of itself?

## 1.2 Literature Review

This literature review will take a look at the theoretical concepts to be studied in the thesis. The literature will be analysed with the Indian context. It is important for this thesis to establish these two concepts in its grounding – neoliberalism and Hindu Nationalism as I am looking at the idea of ‘*New India*’ that the vision of present Prime Minister Narendra Modi is trying to form. I would use these concepts in my analysis to support my arguments where needed. Hence, in this literature review, it is essential to define these concepts concisely to provide a base for my analysis.

Firstly, I will briefly talk about modernity and try to study it with the context of the Indian right wing’s vision of New India. Dipesh Chakrabarty notes in his article, that modernity can be perceived in different ways. Post-colonial states such as India often tend to follow western ideas and thus, westernisation and modernisation are difficult to see apart from each other.<sup>14</sup> There was a process of westernisation in Indian culture where values were redefined by intellectual and cultural revolutionaries like Raja Ram Mohan Roy in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This period is commonly defined as the early modern period by some scholars (Barnett, 2002; Richards, 1997) and late medieval by some scholars (De, 1976).<sup>15</sup> The popular opinion till late 20<sup>th</sup> century was to describe the precolonial period as an era of decline of South Asian values but new revisionist writings present a different view by positing that period as early modern period of South Asian history.

The said debate is explained by Chakrabarty and Starn when they say that the effort to modernise the history gives an opportunity to fill the gaps.<sup>16</sup> The whole point of this discussion with regard to this thesis is that the periodisation of Indian precolonial history is argued variedly

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<sup>14</sup> Chakrabarty, D. (2011). The Muddle of Modernity. *The American Historical Review*, 116(3), 663-675.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

See also, Barun De, “The Colonial Context of the Bengal Renaissance,” in C. H. Philips and Mary Doreen Wainwright, eds., *Indian Society and the Beginnings of Modernisation, c. 1830–1850* (London, 1976), 124–125.

Richard B. Barnett, “Introduction,” in Barnett, ed., *Rethinking Early Modern India* (Delhi, 2002), 11–29.

John F. Richards, “Early Modern India and World History,” *Journal of World History* 8, no. 2 (1997)

<sup>16</sup> Randolph Starn, “The Early Modern Muddle,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 6, no. 3 (2002): 296–307. See also Jack A. Goldstone, “The Problem of the ‘Early Modern’ World,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 41, no. 3 (1998): 249–284

and is conceived differently by scholars. This leads to various other histories in the non-academic realm and much proliferated in the public sphere, as done by the right wing.<sup>17</sup>

These gaps in history of the sub-continent as we know are sometimes exploited in the narrative (claim over the Babri Masjid property) are perceived in a different light in the Hindutva right wing narrative.<sup>18</sup> After independence there was a need to form a continuous history of the whole country to instil a sense of unity and singular history in the nation. There was one narrative that was provided by the Nehru-led Indian National Congress (INC) through the state and state curriculum, where pre-colonial history and the Mughal rule was considered a part of the Indian heritage. On the fringes, another narrative was developing with a support of some organised religious and political groups in the form of VHP and Jan Sangh and spread over the masses by their fellow voluntary organisation Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). This narrative sees the foreign rule in India to have lasted 1200 years since the first Muslim invasions. Additionally, there was an effort to universalise the Hindu mythology,<sup>19</sup> the marketing of this mythology through Gita Press,<sup>20</sup> opening nation-wide RSS *Shakhas*, a *Ramayana* television show, Hindi language newspapers and magazines etc. The Print & Publishing magazine reported that by 2019 Gita Press had published “66 crore 40 lakh (664 million) books on diverse Hindu religious titles in different languages (15)...”<sup>21</sup> This is the most number of Hindu religious books and scriptures sold by a single publisher.

Now, while this narrative that was building in the public sphere through early postcolonial period, in the political sphere, it was overshadowed by the dominance of Nehru and Indira governments.<sup>22</sup> Hence, we now move towards understanding the nature of the state-religion relationship within the Indian context. Rajeev Bhargava presents three sections of the society-civil society, public sphere and the political sphere (the state).<sup>23</sup> These three dimensions of the society are linked to each other and feed off of each other. For an ideology that caters to all three spheres of the society is not an easy task, Hindu nationalists have over time invested to

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<sup>17</sup> Some examples include the universalization of the Indian epic *Ramayana* (Thapar, 1989) and the idea of the ancient golden age of Hindu prosperity in the Indian subcontinent (Jaffrelot, 1996)

<sup>18</sup> Ashis Nandy, “History’s Forgotten Doubles,” *History and Theory*, Vol. 34, No. 2, Theme Issue 34: World Historians and Their Critics (May, 1995), pp. 44- 66

<sup>19</sup> Romila Thapar, “Epic and History: Tradition, Dissent and Politics in India,” *Past and present*, No 125 (Nov 1989), pp 3-26

<sup>20</sup> Mukul, A. (2015) .op.cit.

<sup>21</sup> Long Legacy Of Gita Press As World’s Largest Publisher Of Hindu Religious Books, *Print & Publishing magazine*, April 15, 2019 <http://www.print-publishing.com/6530/long-legacy-of-gita-press-as-worlds-largest-publisher-of-hindu-religious-books/>

<sup>22</sup> Art. 44, the Indian C

Austin, G. (2001). *Religion, personal law, and identity in India. Religion and personal law in secular India: A call to judgment*, 15-23. *onstitution (India)*, 1950

<sup>23</sup> Bhargava, R. (2005). Introduction in Reifeld, H., Bhargava, R., & Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. (2005). *Civil Society, Public Sphere and Citizenship : Dialogues and Perceptions*. Sage Publications Pvt. Ltd.

increase their influence in these spheres, culminating into a sentiment subscribed by a vast majority of Indian voters in the two subsequent general elections.

Firstly, in the public sphere which is not inherently political but influences political thought. Newspapers, television, media, movies, a conversation at a tea stall, in train etc. are all included in the public sphere. Hindutva sympathisers have influenced the public sphere continuously and passively over the years as evidenced earlier. Secondly, in the political sphere, the right wing has had patches of power over time, which did not let it increase religious influence in the state activities explicitly to a large scale. Till 1991, the erstwhile sporadically communal INC governments held considerable power nationally which did not let the Hindu right wing ideology to influence the political sphere to a large extent. This narrative has been changing since Babri mosque demolition. After BJP's second victory in 2019, a shift in the political sphere has been noticed (CAB & Art.370) but this is beyond the scope of this thesis.<sup>24</sup> Thirdly, the civil society, the non-political and non-public arena of society includes organisations and groups focused more towards individual well-being and gains. Bhargava points out that the public sphere and the civil society are inherently a part of each other and also not.<sup>25</sup> Civil society includes voluntary organisations outside the reaches of the state. The right wing has used RSS as its own voluntary organisation to influence opinions in the public and the private sphere. RSS Shakhas (local branches) propagate the ideology through campaigns and activities instigating conversations amongst its members.

Moving on, in the early postcolonial period, Indian state followed a mixed model of socialism and capitalism. The core of this thesis project is the co-existence of neoliberalism with Hindu Nationalism in post-colonial India. As stated earlier both of these ideologies took centre stage in Indian politics at a similar time in the early 1990s, the BJP has evolved and incorporated neoliberalism in its roots. Historically, until 1990 Indian state was a largely closed socialist government which embraced the era of neoliberalism with the end of the cold war. The victory of capitalism in the cold war led to India adopting neoliberal policies. With the opening up of the economy there were scares of foreign exploitation reminiscent of the colonial history. Nitasha Kaul has argued that nationalism and neoliberalism should not be analysed separately in the Indian context.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Article 370 <https://registry.sci.gov.in/library-portal/legis/acttitle2.asp>  
Press Release, GOI <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=195783>

<sup>25</sup> Bhargava, R. (2005). Op.cit.

<sup>26</sup> Kaul, Nitasha. "The Political Project of Postcolonial Neoliberal Nationalism." *Indian Politics and Policy* 2, no. 1 (2019).  
<https://doi.org/10.18278/inpp.2.1.2>.



This form of liberalisation proposed has often been termed as *neo-Gandhian* in its descent as it uses the principles of Gandhian era and the spirit of independence to popularise the popular nationalist sentiment. Radhika Desai combines this Gandhian populism with the liberalisation of the economy through her ‘Embourgeoisement of Gandhi’<sup>27</sup>. ‘*Gandhian socialism*’ is described as ‘harnessing the founding conservative traditions’ and then adjusting to the visions of the right. Mixed with the notion of modernising without imperial scope and taking the castes out of the picture, Hindutva evolved as a popular sentiment among classes.

The embourgeoisement we discuss here is adhering and mixing with the industrial elite. This discourse began during the emergency when several right wing leaders fragmented from the Congress and formed right-to-centre parties to tackle the Indira government during the emergency. This discourse in a wider scope was beneficial for the Hindu right as their populist Gandhian socialism was gaining prominence.<sup>28</sup> This ideology was coupled with conscious capitalism within the rural and urban bourgeois, particularly in the north of India. It can be deduced that this shift in the dynamics of Indian politics and a move towards the ‘neo-Gandhian populism’ and conscious capitalism became relevant for the first time in the mainstream. From here on in world and domestic discourses India was transformed into a ‘modern capitalist state’ with ingrained socialism<sup>29</sup> by 1991. Now this image that I have just built is a general sense of the Indian population which is empirically supported with a research by Ashis Nandy.<sup>30</sup> This general atmosphere has been beneficial for Hindu nationalism to bloom.

One of the initiatives to come out of the right wing arsenal was the Swadeshi Jagaran Manch (SJM) which presented opposition to these reforms. SJM also Gandhian in nature suggested a new view towards India’s capitalist ambitions under Rajiv Gandhi. The view is described as,

“...but not the Swadeshi of an inward looking nation afraid to face an increasingly complex and aggressive world outside, rather the Swadeshi of a self-confident, hardworking modern nation that can deal with the world on terms of equality.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Desai, R. (1999). Culturalism and Contemporary Right: Indian Bourgeoisie and Political Hindutva. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34(12), 695-712. Retrieved from [www.jstor.org/stable/4407763](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4407763)

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Daniel Kent-Carrasco (2017) A battle over meanings: Jayaprakash Narayan, Rammanohar Lohia and the trajectories of socialism in early independent India, *Global Intellectual History*, 2:3, 370-388, DOI: 10.1080/23801883.2017.1370243

<sup>30</sup> Sheth, Ashis Nandy., Rajni Kothari, & Sheth, D.L. (1996). *The multiverse of democracy : Essays in honour of Rajni Kothari*. New Delhi ; Thousand Oaks, CA [etc]: Sage Publications.

<sup>31</sup> Kiran Saxena & Pradeep K. Sharma (1998) Hindutva and economic liberalization, *International Review of Sociology*, 8:2, 239-251, DOI: 10.1080/03906701.1998.9971275

It can be deduced in this sentence that there is the notion of the re-construction of India in a local manner, away from western capitalism. The rise of Hindu nationalism, Hindutva is the result of these initials stands that the right took as the opposition during the forming years of the state. In the following chapters these concepts will be applied to the two sub-questions and an analysis of the main questions will be done. These ideas and discourses would be applied to facts, discourses, and shifts in the Indian politics since 2014.

### ***1.3 Methodology***

In this thesis I would use the process tracing approach<sup>32</sup> within the case of Indian politics. I would try to use the theories discussed so far as variable and try to study the effect on the Indian political discourse. Both the sub questions are different from each other in the scope of the time periods that they are studied in.

The second chapter of the thesis attempts to establish a longer discourse drawing upon some variables<sup>33</sup> of modernity, de-westernisation, postcolonial state development and growth of Hindutva within India. This over time comparison establishes a longer discourse to understand Hindu Nationalism with detail. This chapter discusses the impact of the forces of liberal capitalism and modernisation impacted the growth of the narrative of Hindutva.

