



Ideology of RSS

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The formation of RSS is not a sudden process. The Hindu Renaissance Movement of mid nineteenth century is the ideological foundation of RSS. Several organizations such as Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj were formed during this period. Brahma Samaj founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and focussed on social causes such as ending caste discrimination. Arya Samaj is also a social movement that had profound influence on independence movements by churning out revolutionaries such as Bhagat Singh, Lala Lajpat Rai and Ramprasad Bismil. Swami Vivekananda was a Brahma Samaj member who later associated with Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Swami Vivekananda inspired the nationalist movement by spreading the wave of Hindu spirituality.

This Hindu Renaissance wave was coined the word "Hindutva" by Veer Savarkar in the early 20th century. Veer Savarkar is an Atheist and a Rationalist and rejected the notion of religion. And hence he coined the word "Hindutva" to steer clear of any religious connotations associated with the movement. He saw "Hindutva" as a culture. Same Hindutva is the ideology of RSS which is always "Ready for Selfless Service" with its commitment to the all round development of Bharat and Bharatiya society.

Dr. K. B. Hedgewar floated the organization in 1925 on the Hindu holy day of Vijaya Dashami (the triumphant tenth day of the moon) in the Maharashtrian city of Nagpur. According to Hindu mythology, this is the day when in a holy war, Lord Rama, the God king, triumphed over Ravana "the demon king". The Sangh and its offspring organizations such as the BJP have successfully used the name of Rama as a ploy to garner Hindu votes and drum up anti-Muslim hatred. In addition to the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, the RSS, Jana Sangh (now known as BJP), and VHP or Vishwa Hindu Parishad have been implicated in numerous communal riots all over India. RSS now has two other important offshoots Bajrang Dal (a militant auxiliary of VHP) and Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram, the organization targeted to include the tribals in its fold.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the parliamentary leader of BJP, is a lifelong member of RSS, more commonly known as the "Sangh". Most leaders and active members of BJP are products of the Sangh and steeped in its Hindu supremacist doctrine. Vajpayee was a full-time RSS worker before he was "released" for BJP (formerly Jana Sangh) activities. In one of his Hindi poems, Vajpayee proclaims: "Hindu Hindu mera parichay"-my only identity is Hindu. This may remind us of his campaign speeches during the recent Indian elections, "Is it a crime to be a Hindu in this country?" One can perceive the same Hindu Vajpayee only with refined rhetoric and a display of moderation-very similar to the recently toned-down functioning style of BJP itself.

The meteoric rise of BJP is now all but certain to usher in an era of more social and political pressures for the traditionally oppressed-the "untouchables", the religious minorities, and women. BJP's ally Shiv Sena (SS) and its leader Bal Thackeray have been openly supportive of racist and oppressive social codes. Thackeray said that democracy is not for India and what Indians need is a "benign dictatorship." BJP leaders like Vijaya Raje Scindia, the queen-mother of the royal family of Gwalior favor the now-outlawed "sati" system ("sati" was a horrible practice where the widow was burnt along with her dead husband) and the degenerate Hindu caste system where Brahmans and other upper castes remain the leaders of the society, keeping the lower castes and "untouchables" in abject poverty, subservience, and death. Even though M. S. Golwalkar and Balasaheb Deoras, the second and third supreme leaders of the RSS, spoke against the caste system in its "degenerate form", they did not espouse its abolition. The theory and practice of caste differences is very much in vogue in RSS and its offshoot bodies, although, in order to bring together Hindus of all castes under its artificially-created "unity platform", a unifying theme of hatred for Islam and other "foreign" religions has been deliberately brought in. "Lower caste" legendary heroes such as Birsa have recently been included in the RSS Ekatmata Stotra (the verse of unification) to garner support among the dalits, "forest-dwellers", and other oppressed classes of the society.

In order to examine the RSS with an open mind we can see Most secular and progressive Indians, and those who do not have any particular political faith, either do not know much about the RSS and its modus operandi or because of a preoccupied mind, refuse to recognize them. To me, this ignorance or rejection is the very thing that has allowed the rapid growth of the Sangh organizations. We must defeat the RSS in its own game-its supremacist-divisive Hindutva doctrine must be countered with the secular and all-inclusive version of Hinduism which is the religion of Sri Chaitanya, Ram Mohan Ray, Ramakrishna Paramhansa, and Bhakt Kabir. The Sangh Parivar's doctrine of separatism and supremacy must be exposed by drawing parallels between them and other social-religious fundamentalist groups that fiercely fight with each other. Only then, their global bigotry and deceit can be truly assessed and dealt with.

Its Hindutva:

Golwalkar describes the mission of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh as the revitalisation of the Indian value system based on universalism and peace and prosperity to all.

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, the worldview that the whole world is one family, propounded by the ancient thinkers of India, is considered as the ultimate mission of the organisation. But the immediate focus, the leaders believe, is on the Hindu renaissance, which would build an egalitarian society and a strong India that could propound this philosophy. Hence, the focus is on social reform, economic upliftment of the downtrodden and the protection of cultural diversity of the natives in India. The organisation says, it aspires to unite all Hindus and build a strong India, which could contribute to the welfare of the world. In the words of RSS ideologue and the second head of the RSS, Golwalkar, "in order to be able to contribute our unique knowledge to mankind, in order to be able to live and strive for the unity and welfare of the world, we stand before the world as a self-confident, resurgent and mighty nation".