The third chapter discusses the economic policies that the BJP introduced under the Vajpayee governments, the critique of his policies by forces of left and right. Also, this chapter analyses the ‘model of Gujarat’ and the rise of Narendra Modi as a national leader. Here, we start seeing a relationship between BJP’s economic policies and Hindu nationalism.

The fourth chapter intends to analyse the 2014 LS polls and actions of Prime Minister Modi since assuming power in 2014. This thesis tries to study the case and test the hypothesis of Hindutva over-shadowing the economic and political problems in the country. An analysis of academic and journalistic would be done to study the two variables- economic and political discourses and the proliferation of the intervening variable<sup>34</sup> Hindutva. This analysis aims to understand the ‘shift towards the right’ that India has taken. Emergence of issues such as cow economics, rise of RSS, government legislations, marketing campaigns, national rhetoric would be discussed in this analysis. The growth of the right wing conservative sentiment

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<sup>32</sup> Beach, D. (2017, January 25). Process-Tracing Methods in Social Science. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics. Retrieved from <https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-176>

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Beach, D., & Pedersen, R. (2013). Process-tracing methods: Foundations and guidelines.

marketed and broadcasted by the political parties and the inability of the opposition to make a comeback are also discussed.

I would then bring together both the analysis together and establish a conclusive argument to the main hypothesis, “***How has Narendra Modi been able to marry the two seemingly opposite ideologies – neoliberalism and the Hindutva – as an alternative for his ‘New India’?***” This chapter addresses the culmination of coming together of the theories discussed in the literature review (neo-Liberalism, Hindutva) within the mentioned time period. Some possible impacts on the essence of the society would be brought into the fold to understand the image of ‘New India’ that has been prophesied by the ambitions of the Indian right wing.

## Chapter 2

### Hindutva – Genesis and Proliferation

#### 2.1 Chapter outline

This chapter focuses on the historical and the socio-political evolution of Hindu nationalism. The first section talks about how the idea of Hindutva materialised. In the second portion, the discourse of proliferation of Hindu nationalism in the independent India will be discussed.

#### 2.2 Hinduism and history of Hindu Nationalism

To discuss Hindu Nationalism, I need to begin with some recent history of Hinduism as a religion. The religion is a core aspect around which the principles of Hindu nationalism revolve. The term Hindu comes from the name of the river Indus, present day Pakistan, was used by the Greeks and Muslims over time since 2200 years ago.<sup>35</sup> Although, the people of the region did not address themselves as ‘Hindu’ till late medieval period and *Hinduism* does not possess an orthodox structure, any particular book to adhere by, no concept of a foreigner as every person could fit into the structure of the caste system with every ‘sect’ having its own beliefs. In his book Jaffrelot cites Romila Thapar, “first step towards crystallisation of what we today call Hinduism was born in the consciousness of being amorphous, undefined, subordinate, other”.<sup>36</sup>

The first sense of ‘Hindu’ consciousness is seen in the early eighteenth century, with the rise of Maratha Empire, and its leadership by Brahmin *Peshwas*. According to Jaffrelot (1996) and Bayly (1985) this consciousness stood against the opposing beliefs of the Mughals but it was not over religious grounds till mid nineteenth century.<sup>37</sup> Gradually, the ‘Hindu’ consciousness grew following that period and organised sects of Hindu religion established themselves amongst the growing diversity in the subcontinent, still there were no evident signs of nationalism till late nineteenth century. Hence, it as an observation that even though Hindu

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<sup>35</sup> Sontheimer, Kulke, Sontheimer, Günther-Dietz, Kulke, H., & European conference of modern South Asian studies. (1989). Hinduism reconsidered (South Asian studies / Heidelberg University, New Delhi Branch, South Asia Institute ; no. 24). New Delhi: Manohar. See also, Jaffrelot, C. (1996). “Introduction” in The Hindu nationalist movement and Indian politics, 1925 to the 1990s : Strategies of identity-building, implantation and mobilisation (with special reference to Central India). London: Hurst. Pg.4

<sup>36</sup> Jaffrelot, C. (1996) cites R. Thapar, ‘Syndicated Moksha?’ Seminar, Sept. 1985

<sup>37</sup> Bayly, C. (1985). The Pre-history of ‘;Communalism’? Religious Conflict in India, 1700–1860. *Modern Asian Studies*, 19(2), 177-203. doi:10.1017/S0026749X00012300, Jaffrelot (1996), Ibid.

civilisation and its literature dates back millennia but the Hindu religion of the present day is a rather modern concept, still *amorphous* and *undefined* in the words of Romila Thapar.

Andersen uses an excerpt from an RSS affiliated publication, *Supreme Court Judgement On "Hindutva" - A Way of Life (1996)*

*"It is an interesting fact of history that India was forged into a nation neither on account of a common language nor on account of the continued existence of a single political regime ..... but on account of a common culture evolved over the centuries.... Similarly, the word "Hindu" connotes no religion, for Hindutva is not religion."*<sup>38</sup>

Moving on from late nineteenth century, new ideas of nationalism were travelling from the West. This was also the time when the Indian independence movement was in its nascent stages. Arya Samaj of Dayanand Saraswati made the first attempt in the modern age of the subcontinent to define the spirituality of Hinduism. These explanations respected the amorphous and undefined character of the religion. With the end of the first world war, The *Khilafat movement* led by the Ali brothers joined hands with Gandhi's non-cooperation movement and Hindus and Muslim displayed a sense of unity. After the Islamist revolution in Turkey (Ottoman empire) died, the chants of 'Long Live Hindu-Muslim Unity!' ('Hindu-Musalman ki jai!') across the country in 1921 soon erupted into violence amongst the two groups in 1922 and the liberal nationalists termed it *communalism*.<sup>39</sup>

In 1923, in the region of what is now Maharashtra, there were extremist groups who first codified the Hindu unity.<sup>40</sup> This can be credited to Vinayak D. Savarkar, who in 1923, published his book 'Hindutva – Who is a Hindu?'<sup>41</sup>. Savarkar was a *Maharashtrian Brahmin*, former revolutionary leader and the future president of Hindu Mahasabha and he was instrumental in bringing this substantial change in Hindu identity and his works are studied as a basic text for Hinduness for nationalists. Hindutva was introduced as an opposing front to the rising pan-Islamism and as Pandey writes, 'threatening level of Muslim organisation, preparedness and militancy.' Savarkar was influenced by the rising ethnic nationalism in pre Nazi Germany and he was an admirer of Adolf Hitler.<sup>42</sup> M.S. Golwalkar another Hindu

<sup>38</sup> Andersen, W. (2017). "Evolution of a Hindu-oriented Political Party." quotes from a pamphlet compiled by R. Rama Jois, Supreme Court Judgement on 'Hindutva' a Way of Life (Suruchi Prakashan: New Delhi, 1996), 9

<sup>39</sup> Tejani, S. (2007). Re-considering Chronologies of Nationalism and Communalism: The Khilafat Movement in Sind and its Aftermath, 1919–1927. *South Asia Research*, 27(3), 249-269.

<sup>40</sup> Gyanendra Pandey, "Which of Us Are Hindus?," in *Hindus and Others: The Question of Identity in India Today* ed. Gyanendra Pandey (New Delhi: Viking, 1993), pp. 238-272.

<sup>41</sup> Vināyaka Dāmodara Sāvarkara. (2009). *Hindutva : Who is a Hindu?* New Delhi: Hindi Sahitya Sadan.

<sup>42</sup> Namrata R Ganneri. (2010). Saffron Schooling and the Gandhi Murder. *Economic & Political Weekly*, Economic & Political Weekly, August 14, 2010.

nationalist and later leader of the Hindu Nationalist paramilitary organisation RSS (1940), cites the German view of Nation repeatedly in his book *We, or our nationhood defined*.<sup>43</sup> This exclusivist sentiment gained popularity but the Gandhian influence at the time did not let it be the driving force it aspired to be like other such sentiments in rest of the world.

### ***2.3 Hindu Nationalism in post-independence politics- From Jana Sangh to Bhartiya Janata Party***

Hindu Mahasabha entered Indian electoral politics in 1951 through the political party *Jana Sangh (JS)*. The RSS considered itself to be apolitical, but a certain group in the RSS had an interest in power and thus, believed that in order to achieve the Savarkar and Golwalkar's *Hindu Rashtra* (Hindu State) RSS had to step into party politics.<sup>44</sup> RSS was central to the structure and the operations of the party which drew criticism because of the communal nature of the organisation. Dasgupta writes that while on one hand JS appeased Hindu voters, the INC was accused to play Muslim vote-bank politics.<sup>45</sup> The right wing started adapting to the national politics, advertising *Bhartiyata* (Indianness) rather than *Hindutva* (Hinduness) and initial slogans of 'One country, One culture, One nation' received mixed interpretations. Initially, The Bhartiya Jana Sangh called for abolition of the special status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the re-allotment of *Ramjanmabhoomi*,<sup>46</sup> protection of cows, nuclear weapons capability and economic self-reliance.

Dasgupta writes about the rise of JS, "Since Indian democracy is interpreted in terms of communities or groups.....political parties have become a link between identity/community politics.....Sometimes this combination fails to work when one political party creates a space for the majority community and mobilizes the majoritarian sentiments over certain specific issues.....the opponents often call such a party a threat to democracy or, to be precise, a threat to the minorities and those who do not conform to its ideas and practise."<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup> For excerpts of citations and the glorification of Nazi German policies, see Jaffrelot, C. (1996). p. 52-55. For primary source, read Golwalkar M.S., *We, our defined*, Nagpur: Bharat Prakashan, 1939

<sup>44</sup> see Jaffrelot, C. (1996). op.cit. A specific part-building strategy: The Jana Sangh and the R.S.S. network p. 114

<sup>45</sup> Dasgupta, K. (2020). *Electoral Politics and Hindu Nationalism in India*. London: Routledge, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003003861>

<sup>46</sup> Andersen (2017), op.cit.. For an analysis of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, read Paul Beckett and Krishna Pokharel, "Ayodhya: Battle for India's Soul," *Wall Street Journal*, last modified December 10, 2012, <http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/AyodhyaFinalSeries.pdf>.

<sup>47</sup> Dasgupta. Op.cit.

In its short stint till 1977, the Jana Sangh was still a smaller party under the shadows of the opposing Congress and was not able to win more than 35 seats or even 10% of the vote share in five general elections. Although, it marked a beginning of a gradual change of thought that would evolve and strengthened to become one of the very few parties other than INC who have a pan-India appeal.<sup>48</sup>

Eventually, after the emergency imposed by the Indira Gandhi led Congress government in 1975 and the arrest of all major politicians, the JS combined with most left-right-centre parties to form a unified party *Janata Party (JP)* for 1977 general elections.<sup>49</sup> This coming together of various socialists, former congress people and Hindu nationalists was referred to as the J.P. Movement was the first time in modern Indian politics that a non-INC alliance had come to power in the central government.<sup>50</sup> Their manifesto was

...a “Gandhian alternative” that assures the people “both bread and liberty”. Leaning heavily on Gandhian philosophy, the party promises an “open government in a free society” and assures it “will not misuse the intelligence services and governmental authority for personal or partisan ends”.<sup>51</sup>

Jaffrelot writes,

“The JP movement was a veritable godsend for the Jana Sangh leaders, in that it allowed them to get back in step with the Sangathanist network and integrate with a legitimate political opposition through an activist campaign outside the system.”<sup>52</sup>

Candidates of JS won 93 seats (the largest vote share in the Janata party and their largest electoral gain so far) and Lal Krishna Advani and Atal Bihari Vajpayee were given important ministries. Although, the different ideologies of Prime Minister Morarji Desai and Hindu nationalists came to loggerheads and the government collapsed in 1979. Advani and Vajpayee in particular faced criticisms for their alliance with the JP and their resignations followed. The GDP growth rate fell from 7.255% in 1977 to -5.238% in 1979.<sup>53</sup> The first demonetisation,

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<sup>48</sup> Pan-India appeal is evidenced by the electoral outcomes of 2019 Lok Sabha elections and the state assemblies held by the BJP. According to the Election Commission data, the BJP secured 37.76% of the total valid votes polled winning seats in 24 of the 33 states and union territories. The second party by electoral performance would be the INC, which secured 19.7% total valid votes polled but it was able to win more than one seat in only 7 states and U.T.s. Source: <https://eci.gov.in/files/category/1359-general-election-2019/>

<sup>49</sup> See Editorial, February 11, 1977, Forty Years Ago: Janata Manifesto, Indian Express

<sup>50</sup> see Jaffrelot, C. (1996). op.cit. “The Hindu Nationalists in the ‘J.P. movement’” p. 255

<sup>51</sup> See Editorial, op.cit.

<sup>52</sup> see Jaffrelot, C. (1996). op.cit. “The Hindu Nationalists in the ‘J.P. movement’” p. 266

<sup>53</sup> World Bank Data, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=IN>

regulation of foreign investment which led to the departure of large MNCs like Coca-Cola were some reasons for the Desai government downfall.

#### ***2.4 The Bhartiya Janata Party***

On 6<sup>th</sup> April, 1980, following the defeat of Janata Party and resignations of Advani and Vajpayee, the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) was formed as an inheritor of the JP.<sup>54</sup> Vajpayee was sworn in as the founder president of party and there was an effort to modify the party into a national party with an influential standing electorally, reforming the ideology to gain popular sentiment, bring in socio-economic policy changes and an inclusive social appeal. The BJP aspired to be a party of mass-appeal, making a conscious shift away from the explicitly religious and cultural ideologies of Hindutva.<sup>55</sup>

This was the beginning of the time when the BJP moved a towards a ‘centrist’ approach to gain a wider appeal and started incorporating economic policies, employment, agriculture and trade more explicitly in its policies. The explicit Hindu extremism was shunned down, developmental policies of the Janata Party were inherited. The language of politics amongst the right wing changed a bit to align itself to the mass appeal. The party’s principle towards religion is projected as ‘positive secularist’ (*Sarva Dharma Samabhav*), one of the five commitments of the party. The other four being – Gandhian Socialism, democracy, value based politics, nationalism and national integration.<sup>56</sup> The party also directed towards decentralisation of economic and political power. They projected their agenda in a way that it is more inclusive and national rather than religious. They started winning vote-share in the Hindi heartland. Although, this change in conduct, still emphasised on the past glory of ancient India, but the religious angle towards it was toned down at the time.<sup>57</sup> This gain of power marked a beginning of a give and take relationship amongst RSS and BJP, where BJP allowed RSS to function peacefully and in turn running organised grass roots campaigns with the help of RSS cadres.<sup>58</sup> Although, there have been at times disagreements and reservations amongst the RSS, where opting for a less ‘Hindu’ image of the party is seen as weakening of character.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>54</sup> see Jaffrelot, C. (1996) op.cit. “The Impossible Assimilation” p. 313

<sup>55</sup> Andersen (2017). op.cit.

<sup>56</sup> CONSTITUTION AND RULES, BJP, The Election Commission of India, <https://eci.gov.in/files/file/4929-bharatiya-janata-party/>

<sup>57</sup> In the BJP constitution objectives, the idea of lost ancient pride that needs to be regained is visible in the Constitution op.cit.

<sup>58</sup> Datta, R. (1999). Hindu Nationalism or Pragmatic Party Politics? A Study of India’s Hindu Party. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 12(4), 573-588.

<sup>59</sup> In an article published in the *Organiser* in 1983, excerpt, “...BJP has a tendency to play down its Hindu character, nobody need quarrel with its efforts to attract non-Hindus. But many also view it as a certain weakening of character” see Jaffrelot, C. (1996). op.cit. “The contradictions of BJP” p. 327



In its first outing in the 1984 Lok Sabha elections, the INC rode the sympathetic wave of Indira Gandhi's assassination, thus, the BJP secured only 2 seats. But this change in outlook of the party, its transformation, establishment of a high powered working committee, appointment of Advani as the party president in 1986 and *pilgrimages* bore results in the 1989 elections. This rebuilding of the party as a vocally secular entity was accompanied by widespread communal unrest in all parts of India in the years leading to the next elections. Violence was erupting sporadically throughout the country in Gujarat, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh amongst Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. The ruling party was increasingly facing criticism for the *Bofors scam*<sup>60</sup> and minority appeasement in *Shah Bano case*.<sup>61</sup> Hence, the next election was fought on communal issues when the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi invoking the pro Hindu sentiment through Ram Rajya (Lord Rama's kingdom) slogans,<sup>62</sup> a strategy which had provided him with results in the aftermath of Hindu-Sikh riots during 1984 elections. Puri (1990)<sup>63</sup> mentions that these elections were fought on four diverse social issues but the results show that the idea of Hindutva, Hindu consciousness, anti-minorityism emerged as a new dominant force in Indian politics. In 1989, this strategy backfired for Gandhi as the INC lost 207 seats and despite being the highest single majority it refused to form the government. The BJP won a resounding 89 seats and provided outside support to the Janata Dal (JD) candidate V.P. Singh. The 9<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha of 1989 announced the arrival of a Hindu right wing party on the national stage and the BJP had secured its position as a national party with growing influence since.

### **2.5 Ramjanmabhoomi and Rath Yatra**

During the 1989 elections the next challenge for the party was to gain appeal in the rural areas. Having gained political leverage in 1989, the BJP thereafter raised communal issues on the national scene and it had achieved the desired protection for RSS to do so with its government building mandate.<sup>64</sup> The RSS agendas resonated with the initial aspirations of the JS (mentioned earlier), and now, BJP was able to push them politically. Hence, two different yet

<sup>60</sup> Something is very rotten in the Indian gun deal: Sverige Radio, India Today, Cover Story, May 15, 1987 <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/19870515-something-is-very-rotten-in-the-indian-gun-deal-sverige-radio-799726-1987-05-15>

<sup>61</sup> Rajiv Gandhi was criticised for voter appeasement. See, Mohd. Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum [1985] For academic analysis, Austin, G. (2001). Op.cit.

<sup>62</sup> Rajiv Gandhi loses his charismatic touch, V.P. Singh proves to be a formidable campaigner, Inderjit Bhadwar, Prabhu Chawla, India Today, 30<sup>th</sup> November, 1989 <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/19891130-general-elections-1989-rajiv-gandhi-loses-his-charismatic-touch-v.p.-singh-proves-to-be-a-formidable-campaigner-816804-1989-11-30>

<sup>63</sup> The four issues mentioned in the column are "a. Concern for integrity and stability of the country; b. Consciousness of community, caste and hind identities; c. resentment against corruption, scandals and d. Urge for socio-economic equality" Puri, B. (1990). Can Caste, Region and Ideology Stem Hindu Wave? Economic and Political Weekly, 25(1), 15-16. Retrieved from [www.jstor.org/stable/4395767](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4395767)

<sup>64</sup> see Jaffrelot, C. (1996). "The contradictions of BJP" op.cit.

inter-related events were the defining moments of the BJP politics from this period – Ayodhya temple-mosque issue and the Ram Rath Yatra. In this last section of this chapter I would discuss these two landmark events for the BJP, which consolidated the idea of Hindu nationalism as a mainstay force of Indian politics since then.

The decade of 1980s was a time when the BJP made an effort to consolidate popular support by instrumentalisation.<sup>65</sup> This was carried out by different campaigns suggesting historical and nationalist themes. Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), an affiliate Hindu nationalist organisation was the architect of these campaigns and with the political support of BJP and grassroots reach of the RSS, these campaigns gained wide appeal.

These campaigns took the forms of *Yatras* (pilgrimages), long roadshows stretching through several cities and states. These Yatras had a theme and a narrative attached to it and addressed issues that the nationalists wanted to project into the national conversation. Two of the most prominent and important Yatras carried out were *Ekmata Yatra* (1983) (Unity pilgrimage) and *Ram Rath Yatra* (1990) (Rama's chariot pilgrimage).

The first one *Ekatmata Yatra* of 1983, was carried out exclusively by the VHP, who explicitly termed it apolitical often kept away from political connections condemning Vajpayee and Indira in the same sentence.<sup>66</sup> It comprised of several small and long pilgrimages all throughout the country, the longest one starting from Pashupati Nath temple in Nepal to Rameshwaram, a coastal city by the Bay of Bengal in Tamil Nadu.<sup>67</sup> This yatra called for all Hindu sects of the country to band together and symbols of *Punya Bhoomi* (Holy Land) signify *Matra Bhoomi* (motherland) as well. The creation of a Hindu *Ekta* (Unity) was publicised as apolitical but VHP was organising this campaign with RSS support and resources.

The second Yatra of 1990 was a much more politicised pilgrimage carried out by LK Advani. The growth of the BJP politically in 1989 elections made a way for the leaders to come forward and raise the issue of creating a Hindu temple at the apparent birthplace of Hindu deity 'Rama' at the same place a Mosque called Babri masjid, constructed by Mughals after the name of their first emperor. Now, the historical facts around this contested land are neither proven nor in

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> "VHP-organised Ekaimata Yagna to roll across India with 92 religious caravans". India Today ISSUE DATE: November 30, 1983 Excerpt: *She is Bharatmata or Mother India, admitted last fortnight into the Hindu pantheon of 33 crore divinities ..... The Kathmandu-Rameswaram trail is only one of the three main yatras (marches) and 89 upayatras (shorter marches) that will criss-cross the country this fortnight, traversing three lakh of India's five villages, covering well over 50,000 miles ..... It is organised by Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), which claims a membership of 350,000 "*

question here. Romila Thapar<sup>68</sup> addresses the “ahistoricality” of this issue and the epic of ‘Ramayana’ highlighting the fact that myths and epics in India have played a role in forming ahistorical non-linear pasts.

The motivations and consequences of the pilgrimage go beyond the just the dispute over the land. The erstwhile JP government had set up the *Mandal Commission*<sup>69</sup> during its short tenure. The commission report completed in 1983, was not implemented until August. This report directed to provide 27% reservations for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in governmental and public sector entities, who according to the report comprised 52% of total Indian population. This would lead to a total of 49% reservations in the public sector. The report faced a lot of criticism on its factual basis as well as its directives.<sup>70</sup> Wide-spread student protests and incidents of self-immolation were reported.<sup>71</sup>

At the time, the BJP comprised of people who belonged to the higher Hindu castes and this decision did not resonate with the party and affiliated sects comprised of upper class votes. The directives of Mandal commission report would not allow the BJP to increase its influence in the countryside as the rural voter would be swayed by the new reservation paradigms.<sup>72</sup> Malik and Singh (1992) make an argument that the implementation of the report in 1989 was also a strategic move by the VP Singh government to cut down the growing voter base of the BJP.

Hence, the Rama Rath Yatra had importance for the BJP, as it hoped to raise the issue of Ayodhya, which resonated with the rural classes. Taking a journey on a ‘chariot’ headed by L.K. Advani through the Hindi heartland of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh with an estimated 150,000 *kar-sevaks* (party workers) following and a lot more people joining sent a political statement across the country. Although, Advani was arrested when the Yatra reached Bihar on charges of inciting communalism and divide amongst people, his followers went on to reach Ayodhya. They were met by armed forces at the Babri masjid site and partial damage to the mosque was successful. After the events of 1990, the BJP had gained an ideological appeal for the masses and strengthened their vote bank in the Hindi belt.<sup>73</sup> Hence, BJP withdrew

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<sup>68</sup> Romila Thapar,(1989)op.cit

<sup>69</sup> *The Mandal Commission report*, Part I&II, National Commission for Backward Classes, Government of India, 1980 Retrieved from: [http://www.ncbc.nic.in/User\\_Panel/UserView.aspx?TypeID=1161](http://www.ncbc.nic.in/User_Panel/UserView.aspx?TypeID=1161)

<sup>70</sup> Kumar, D. (1992). The Affirmative Action Debate in India. *Asian Survey*, 32(3), 290-302. doi:10.2307/2644940

See also, Śrīrāma Maheśvarī. (1991). *The Mandal Commission and Mandalisation : A critique*. New Delhi: Concept Pub.

<sup>71</sup> For more details, see the cases of Rajeev Goswami and others. “Burnout in obscurity - Forgotten anti-mandal face fades”, *The Telegraph*, Feb. 24, 2004. <https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/burnout-in-obscurity-forgotten-anti-mandal-face-fades/cid/768279>

<sup>72</sup> Malik, Y., & Singh, V. (1992). *Bharatiya Janata Party: An Alternative to the Congress (I)?* *Asian Survey*, 32(4), 318-336. doi:10.2307/2645149

<sup>73</sup> see Jaffrelot, C. (1996). op.cit. “Making of a Hindu Vote” p. 377

its support to the JD government and emerged as the second largest party (after INC with 252 seats) bagging 121 seats in the 10<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha.

Finally 6<sup>th</sup> December 1992, around 150,000 VHP supporters incited by Hindutva leaders (Advani, Uma Bharti, Ram Manohar Lohia) stormed the Babri Masjid, and despite police and military being present were able to demolish the mosque inciting Hindu-Muslim violence all over the country again. India's longest truth commission enquiry, the Liberhan commission found a number of prominent BJP and VHP leaders culpable for the events of 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1992.<sup>74</sup>

## 2.6 Summary

Having established the early years of BJP, its values, its beliefs, the revisionist historical history it propagates, I have been able to make some important observations relevant for further chapters. This chapter analysed the politics of Hindu nationalists, the instrumentalism and polarisation of the socio-economically backward classes. We can see a clear flow of a similar ideology that was synthesised by Savarkar, which has been able to proliferate on a wider scale. This chapter also establishes that although there have been differences of opinion amongst the nationalists but common goals (Ramjanmabhoomi, Kashmir etc.) set up by the JS in the 50s are an essential in keeping all the sects together.

Another important observation is the structure of the Sangh Parivar, different entities complement each other and creates a well-oiled machinery. For example but not limited to, the BJP is the political voice, the RSS is the human resource grass-roots organisation and the VHP provides the ideological input. This structured has flowed from JS to BJP but the driving principles have stayed the same. Finally, the most important point to notice is the dichotomy of secular and inclusive ideals that the constitution of the BJP promotes. But since, its inception, it has addressed the same issues that the nationalists wanted to through the JS. The evolution has not been in principles, but how to disseminate the existing principles in a manner that would ensure vote polarisation and increased electoral performance. This evolution has thus brought success for the Hindu nationalists.

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<sup>74</sup> ANANTH, V. (2010). Liberhan Commission: A Critical Analysis. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 45(4), 12-16. Retrieved from [www.jstor.org/stable/25664036](http://www.jstor.org/stable/25664036)

## Chapter 3

### *3.1 Neoliberalism in India*

Neoliberalism is the ideology that supports the claim that economic liberalism and free market capitalism lead to capital multiplication and economic prosperity. Role of the state in an ideal neoliberal economy is relegated to ensure that all the norms and laws are held up with little to no influence in the functioning of the market.

India is a developing country with 25.70% and 13.70% of rural and urban populations respectively being under the poverty line amounting to 21.92% of the national average.<sup>75</sup> In 1990-91 this percentage was close to 35%.<sup>76</sup> Hence, having a large population under the poverty line, Indian economy was built on a socialist model of state welfare after independence and intense state involvement in the economy. By 1975, this model stopped producing sufficient results and the economy went into decline. Desai (2012) writes there was an understanding amongst the Indian leaders and the elite to bring in economic reforms.<sup>77</sup> This chapter will discuss how the political discourse of economic reforms has been politicised and the neoliberal reforms that were brought in the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were overshadowed in the political sphere. Another important aspect of this chapter is how the right wing has embraced neoliberal politics to their advantage incorporating it in their ideology. Lastly, I will analyse the economic policies of the Vajpayee governments from 1996-2004 and Modi's model of Gujarat, till he arrived on the national stage.

### *3.2 The economic policies of 1991*

The first step towards neoliberalism in India started in 1975, when Indira Gandhi started adopting more pro-business and anti-labour strategy.<sup>78</sup> Before this shift, virtually all big industries were run by the state or with high rate of intervention from the state. Import taxes were high, the permits difficult to get and hence, Indian economy was very isolated from the world. FDI and import of technology was further discouraged and controlled strictly by the government. The economy grew at a substantial rate of around 4% for the first 15 years but Ahluwalia (2019) states that the negative effects of these policies and slow comparative growth rate to other south-east Asian countries became evident by 1970s. Thus the Congress

<sup>75</sup> These are the figures of the fiscal year 2011-12 and calculates poverty by MRP consumption. This data is retrieved from an RBI report of 16 Sept, 2013. <https://web.archive.org/web/20140407102043/http://www.rbi.org.in/scripts/PublicationsView.aspx?id=15283>

<sup>76</sup> Reserve Bank of India Statistics,

<https://rbi docs.rbi.org.in/rdocs/Publications/PDFs/14TABLE9AA846828C16454182612FF9B7172C0F.PDF>

<sup>77</sup> Desai, M. (2012). Parties and the Articulation of Neoliberalism: From "The Emergency" to Reforms in India, 1975–1991. In *Political Power and Social Theory* (Vol. 23, pp. 27-63). Emerald Group Publishing Limited

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

governments under Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi brought incremental rather than structural reforms in the next decade and a half.<sup>79</sup>

The economic policy change brought in 1991 by the P. V. Narasimha Rao government was the first structural change and establishing of neoliberal ethics. The economy was about to collapse due to the a high balance of payments deficit, increasing inflation, foreign exchange reserves were at \$1.1 billion by the end of June 1991 and constant currency devaluation.<sup>80</sup> The economy was running out of liquidity and the government looked towards IMF, who set conditions of economic reforms for injection of liquidity in the economy. Hence, the new government brought in *classic stabilization programme consisting of a reduction in the fiscal deficit and a currency devaluation*.<sup>81</sup> Loans were negotiated with the IMF, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank in order to give the economy a direction in which it can fulfil its potential.

As evidenced, India being a largely poor country, the INC depended on the populist politics. There was a reluctance about how these substantial policy changes will be perceived by the people and thus, it would affect the vote bank. Hence, Kohli (2007) argues that the government chose to indulge in matters of ethnic populism as well, simultaneously bringing in the said pro-business changes in the economy. To quote Kohli, "*Indira Gandhi's flirtation with ethnic politics in this period, especially Hindu chauvinism and interfering with Sikh politics, marked the new political economy*".<sup>82</sup>

Hence, it was not only the right wing that used ethnic politics but also the dominant political party at the time. Desai (Ibid.) asks why political techniques had to take the form of ethnic politics in this period. Varshney (1998) has presented an argument that I would use, he says that these ethnic and religious issues gave a 'niche' to the politicians to push in the economic reforms, because otherwise they would have met with much political resistance.<sup>83</sup> This claim is evidenced by the largest ever survey of mass political attitudes conducted in India. In 1996, only 19% of the electorate had knowledge of economic reforms that had been brought in almost half a decade ago and 75-80% electorate had caught up with the discourse around

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<sup>79</sup> I have explained the changes that are relevant to the thesis. To get more explanation of the reforms, read p. 48 from Ahluwalia, M.S. (2019), India's Economic Reforms: Achievements and Next Steps. Asian Economic Policy Review, 14: 46-62. doi:10.1111/aep.12239

<sup>80</sup> Saxena, S., & Cerra, V. (2000). IMF Working Paper: What Caused the 1991 Currency Crisis in India?. USA: INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5089/9781451857481.001>

<sup>81</sup> Ahluwalia Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Kohli, A. (2007). State, business, and economic growth in India. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 42, 87–114.

<sup>83</sup> Ashutosh Varshney (1998) Mass politics or elite politics? india's economic reforms in comparative perspective, *The Journal of Policy Reform*, 2:4, 301-335, DOI: 10.1080/13841289808523388. He notes, "*Theoretically speaking, this view is precisely the opposite of the so-called instrumentalist argument about ethnicity, which has typically seen ethnic politics as an expression of economic conflicts. In ethnically divided countries, the relationship may well be the reverse.*"

*Ramjanmabhoomi* and subsequent demolition of the Babri masjid in Ayodhya.<sup>84</sup> This contrasting data does not tell us why was it so, but it surely evidences the fact the in popular political discourse, ethnically originated issues held more power in vote mobilization.

The BJP advocated a move away from Nehruvian socialism and towards a model that is pro-market, promotes self-sufficiency (*swadeshi*) and Gandhian socialism. This idea that incorporates Indian values of *swadeshi*, Gandhian socialism and also keeps a pro-market approach, was the beginning of the Hindu right's tryst with neoliberalism. The BJP's main aim in the 1980s was to consolidate mass appeal and this balance of discourses helped them to gather elite and poor classes alike. The elite classes were mobilized by this new pro-business, self-sufficient (*swadeshi*) neoliberalism and the lower class majority of the country was mobilized on ethnic grounds and Hindu-Muslim conflicts.<sup>85</sup>

### ***3.3 The years of Vajpayee***

The BJP under Atal Bihari Vajpayee contested three Lok Sabha polls through 1996-1999 due to hung houses and no stable governments on the first two occasions. At this time Indian politics had become a system of a considerable number of political parties contesting for power, leading to a number of coalition governments till 2014. Although, it appears to be that the two largest political parties (INC and BJP) had a rather common stance towards market reforms when they were in power, this claim is arguable when looked at closely.

After the reforms of 1991, there were many different opinions amongst and within political parties.<sup>86</sup> The BJP had condemned the liberalisation before 1996 with the support of Swadeshi Jagaran Manch (SJM). Although, the first decision that Vajpayee government made when elected was to open the economy to foreign investment in the insurance sector which was nationalised until this point. Thus, the BJP government of the time faced similar kind of opposition that the earlier INC governments had faced up until now. Both governments faced criticism from the right (SJM) and the left (the communist parties). The situation is categorised as a TINA (there is no alternative) consensus where due to a lack of an alternative, a consensus seems to emerge which is not certainly true.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Yadav, Yogendra, and V.B. Singh (1996), "Maturing of a Democracy", India Today August 31, 1996. Survey was conducted by Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), New Delhi and reported by Yadav and Singh in India Today.

<https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/19960831-icssr-csds-india-today-poll-an-attempt-to-vivisect-the-political-mind-of-india-834389-1996-08-31>

<sup>85</sup> Varshney, 1998, Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Thakurta, P. (2002). Ideological Contradictions in an Era of Coalitions: Economic Policy Confusion in the Vajpayee Government. Global Business Review, 3(2), 201-223.

<sup>87</sup> Thakurta, 2002, Ibid. p. 202

The wide variety of opinion made these definitions of privatisation and swadeshi for different parties at different times. Vajpayee had lobbied against the 1991 reforms until coming to power in 1996 and in 1998 he was redefining his version of swadeshi in front of the annual session of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). He said that swadeshi does not mean ‘we don’t value foreign direct investment’. He believed that India needed foreign investment in the economy so that it does not isolate itself after gaining nuclear weapons. He spoke in a neoliberal fashion, announcing policies to reduce state involvement in the market and ‘reforming the reforms’ of ’91, which he believed were not ‘backed by checks and balances’.<sup>88</sup> By September, 1998 the tensions between the Vajpayee government and ‘the sangh parivar’ were rife and the BJP had explicitly distanced itself from the SJM citing difference of opinions, Now, SJM had become a voice against neoliberalism and big business in India and their list of grievances grew.<sup>89</sup> There were oppositions to businesses like foreign companies in tobacco industry, the partnership between Japanese Suzuki motor company and Indian cooperative Maruti and giving a tender to an Italian company rather than state owned Public sector Undertaking (PSU) Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL).

Another important point of conversation here is privatisation of the PSUs which generated a huge debate. Thakurta has lauded the then finance minister Yashwant Sinha in presenting the budget of 1998 (which he terms as second wave of reforms). This budget he notes,

“...was not excessively protectionist to pander to the wishes of the proponents of ‘swadeshi’ nor was it aimed at those who assemble at the Swiss ski resort of Davos every year..”

Now, privatisation for the PSUs in the economic policy was done through disinvestment, rather than opening them up to the markets. Disinvestment, is the approach where the PSUs buy each other’s shares and the ownership exchanges hands amongst the PSUs themselves. There was an effort to bring down its budget deficit by receiving funds from ‘disinvesting’ the most profitable PSUs, Oil and Natural Gas Cooperation (ONGC) and Indian Oil Corporation (IOC). The critics such as Manmohan Singh (Finance Minister of India in 1991) argued that instead of increasing profitability this step hindered potential long term investment gains.

Thus, the points to note from this section that would be helpful for analysis in the next chapter are the disinvestment of PSUs, the Indian economic policies of disinvestment, opposing

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid. for a full list of measure announced by Vajpayee during his first public interaction with industrialists, Vajpayee's April Promises At CII, the Outlook magazine, November 9, 1998, <https://www.outlookindia.com/magazine/story/vajpayees-april-promises-at-cii/206510/?next>

<sup>89</sup> Full list of major SJM movement activity, official website, SJM <https://swadeshionline.in/page/movement>



ideologies of other political parties and the role of the Sangh parivar in the economic policies of the BJP.

### ***3.4 Rise of Narendra Damodardas Modi – The Chief Minister of Gujarat***

According to his website, Narendra Damodardas Modi was born on 17<sup>th</sup> September, 1950 in Vadnagar, a small town in northern Gujarat.<sup>90</sup> His biography on his website states that he was born in a family that lived on the margins of the society and they struggled to make ends meet. His father was a roadside tea seller in the town and a young Narendra Modi worked for his father as tea seller initially. This first profession of has been politicised quite a bit by his proponents and opponents using this narrative of- *Chaiwala* (tea seller) to the Prime Minister of India seems to be inspiring.

He is described as a man of spirituality and a follower of Swami Vivekananda's writings (a spiritual revolutionary of late 19<sup>th</sup> century). He joined RSS in 1970 at the age of 20 and by 1972 was a full time *Pracharak* (Volunteer). He was active on a grassroots level during the emergency and the JP movement. Modi eventually joined BJP in 1987 and actively participated in BJP campaigns like Advani's Rath Yatra in 1990 and Murli Manohar Joshi's Ekta Yatra in 1992.

His first stint as the Chief Minister of Gujarat came at the back of his work on the grassroots campaigns of the BJP. In 2001, he was offered the post of Deputy Chief Minister in the Keshubhai Patel government but he turned it down demanding full power in Gujarat which led to him becoming the Chief Minister for the first time. His website describes him as a spiritual and secular man devoted completely to the service of his organisation and country.

He was the CM of his state until 2014 when he renounced his seat for his national political ambitions. His model of development and industrialisation in Gujarat was praised internationally<sup>91</sup> making him an ideal candidate to take on a national leadership role. In 2001, Modi inherited the state of Gujarat in dire situation of negative growth rate, a result of the aftermath of the disastrous earthquake in Bhuj, Gujarat. From here on for the rest of the decade the economy of Gujarat grew at a faster pace than the rest of the country.<sup>92</sup> Ghazal & Roy (2014) have analysed the growth rates of Gujarat on a wider time period and compared it to growth rates of the state and the country since 1980s. They conclude that the state of Gujarat

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<sup>90</sup> His website provides data about him and his personal life, <https://www.narendramodi.in/humble-beginnings-the-early-years>

<sup>91</sup> Foreign participants sing paeans of Gujarat model of development, The Financial Express, 12<sup>th</sup> January, 2013.

<sup>92</sup> Ghatak, Maitreesh & Roy, Sanchari. (2014). Did Gujarat's growth rate accelerate under Modi?.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/291565482\\_Did\\_Gujarat's\\_growth\\_rate\\_accelerate\\_under\\_Modi](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/291565482_Did_Gujarat's_growth_rate_accelerate_under_Modi)

had been experiencing higher growth rates than the rest of India all through the last two decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The negative annual growth rate of 2001 was an outlier which was caused due to a natural calamity. Post 2001, the growth rate corrected itself to its pre-2001 standards and Modi was applauded for doing so. It's argued that this correction and subsequent linear growth rate is not necessarily because of the hyped 'Modi effect' as there is no data to suggest so.

Jaffrelot (2015) argues that this model of economic growth does not depict the development of the state in the Modi's leadership.<sup>93</sup> His argument is that political economy of Gujarat had been, ".....based on some co-operation between capitalists, politicians and bureaucrats, at the expense of labour, whose wages have been low since the decline of the trade unions."<sup>94</sup> The state did not show the same level of progress in human developmental indices (HDI) when compared to other states and the state spending for education and healthcare figuring amongst the bottom of the national list.<sup>95</sup> It is argued that this model of growth comes at the cost of development and social inequality, with disproportionate amounts of the budgets allocated to the lower classes.<sup>96</sup> Dalits (lower-castes) represented 7.1% of the state's population and never allocated more than 4% of the budget. Land allocation for SCs and STs was also carried out disproportionately. The overall indebtedness of the rural households increased (from 35% in 1999-2000 to 56% in 2004-05) but for Dalits (44.8% to 62.5%) and Adivasis (Tribes) (32.9% to 60.1%) this increase was much greater.<sup>97</sup>

The story is similar for Muslims who had suffered sporadic communal violence in the state (especially in Godhra, 2002) and data shows that they were under-represented in industrial sector (21% all India, 13% for Gujarat) and government jobs when compared nationally. We see a high employment rate for Muslims in the informal sector (51% compared to 39% Hindus) which shows over-representation. This divide in employment can be attributed to the education level of Gujarati Muslims as only 26% cleared matriculation.<sup>98</sup>

His strategy of catering to the majority middle class, increasing his popular appeal and to saturate the public sphere via the media was instrumental in this process.<sup>99</sup> The BJP was able to attract the middle class to the principles of Hindu nationalism. Nandy writes that,

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<sup>93</sup> Christophe Jaffrelot (2015) What 'Gujarat Model'?—Growth without Development—and with Socio-Political Polarisation, South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies, 38:4, 820-838, DOI: 10.1080/00856401.2015.1087456

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. p.822

<sup>95</sup> Reserve Bank of India, 'State Finances: A Study of Budgets' [<http://www.rbi.org.in/scripts/PublicationsView.aspx?idD14835>]

<sup>96</sup> Jaffrelot, 2015. Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Government of India, Rural Labour Enquiry Report on Indebtedness among Rural Labour Households (Round of N.S.S.) 200405

(Shimla/Chandigarh: Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2010), p. 59 [[http://labourbureau.nic.in/RLE\\_Indebtedness\\_RLH\\_2004\\_05.pdf](http://labourbureau.nic.in/RLE_Indebtedness_RLH_2004_05.pdf)]

<sup>98</sup> Jaffrelot, 2015, pg.827

<sup>99</sup> Jaffrelot, 2015, Ibid. p.828

“Recovering Gujarat from its urban middle class would not be easy. The class has found in militant religious nationalism a new self-respect and a new virtual identity as a martial community.....In Gujarat this class has smelt blood, for it does not have to do the killings but can plan, finance and coordinate them with impunity.”<sup>100</sup>

He also says that the middle class receives supports from non-residential Indians and controls the media and television, describing them as ‘hate factories’. Elsewhere Jaffrelot has said that Modi has ignored the groups of Adviasis, Dalits, SCs, STs, Muslims and other minorities and concentrated wholly on the middle class majority- the ‘*neo-middle class*’ which has been sufficient for him to win elections.<sup>101</sup> A CSDS survey suggests that the richer the the middle class gets the more likely they are to vote for BJP than anyone else.<sup>102</sup>

### ***3.5 Chapter Summary***

This data shows that while the state of Gujarat was growing economically, the social divide was increasing and was not addressed. The Modi governments catered to the needs of the upper middle-class and industrialists who combined to make a large portion of their vote-bank. An Indian Express-CNN-IBS-CSDS Gujarat poll survey in 2007 reported that 34% of the voters in Gujarat considered his leadership style ‘dictatorial’.<sup>103</sup> Modi implemented the minimal government policies in Gujarat and has used the same model on a national level. The repercussions of these policies on the national level will be discussed in the next chapter.

## ***Chapter 4 – The Modi Era***

This chapter aims to bring together the themes prevalent in the previous three chapters to make an analysis of the research question and the sub questions. We have developed an understanding of the proliferation of Hindutva on a national scale, India’s move towards neoliberal policies, the role of the earlier BJP governments in the discourse and Narendra Modi and his model of Gujarat. Moving on, in this chapter we would see how Modi has developed

<sup>100</sup> Ashis Nandy, ‘Blame the Middle Class’, The Times of India (Ahmedabad edition) (8 Jan. 2008)

<sup>101</sup> Jaffrelot, C. (2013). Gujarat Elections: The Sub-Text of Modi’s ‘Hattrick’—High Tech Populism and the ‘Neo-middle Class’. *Studies in Indian Politics*, 1(1), 79-95.

<sup>102</sup> The survey suggests that in voting patterns for the BJP in 2007 and 2012 state assembly elections the BJP gets on an average 60% of the upper class vote, Congress 31% while for the poor these numbers for the BJP fall to 44% for the BJP and rises to 43% for the Congress.

Gujarat Assembly Election 2012: Post Poll Survey by Lokniti’, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, p. 13 [http://www.lokniti.org/pdfs\_dataunit/Questionairs/gujarat-postpoll-2012-survey- findings.pdf]

<sup>103</sup> Dictating the Trend’, The Indian Express (27 Nov. 2007) [http://www.indianexpress.com/news/dictating-the- trend/243904/]

his ideology and electoral strategy (appeasing the middle class) through his economic promises and proliferating Hindutva and creating a unique national environment that suits his politics.

#### ***4.1 The 2014 Lok Sabha Election- The Saffron Wave***

The 2014 Lok Sabha election was a very essential one for Indian politics in the sense that it was the first time since 1984 that a single party had gained a majority in terms of seats and the first time it was someone other than that to do so. The 16<sup>th</sup> LS election saw the highest number of voter registrations (884 million) and turnouts (554 million).<sup>104</sup> The 2014 LS election was contested on the issues of corruption within the UPA (Congress led United Progressive Alliance), a call for change, the middle class, the future image of India etc. In this section of the chapter, we would discuss these factors individually to analyse the impact of the 2014 elections.

(a) *The shortcomings of the UPA:* The UPA government came into power in 2004, under the leadership Mrs. Sonia Gandhi of the Gandhi-Nehru family. Manmohan Singh was appointed to the post of Prime Minister after the election. He had been Indian Finance Minister in 1991 and was instrumental in bringing in the open market reforms. A former governor of the Reserve bank of India, Deputy Chairman of the planning commission and Chief economic advisor to the Prime Minister, Singh had the credentials and academic acumen to be in office but his lack of electoral politics experience was criticised.

Over the course of following ten years in power, the UPA passed several legislations including the Right to Information (RTI) Act in 2005-06, National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in 2005-06, Right to Education Act in 2009, Lokpal Bill in 2013, National Food security act in 2013 to name a few. It is deducible that the legislations and the bills being passed were focused on providing education, rural employment and food security while making the state activity more transparent to the public. These legislations can be termed to be socialist in nature as state welfare schemes were passed to lift people out of poverty.

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<sup>104</sup> Voter turnout percentage: 66.4% (Highest recorded thus far); Women's voter turnout from 55.82 per cent in 2009 to 65.3 per cent. Jaffrelot, Christophe. 'Explaining the 2014 Lok Sabha Elections: Introduction'. *Studies in Indian Politics* 3, no. 1 (2015): 5–6. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2321023015575209>.

On the economic front, the economy registered its highest growth rates in 2008 and then observed a slowdown by 2012.<sup>105</sup> The unemployment rates rose and the government projects were stalled which led to inflation in government spending. The UPA was hit by a number of corruption scandals involving large sums of money and party leaders at higher positions.<sup>106</sup>

The mistrust between the people and the government grew which led to widespread protests led by Anna Hazare (former peasant turned activist). The Indian anti-corruption movement was led by Hazare in 2011 when he announced an indefinite fast for Lokpal Bill to be passed.<sup>107</sup> Hazare's movement was a social movement rather than a political one, some members of the movement defected to form Aam Aadmi Party led by former IAS officer Arvind Kejriwal although the party did not perform very well in the elections.

Hence, by 2014 elections the UPA alliance underwent an identity crisis, tainted by a number of high-profile corruption scandals, questioned 'leadership' etc.<sup>108</sup> This political atmosphere around the incumbent regime (lack of authority and mistrust) could be attributed to be one of the reasons why the BJP was able to mobilise the sentiment.<sup>109</sup> The BJP benefitted from the lack of an alternative electoral choice in the elections as other parties possessed a regional or a state level appeal.

*(b) The Saffron Wave- The narrative of 'Achhe din'* - After his third consecutive win in 2012 Gujarat state elections it became more and more likely that BJP would choose Modi as their prime ministerial candidate in the upcoming LS polls. After intense deliberation amongst the party high command Modi was chosen as the Prime Minister candidate over stalwart Advani.<sup>110</sup> Modi was expected to introduce his 'model of development' in Gujarat on a national level and pull the economy back into an accelerating position. The manifesto of the party focused on themes of national integration, inclusive growth (Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas), 'Ek Bharat, Shrestha Bharat' (One India, Great India) and tackling corruption, employment and

<sup>105</sup> "The average growth rate under four governments since 1999 were-- NDA I - 5.68 per cent, UPA I - 8.36% UPA II - 7.68% and NDA II - 7.35 per cent (four years)," Chidambaram tweeted." National Herald. "Economy Grew in Double Digits Twice during UPA Decade": Govt Panel". <https://www.nationalheraldindia.com/india/economy-grew-in-double-digits-twice-during-upa-decade-govt-panel>.

<sup>106</sup> Some important scams are CWG scam, Coal scam, 2G spectrum Scam amongst others. India Today has compiled a list of nine important corruption instances of the UPA years. India Today. 'UPA Report Card: Nine Years, Nine Scams'. Accessed 23 June 2020. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/photo/upa-govt-9-years-9-scams-sonia-manmohan-369868-2013-05-22>.

<sup>107</sup> 'Fast Stokes Anti-Corruption Anger'. BBC News, 7 April 2011, sec. South Asia. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12994855>.

<sup>108</sup> Padmanabhan, Anil. '2004 to 2014—India's Lost Decade'. Livemint, 10 January 2014. <https://www.livemint.com/Opinion/pJn6VtNuSyLCIkQFwx5OqN/2004-to-2014Indias-lost-decade.html>.

<sup>109</sup> Priya Chacko & Peter Mayer (2014) The Modi lahar (wave) in the 2014 Indian national election: A critical realignment?, Australian Journal of Political Science, 49:3, 518-528, DOI: 10.1080/10361146.2014.937392

<sup>110</sup> Inde, Ramalingam Vallinayagam, correspondent à Chennai. 'India : Narendra Modi nominated BJP's Prime Ministerial candidate'. Le Journal International - Archives. Accessed 29 June 2020. [https://www.lejournalinternational.fr/India-Narendra-Modi-nominated-BJP-s-Prime-Ministerial-candidate\\_a1273.html](https://www.lejournalinternational.fr/India-Narendra-Modi-nominated-BJP-s-Prime-Ministerial-candidate_a1273.html).

policy paralysis. While promoting the middle class, transforming India into a developed industrial power and an aim to “build a modern, prosperous and vibrant India - based on our ethos and values.”<sup>111</sup>

(c) *The Campaign*- This campaign was fought on a national and a local level alike. Issues of national importance like price rise, corruption and policy paralysis were raised and on a state level a stiff opposition to the incumbent state governments and regional parties was presented.<sup>112</sup> For example, the most important case of UP, a state where BJP had seldom achieved political success in the past. The most populous and a lesser developed state of the country holds 80 of the 543 seats which gives it its said importance. Like other states the BJP attacked the incumbent ruling state government led by Samajwadi Party (SP) and Congress alike. Since 2013, Modi’s close aide Amit Shah was tasked to build the campaign from a village level in the state, creating and strengthening party structures on a local level spreading the ‘message of a Hindu identity, Modi’s leadership and encashing the anti-incumbency’.<sup>113</sup>

Sheela Bhatt writes,

“Shah knew his critics were right when they said he did not know UP. He was new to the land of the Ganga. .... Shah travelled 93,000 km by road and rail in the last one year. In all he spent 142 nights in villages and towns of different UP districts. Everywhere he ensured he had dinner of saunf-khichdi-chaas (fennel-rice and lentils-buttermilk) in workers' homes. In 52 districts, he addressed big meetings. He called another 40 or so meetings to touch all 80 constituencies.”<sup>114</sup>

Modi himself contested from the seat of Varanasi, UP (One of the holiest Hindu cities). Eventually, the BJP won 71 out of the 80 seats which propelled it to gain a national majority. A similar campaign strategy was used in other states, targeting the national issues, local incumbencies and creating a grassroots reach and their performance improved considerably in the states which were not traditional strongholds (West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh etc.). The kind

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<sup>111</sup> BJP Election manifesto, ‘Manifesto2014highlights.Pdf’. <http://cdn.narendramodi.in/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Manifesto2014highlights.pdf>. See also, ‘What Promises Did the BJP Make in Its 2014 Manifesto’. Accessed 29 June 2020. <https://www.businesstoday.in/current/economy-politics/what-promises-did-the-bjp-make-in-its-2014-manifesto/story/334812.html>.

<sup>112</sup> Chacko & Meyer (2014) Ibid.p.522

<sup>113</sup> Bhatt, S. 2014. Exclusive: How Amit Shah engineered the UP revolution. Rediff 16 May. URL:

<http://www.rediff.com/news/special/exclusive-ls-election-how-amit-shah-engineered-the-up-revolution/20140516.htm>.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

of self-promotion that Modi undertook, fitting the Gujarat model with every state he went to, vernacularizing the campaign, talking about local heroes and issues relevant to the places.<sup>115</sup>

Along with the traditional ways of campaigning, social media activity of political parties were high. The rise of social media made it a substantive tool to mobilise votes, generate funds and connect with the people. This was the most ‘mediatised’ and the political environment most disintermediated so far.<sup>116</sup> The BJP had been one of the most active parties in the internet, they had a website since 1998 and had used the internet in the 2009 LS elections as well.<sup>117</sup> BJP studied the Obama (2008) and the Australian elections to adopt modern innovative techniques to mobilise votes through the internet.<sup>118</sup> Narendra Modi joined social media early in 2009, and he was a popular social media personality even before his candidacy was announced. Although, there is no proved correlation between social media activity (posts, likes, shares, engagement etc.) and actual number of votes influenced yet, some indicators believe that online social media presence can swing votes by as much as 3-4%.<sup>119</sup> Social media reaches directly to the middle class youth and acts as a good tool to influence the young vote. The analysis by Kanungo (2015) reveals that the BJP along with AAP was the most active party in the polls. A study by Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and IRIS knowledge foundation on *Social media and Lok Sabha elections*<sup>120</sup> analysing the impact of Facebook on the polls, classified as many as 160 out of the 523 as high impact and 67 as medium impact. Although, Chakravarty (2014) has written that 70% of the winning candidates had a minimal social media presence due to their limited outreach of less than 10,000 users.<sup>121</sup> According to the data, Modi alone had a reach of 25 million users during the elections. On Facebook, the BJP had the highest average post likes per day in spite of being only fourth in terms of total posts with 348 posts in the election period (behind AAP-610, CPI(M)-595, NCP-480).<sup>122</sup> According to the regression analysis by Barclay et al. the BJP recorded a strong correlation of 0.828 with the election results

<sup>115</sup> He spoke about J.P. Narayan in Bihar in Oct. 2013, ‘One rank, one pension scheme at Army Base in Rewari etc. For a detail and more examples, see p. 156 in Jaffrelot, C. (2015). The Modi-centric BJP 2014 election campaign: New techniques and old tactics. *Contemporary South Asia: SPECIAL ISSUE ON INDIAN ELECTIONS 2014: EXPLAINING THE LANDSLIDE*, 23(2), 151-166.

<sup>116</sup> Palshikar, Suhas. (2014). Modi media and the middle class. *Seminar*, 656(April). Retrieved 23 February 2015, from [http://www.india-seminar.com/2014/656/656\\_suhas\\_palshikar.htm](http://www.india-seminar.com/2014/656/656_suhas_palshikar.htm)

<sup>117</sup> Kanungo, N. T. (2015). India’s Digital Poll Battle: Political Parties and Social Media in the 16th Lok Sabha Elections. *Studies in Indian Politics*, 3(2), 212–228. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2321023015601743>

<sup>118</sup> Gowen, Annie, and Rama Lakshmi. “Indian Parties Are Using Obama-Style Campaign Tactics as Hundreds of Millions of Voters Head to the Polls.” *Washington Post*, April 7, 2014, sec. World. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/indian-parties-are-using-obama-style-campaign-tactics-in-crucial-election/2014/04/06/db7d4571-8333-4334-b252-3ebd99b25746\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/indian-parties-are-using-obama-style-campaign-tactics-in-crucial-election/2014/04/06/db7d4571-8333-4334-b252-3ebd99b25746_story.html).

<sup>119</sup> Kanungo(2015)op.cit.

<sup>120</sup> IRIS Knowledge Foundation & Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI). (2013). *Social media and Lok Sabha elections*. [http://www.esocialsciences.org/General/A2013412184534\\_19.pdf](http://www.esocialsciences.org/General/A2013412184534_19.pdf)

<sup>121</sup> Chakravarty, Parveen. (2014, August 22). No Facebook and Twitter election. *The Indian Express*, New Delhi, p. 15

<sup>122</sup> Kanungo (2015)op.cit.

and the percentages of fan page ‘likes’.<sup>123</sup> Also, BJP was amongst the least critical parties on social media and the criticism in 59 of its posts was very mild, mainly promoting positive messages of the future. Kanungo writes,

“was very positive in its approach, as evident by slogans like *Achhe Din Aane Wale Hain* (Good times are ahead) and *Ab Ki Bar Modi Sarkar* (This time Modi government). The party wanted to project in social media that Modi government would be synonymous to good governance which will benefit all citizenry.”<sup>124</sup>

Hence, through these various data analyses we see an effect in outreach of the BJP and Modi with the population. Chakravarty’s article tells us that this relation is not on a constituency level but the positive correlation shows that on a national level social media’s reach is beyond constituencies on a virtual level, hence, it can be beneficial. The BJP used it to its merit, reaching a vast number of young urban voters with a quality “well branded” campaign.

(d) *Hindutva in the election*- Modi capitalised on his image and this brand of ‘Achhe din’ (Good days) and ‘Vikas Purush’ (the development man) combined with promises of development, integration and de-centralisation formed the crux of the election strategy. The narrative of Hindu nationalisation took a back seat as the promise of development through neoliberal economic growth came at the back of increasing unemployment and economic slowdown. This narrative created an image of his persona that a vote for Modi is a vote for India, leaving no other political alternative in site. Not to say that the Hindutva element was not present in the election as we see that the BJP awarded only 7 contesting tickets to Muslim. Modi criticised the INC for giving subsidy to cow slaughterhouses (Cow is a sacred animal for Hindus). He visited a number of temples and holy sites in UP, talking about Ram Rajya (Lord Rama’s kingdom), inciting slogans of *Jai Sree Rama* (All hail lord Rama).<sup>125</sup> But we see that this communal mobilisation was more prevalent in UP than in other states. This is interesting to note that UP is a state with a largely rural population and religious symbols attracted more votes in the state, evident by the results.

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<sup>123</sup> For a complete regression analysis of the study, see, Francis P. Barclay, C. Pichandy, Anusha Venkat & Sreedevi Sudhakaran (2015) India 2014: Facebook ‘Like’ as a Predictor of Election Outcomes, *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 23:2, 134-160, DOI: 10.1080/02185377.2015.1020319 (this a study of relationship between results and likes, thus it’s a gauge of popularity and does not imply that social media activity influenced the campaign in anyway)

<sup>124</sup> Kanungo(2015)op.cit.p.219

<sup>125</sup> Christophe Jaffrelot (2015) The Modi-centric BJP 2014 election campaign: new techniques and old tactics op.cit.



To summarise, the narrative of development focused at attracting the middle class, a strong grassroots campaign comprised some factors leading to the BJP's win in 2014. Narendra Modi was able to create a brand out of his persona and the lack of a political alternative on a national level aided this campaign. The BJP managed to consolidated its seats in the central and north of India known as the 'Hindi belt' and despite having only 31% of the total vote share won more than 51% of the seats (lowest vote share for a single majority so far). This election is an example of how the right wing has used the 'narrative' of open markets and neoliberalism coupled with mobilisation of the middle class to attract votes.

#### ***4.2 Economic policies (2014-2019)***

In order to recapitulate, the 2014 LS polls were won on the promises of development and lifting the economy from an economic slowdown. In his first address to the 16<sup>th</sup> LS, President Pranab Mukerjee set up directives to create jobs, increase economic growth, attract private investment, increase labour intensive manufacturing and modify tax laws.<sup>126</sup> Modi called for easing up infrastructure bottlenecks and more business friendly policies. In this section a discussion of the Indian economy in the first term of Modi will be carried out. A discussion of some policy measures which are relevant to our discussion around neoliberalism will be analysed. I use demonetisation, economic growth, investment and public lending, job creation and agriculture as parameters for this analysis.

(a) *Demonetisation*- Demonetisation is an economic policy measure that helps the state to induce money in the formal sector of a highly inflated economy, while trying to formalise the economy by formalising the informal sector to maintain high liquidity.<sup>127</sup> In 2016, all the major denominations of the Indian rupee (Rs. 500 and Rs. 1000) were rendered useless overnight and replaced with new bank notes of Rs. 500 and Rs. 2000.

This move, implemented at the midnight of 8th November 2016, was executed poorly: long lines in front of empty cash machines only harmed the common public and the country's economic growth stumbled as there was no major cash flow in a majorly cash based economy. The economic growth of the country dropped from 8.170% at the beginning of 2016 to 7.160% at the beginning of the next year.<sup>128</sup> A move aimed at recovering black money and counterfeit currency backfired as 99% of the ineffective rupee bills were eventually deposited in the banks

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<sup>126</sup> Mandhana, Niharika. (2014). Modi government unveils roadmap for development.(Prime Minister Narendra Modi's economic policy)(India News). The Wall Street Journal Eastern Edition, p. The Wall Street Journal Eastern Edition, June 10, 2014

<sup>127</sup> Augendra Bhukuth, & Bernard Terrany. (2019)op.cit.

<sup>128</sup> Upadhyay, (2019). Op.cit. p.3

by 2018.<sup>129</sup> There were hardly any long term benefits observed and by 2018 the economy dropped to a four year low.<sup>130</sup> Also, this policy increases the state's involvement in the economy and disrupts the open market economy. In short term the economy comes to a standstill due to state interruption. Thus, we see this is a policy measure pursued by the Modi government that inhibits the free market and increases state involvement.

(b) *Public Sector Lending* - The banking sector problems of bad loans with a number of industrialists declaring bankruptcy and fleeing the country have cost a lot. India has the worst bad loans ratio in the world, where the country has 9.6% bad loans on top of another 2.6% loans under stress. This is followed by Italy, who have a ratio of 8.5% (halved in three years)<sup>131</sup>. In a period of an year, the state has increased the number of bankruptcy solvency cases from 186 cases in June '18 to 445 cases in June '19. The government has taken steps to infuse 2.7 trillion USD into the draining economy along with an effort to merge incompetently function small state banks into bigger banks.<sup>132</sup> After all of this, bank lending to the industry has increased in the Apr-Jun quarter of 2019. This is another policy measure where the promises of decentralisation and privatisation did not translate into active policies. Under the Modi government, much like the previous governments, there is more disinvestment<sup>133</sup> rather than privatisation (which is still largely discouraged).<sup>134</sup> Public sector banks have not been able to recover bad loans and to solve this problem disinvestment follows. This is another important part of the economy that slows down the economic activity.

(c) *Economic growth and Investment*- The Modi government was notable to emulate the economic growth rates achieved by the UPA governments. Although, he inherited a slowing economy, his budgets were not able to curb government expenditures and attract substantial investment.<sup>135</sup> Starting from 7.4% annual GDP growth rate in 2014, reaching a high point of 8.3% in 2016 and then dipping to around 4% by the end of 2019 (lowest since 2008).<sup>136</sup> In terms of foreign investment, as soon as Modi won the elections and announced Make in

<sup>129</sup> Sen, Kunal, Narendra Modi's performance on the Indian economy – five key policies assessed (May 8, 2019) <https://theconversation.com/narendra-modis-performance-on-the-indian-economy-five-key-policies-assessed-116485>

<sup>130</sup> "Report for Selected Countries and Subjects." IMF

[https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2019/01/weodata/weorept.aspx?pr.x=61&pr.y=6&sy=1980&ey=2024&scsm=1&ssd=1&sort=cou ntry&ds=.&br=1&c=534&s=NGDP\\_RPCH,PPPGDP,PPPPC,PPPSH,PCPIPCH,GGXWDG\\_NGDP&grp=0&a=](https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2019/01/weodata/weorept.aspx?pr.x=61&pr.y=6&sy=1980&ey=2024&scsm=1&ssd=1&sort=cou ntry&ds=.&br=1&c=534&s=NGDP_RPCH,PPPGDP,PPPPC,PPPSH,PCPIPCH,GGXWDG_NGDP&grp=0&a=)

<sup>131</sup> Satija R., Sanjai P. R., Bloomberg News, Sept 08, 2019, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-09-08/world-s-worst-bad-loan-mess-set-to-worsen-on-india-s-cash-crunch>

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Disinvestment is defined in Introduction p.1

<sup>134</sup> Harsh Jain Disinvestment In India: Objectives And Importance Read more on Groww: <https://groww.in/blog/disinvestment-in-india-objectives-and-importance/>

<sup>135</sup> Bellman, E. (2018). World News: Slower Economic Growth Tests India's Modi. Wall Street Journal, p. A.16.

<sup>136</sup> IMF Data, <https://www.imf.org/en/Countries/IND>

India campaign, Indian economy experienced a surge in the FDI inflow,<sup>137</sup> but this rapid increase was short lived as in the following years private investment decreased. The government was not able to sustain the boost that it got in its first year, coupled with a crippling economy both things discouraged investors.

(d) *Manufacturing and Employment*- The ambitious targets set by Modi in 2014 to increase manufacturing did not translate to numbers as well.<sup>138</sup> The manufacturing sector grew at a similar pace for most of the first term before dipping sharply in March, 2018 to its lowest since 2013. “The decline in manufacturing sector is attributed to three things – a sharp decline of 8.7% in the production of capital goods, another sharp decline of 5.1% in consumer durables and a decline of 3.5% in production of intermediate goods”.<sup>139</sup> This data highlights the shortcomings of the *Make In India* campaign.<sup>140</sup>

The other problem that the country and the economy is facing is the rise of unemployment which has been the highest since the past 45 years,<sup>141</sup> at 6.1%. The Government has rendered this data unreliable by using changed survey methods has brought in some discrepancies, but that does not explain the rising number of unemployed urban youth (18-29 years) due to economic slowdown experienced. The Modi government also launched a Skill India campaign in the image of the Make in India. This campaign has not been successful in terms of creating skilled labour . While we have the number of people going through Skill India has increased multifold from 3,50,000 in 2016 to 1.6 million in 2017-18, the number of people actually getting employment after that has decreased from 50% to less than 30%, which is worrying.<sup>142</sup> Jaffrelot and Jumle give reasons of why this has been the case attributing these problems to low quality of skill education, misinterpretation by the government and mainly non-interest of recruiters to invest in a less-skilled workforce. Also, it has been observed that, in Indian politics, employment has not been an issue which affects the voter mind set as levels of unemployment show no correlation to the way the youth has voted over the past 20 years.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Badarinath, K. (2015). Modi's India passes US and China in FDI. *Global Finance*, 29(10), 8.

<sup>138</sup> The ambition to increase manufacturing to 25% of the GDP.

<sup>139</sup> Krishnanand Tripathi, Modi 2.0: Daunting challenge of reviving the manufacturing sector, *The Financial Express*- May 26, 2019

<sup>140</sup> R Srinivasan, Making 'Make in India' work, *The Hindu-Business Line*, January 22, 2020

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/columns/making-make-in-india-work/article30627351.ece#>

<sup>141</sup> Periodic Labour Force Survey, NSSO, 2017-18

<sup>142</sup> Jaffrelot, C., & Jumle, V. (2019). *Op.cit.* p. 7.

<sup>143</sup> Swaminathan A Aiyar (2019). Why did rising unemployment not hurt Prime Minister Narendra Modi? *Economic Times*

### 4.3 Hindu Nationalism (2014-2019)

This section examines how the policies and actions of the BJP governments in a social context. We also see how the Hindutva forces acted during this tenure. Minorities have faced persecution, Sangh Parivar has become stronger, communal violence in the name of ‘gau raksha’ (cow protection) has gone up and freedom of speech for media and journalists increased. We will take a closer look at some of these parameters.

(a) *Sangh Parivar (The RSS family)*- The Sangh Parivar or the RSS family is the umbrella term commonly used for the Hindu right wing organisations led by the RSS. By the time of 2019 LS polls their cadre boasted of 800,000 RSS volunteers, 2.8 million ABVP volunteers (Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad- the student volunteer organisation), 20mn Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh volunteers (the biggest labour union in the world), 2.8mn Bhartiya Kisan Sangh volunteers (the farmers collective) and 3.2mn Vishva Hindu Parishad volunteers (the religious organisation leading the Ayodhya dispute). Along with this, there are around 20,000 Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram projects for education and health in tribal areas run by the parivar and 160,000 other Rashtriya Sewa Bharati projects in over 600 districts over the country.<sup>144</sup>

(b) *Cow politics*- There have been widespread reports of lynchings and violence in the past decade. These incidents are often caused by religious minorities or lower caste people being attacked by Hindu supremacists for possessing cow meat (Cow is a sacred animal in Hinduism and slaughtering is discouraged in the religion).<sup>145</sup> Due to its highly volatile nature, cow slaughter is highly regulated in India. ‘Vigilante Cow Protection’ groups have formed in parts of India which take the regulation in their control. Human Rights Watch (HRW) has reported that 44 people (36 Muslims) had been killed between 2015-18 in 10 Indian states due to cow related violence. In the same period they report, ‘around 280 people were injured in over 100 different incidents across 20 states’.<sup>146</sup> The BJP leaders have maintained silence over this increasing phenomenon and the media has often called India ‘Lynchistan’ (The land of Lynchings).<sup>147</sup> In an analysis of 14 cases the HRW reports, ‘In almost all of the cases, the police

<sup>144</sup> Foot Soldiers of the Sangh, India Today, March 15, 2019 <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/the-big-story/story/20190325-foot-soldiers-of-the-sangh-1477820-2019-03-15>

<sup>145</sup> Staples, J. (2017). Appropriating the Cow: Beef and Identity Politics in Contemporary India. In *Farm to Fingers: The Culture and Politics of Food in Contemporary India* (pp. 58-79). Cambridge University Press.

<sup>146</sup> Violent Cow Protection in India, February 2019, Human Rights Watch <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/02/18/violent-cow-protection-india/vigilante-groups-attack-minorities>

<sup>147</sup> R. Subramanya, Has India Become ‘Lynchistan?’ Here’s What The Data Says, *The Huffington Post*, July, 2017

initially stalled investigations, ignored procedures, or even played a complicit role in the killings and cover-up of crimes'.<sup>148</sup>

The UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath made a statement at India's first national convention of cow protectors (gau rakshaks) in Lucknow organized by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad,

“There is only one way to protect Indian culture: to protect gau (cows), Ganga, and (goddess) Gayatri...Only the community that can protect this heritage will survive. Otherwise there will be a huge crisis of identity, and this crisis of identity will endanger our existence.”<sup>149</sup>

(c) *Freedom of Speech*: There have also been attacks on freedom of speech against journalists, media houses and university students. People who have spoken against the government or against rising communalism have been either arrested or marginalised. PEN International, an international organisation of writers made a statement in an international conference, India has experienced “a rising tide of violence, impunity, extended pre-trial detentions, and surveillance”.<sup>150</sup> A number of media houses have been raided or at times shut down in order to control the news that gets out.<sup>151</sup> This discourse has led to more and more television channels adopting a more nationalistic stance (Zee News, Times Now). Media watchdog the Hoot published “THE INDIA FREEDOM REPORT” in 2017 where they report 3 killings of journalists which can be clearly linked to their journalism, 46 attacks, 27 cases of police action including detentions, arrests and cases filed and 12 cases of threats all in the space of one year.<sup>152</sup> The perpetrators tend to be “the police and politicians and political workers, followed by right wing activists and other non-state actors”.<sup>153</sup> HRW and Outlook India write,

“National Crime Records Bureau data from 2014 to 2016 show 179 sedition arrests, but no charge sheet had been filed by the end of 2016 in over 70 per cent of the cases, and only two of the accused had been convicted. As Human Rights Watch and

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Snigdha Poonam, “To protect Indian culture, protect gau: Adityanath at meeting of cow vigilantes,” Hindustan Times, November 5, 2017, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/to-protect-indian-culture-protect-gau-adityanath-at-meeting-of-cow-vigilantes/story-GsKPbePGqZb7NnBCi7PTYM.html>

<sup>150</sup> Freedom of expression severely deteriorated under Modi: PEN International, Outlook India, 29 Sept. 2018.

<https://www.outlookindia.com/newscroll/freedom-of-expression-severely-deteriorated-under-modi-pen-international/1393540>

<sup>151</sup> Some examples, murder of Karnataka journalist Gauri Lankesh, Raids at the house of Prannoy Roy, founder of India's oldest news channel NDTV; capture of left-wing student leaders in Delhi; attacks on leftist student organisations by ABVP (BJP's youth wing), read more at “Is free speech under threat in Modi's India?”, Al Jazeera 3 Aug 2017 <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/07/free-speech-threat-modi-india-170712131837718.html>

<sup>152</sup> Note: the data is collected from English news channel sources in India. THE INDIA FREEDOM REPORT, Media Freedom and Freedom of Expression in 2017, The Hoot <http://asu.thehoot.org/public/uploads/filemanager/media/THE-INDIA-FREEDOM-REPORT-.pdf>

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

others have documented, the very process of investigation and prosecution becomes the punishment”<sup>154</sup>.

There have been threats to journalists by twitter handles followed by the PM himself. Although, all these crimes are not committed by Hindutva sympathisers there is no action taken by the government enabling such activities. India is also the country with one of the most internet shutdowns in the world. There were 95 internet shutdowns in various parts of the country in 2019, increasing from 29 in 2016-17 and 15 in 2015.<sup>155</sup> Students, academics and journalists are termed anti-nationals. Any voice that speaks against the government and shows a slightest bit of dissent is shutdown in Modi’s India.

## ***Chapter 5 – Analysis and Summary***

The final chapter of the thesis aims to answer the research questions and the sub questions with the context of the literature and discourses studied so far. This analysis will be done in three parts, starting with the two sub questions and then finally moving on to the main research question and summarising the analysis of the thesis.

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<sup>154</sup> There Is No Democracy Without Dissent, Jayashree Bajoria, Feb. 2019 <https://www.outlookindia.com/magazine/story/india-news-in-course-of-persecution/301193>. Also, HRW, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/02/14/there-no-democracy-without-dissent>

<sup>155</sup> Why India shuts down the internet more than any other democracy, BBC News, 19 December 2019 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-50819905>

## **5.1 How has the Modi government used the Hindutva rhetoric to overshadow the economic and political problems it has faced in its first tenure since 2014?**

The Modi government has had a diminishing economy and rising polarisation amongst different groups in the country but has still been able to win with an overwhelming majority in 2019 polls.<sup>156</sup> As discussed in the thesis this discourse can be attributed to certain factors – lack of a formidable opposing political ideology, catering to the Hindi belt and the middle class and crushing any dissent that comes in its way. The Hindu right has been steady with its ambitions diverting any other problems coming in its way. We see in the third chapter of this thesis that when needed the BJP governments under Vajpayee and BJP governments in Gujarat have conformed to the global rhetoric of economic reforms while not bringing in substantial changes than its previous governments. A similar model has helped the BJP on the national level between 2014-19 and the lack of a united opposition has aided these ambitions in a major manner. In his public addresses Modi has always talked about a bright future and the dream of a ‘New India’. The Hindi belt, big business and the neo-middle class constitute the strength of Modi politics which aids him to put on grand electoral campaigns and the lack of an opposition voice has helped him overshadow these issues.

## **5.2 After 70 years of independence, how does a post-colonial state like India handle a move towards a de-westernized image, forming a new image of itself?**

After 70 years of Independence, the Indian electorate currently comprises of a majorly young population. Around 53% of the Indian population was in the bracket of 19-60 years and 149 million people voted for the first time in 2014.<sup>157</sup> These numbers and the results of the election show us that India has a young electorate which has not experienced the colonial times. Also, around 67% of the population has grown up in the post-economic reforms era. Thus, young India is more global. Also, a major part of the country comprises the ‘neo-middle class’ as described by Modi.

The right wing has provided a narrative of future economic prowess and a globally powerful India. The narrative of Hindu nationalism has been proliferated to the grassroots through the RSS and its subsidiaries. The right wing has advocated the importance of ‘swadeshi’ (native),

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<sup>156</sup> *Under Modi, a Hindu Nationalist Surge Has Further Divided India*, The New York Times, April 11, 2019

<sup>157</sup> Census profiles the young Indian voter, spender, Livemint, 07 Sep 2013  
<https://www.livemint.com/Politics/B1tnK7YhZZUYb56bLJL9kK/Census-profiles-the-young-Indian-voter-spender.html>

Make in India which has resonated with the people. Thus, de-westernisation has been coupled with conservative Hindutva sentiments by the right-wing.

### ***5.3 How has Narendra Modi been able to marry the two seemingly opposite ideologies – neoliberalism and the Hindutva – as an alternative for his ‘New India’?***

In the third and fourth chapter, an analysis of Modi’s neoliberalism and Hindutva proliferation under his governance is discussed. It is noticed that although he has maintained the narrative of economic reforms, industrialisation and ‘minimum government, maximum governance’ the results have not been fruitful enough. Ambitious policy decisions like demonetisation have affected the economy in a negative way. Most reforms that were brought in like Goods and Services Tax (GST) were already tabled in the house by the UPA governments and have been implemented poorly by the BJP. While the focus has been on the economy, Hindu Nationalism has proliferated, freedom of speech diminished and violence by right wing activists gone up. Media is compromised, open discussions on an academic level have been stopped by the ABVP and an environment of fear is rising.

This narrative of a ‘New India’ does not address the problems that the minorities of the countries are facing and the dream of a ‘New India’ is catered towards the neo-middle class, big business and supporters of the right wing. Also, this image is highly relied on a distant past of Indian glory or the ‘Golden Age’ of ancient times. Modi’s website describes the dream of a new India as a country of ‘peace, unity and brotherhood’.<sup>158</sup> These three elements are currently diminishing as we see a rising majority polarisation and increasing communal divide. There has been an effort to remove the Muslim history of India with renaming of cities into more Hindu names and promoting Hindi as a national language.<sup>159</sup> Media is made to cater to the government which also helps the rhetoric. On one hand India is going through a phase where media is controlled and dissent silenced, Modi government hopes to bring in substantial foreign investment to kick-start the economy. The US editor of The Financial Times, Edward Luce has recently said in an interview that the Modi’s ambitions of making India an economic hub is hindered by the lack of infrastructure and taxation systems and this rhetoric built by Modi is weak.<sup>160</sup> Kaul has complemented my argument that there has been a significant effort since

<sup>158</sup> <https://www.narendramodi.in/newindia/index>

<sup>159</sup> Renaming India: Saffronisation of public spaces, Al Jazeera, Rizwan Ahmad, 12 Oct 2018

<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/renaming-india-saffronisation-public-spaces-181012113039066.html>

<sup>160</sup> Edward Luce in an exclusive interview to the Wire, “India Now the World’s Largest Illiberal Democracy, Says Financial Times US Editor, <https://thewire.in/video/karan-thapar-edward-luce-interview-india-illiberal-democracy>



Modi assumed power to ‘fundamentally change the shape of Indian society and economy’. Constitutionally guaranteed principle like minority rights, secularism and democracy are being targeted and what is marketed as ‘New India’ is termed as ‘Modi-fied India’.<sup>161</sup>

Thus, to summarise the neoliberal rhetoric is used to overshadow the economic and social problems alike in the ‘Modi-fied India’. This rhetoric is not factually supported and the data has shown opposite results to what this rhetoric aims for. The majority of India is getting stronger whereas the minorities are getting persecuted and shut down. The violence and economic slowdown are overshadowed by the promises of a business friendly bright future but there are no policies in place which seem to fulfil these promises.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

This thesis aimed to understand the neoliberalism and Hindu nationalism that the BJP has advocated in India in recent times. We have seen that the economic policies of the Modi government in its first term have not been able to get India out of the slump that it has faced for almost a decade. Indian economy is shrinking and social atmosphere of the country is deteriorating. Hindu Nationalism has enabled the persecution of minorities and a trend of majoritarian appeasement catering to the middle class is noticed. India has voted the BJP in with a better result in the 2019 LS polls. Since independence, the right wing has stuck to its principles and under Modi government it has gotten the opportunity to influence. Neoliberal policies are used by the right wing to make promises without results. Also, the right wing has incorporated grand election strategies of grassroots campaigning aided by fundings from big business and non-residential Indian diaspora. Luce has described India as the world’s largest Illiberal democracy where elections are held, but the social sphere is transformed in such a way (controlling the media, persecution of minorities etc.) by the state (BJP in this case) which tilts the playing field in the favour of the ruling party and the majority population.<sup>162</sup> Hence, this thesis concludes that the ‘New India’ seems to be a country run by a majoritarian polarising sentiment with ambitions of a neoliberal flourishing economy without particular policies in place.

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<sup>161</sup> Kaul, op.cit.(2017)

<sup>162</sup> Luce Ibid.

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