In Vichardhara (ideology) Golwalkar affirms the RSS mission of integration as- RSS has been making determined efforts to inculcate in our people the burning devotion for Bharat and its national ethos; kindle in them the spirit of dedication and sterling qualities and character; rouse social consciousness, mutual good-will, love and cooperation among them all; to make them realise that casts, creeds and languages are secondary and that service to the nation is the supreme end and to mold their behaviour accordingly; instill in them a sense of true humility and discipline and train their bodies to be strong and robust so as to shoulder any social responsibility; and thus to create all-round Anushasana in all walks of life and build together all our people into a unified harmonious national whole, extending from Himalayas to Kanyakumari.— M. S. Golwalkar

Golwalkar also explains that RSS does not intend to compete in electioneering politics or share power. The movement considers Hindus as inclusive of Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, tribals, untouchables, Veerashaivism, Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission and other. as a community, a view similar to inclusive referencing of the term Hindu in the Indian Constitution Article 25 (2)(b). When it came to non-Hindu religions, Golwalkar's (who once supported Hitler's creation of a supreme race by suppression of minorities) view on minorities was that of extreme intolerance. In a magazine article in 1998 some RSS, and BJP members have been said to have distanced themselves from M.S Golwalkar's views though not entirely.

The non-Hindu people of Hindustan must either adopt Hindu culture and languages, must learn and respect and hold in reverence the Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but of those of glorification of the Hindu race and culture...in a word they must cease to be foreigners; Or may stay in the country, wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment— not even citizens' rights — M. S. Golwalkar

Dr. S Radhakrishnan has said about Hinduism "Hinduism is not just a faith. It is the union of reason and intuition that cannot be defined but is only to be experienced. Evil and error are not ultimate. There is no Hell, for that means there is a place where God is not and there are sins which exceed his love. " "Ye, who by race, by blood, by culture, by nationality possess almost all the essentials of Hindutva and had been forcibly snatched out of our ancestral home by the hand of violence—ye, have only to render wholehearted love to our common mother and

recognise her not only as Fatherland (Pitrabhu) but even as a Holyland (Punjabhu):and ye would be most welcome to the Hindu fold.” — From Essentials of Hindutva by Savaekar.

The idea of Universal Brotherhood. We will also be appreciating how the idea of the Akhand Hindu Rashtra is a political move of Hindutva-consolidating Hindu Rashtra (nation-state), Jati (race!) and Sanskriti (culture), an attempt for communal divisive politics which not only hinders ethnic nationalism but is also in contrast to Universal Brotherhood aka Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam—which is inevitable, given the rise in the speed of circulation of information and humans making a melange of universal citizens rather than religious warriors for the glory of their Pitrabhu or Punjabhu.

The idea of an Akhand Hindu Rashtra is not about a country or a nation of Hindus but the Hindu nation-state. This state would not be secular but religious state like any other Islamic or Christian or Jewish state. This religious state is guided by the values and ethos of a particular religion. The state’s actions and decisions are guided and influenced by religion. The Akhand Hindu Rashtra would be a state to be ruled by the benevolent majoritarian Hindus. Though, imaging and imagining a Hindu Rashtra has umpteen inherent contradictions and paradoxes like who is a Hindu—the one who is a sanatani, or the one identified by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar or the one found by the British in their census of India? What will or which text would replace the Constitution of India—Vedas, the Gita, Manusmriti, Sathyarth Prakash or the tract by Savarkar? The question of demography will be equally pertinent because if we include all the imagined territories in mapping the Akhand Hindu Rashtra, Hindus would become minority and would lose the legitimacy to rule being the majority. The idea of a single nation on religious lines and from a convenient part of the geographical history indeed has its own cultural and social hierarchical norms directly adopted from the ideological basis. Like other typical ingredients of a socially constructed system of cultural hegemony, legitimacy of a single language/form of language as superior is an inevitable part of the idea of the Akhand Hindu Rashtra. Obviously, the choice goes to Sanskrit, the divine language which, like its counterparts in other hierarchical societies as the church and the Islamic clergy where Latin and Arabic, their puritan forms, has been a way of restricting knowledge, status and thus power to a particular portion of the society. Time and again, the Hindutva machine has compromised, even like its radical counterparts in the Left spectrum of political ideologies in India, its ideological stances under the pressures of electoral politics of the parliamentary system of Indian democracy. Just like it has tried wooing the desperate upper spectrum of the Dalits, mainly OBCs and SCs for their electoral benefit in the recent past, it had to put down the puritanical idea of making Sanskrit the national language in the Akhand Hindu Rashtra. So they have settled for a popular alternative—the diluted down version—Hindi. The ideology which is hell-bent on making Sanskrit the most omnipotent language, came blatantly out when the incumbent HRD Minister tried pushing out foreign languages from the school curriculum in a hurry, giving forced choice for the students to learn the ropes of the language. After all, just like the cow protection exponents who believe that just

drinking cow milk/urine keep crime rates low, Sanskrit exponents believe that the language will teach the learners culture and values. The idea of Hindi as the national language, aka the language of the ideal nation is very evident from the debates that have taken place around implementing Hindi as the national language in the country.

Another interesting paradox would be whether this 'Hindu' Rashtra would be Vaishnavor Shaiva. Shiva as the supreme Brahman would not be in consonance with the ideology of political Hindutva as Shiv in mythology is more akin to a postmodern and subaltern deity and is also 'dravidian' and 'aghari'. The political Hindutva would need suave Vishnu or Ram for furthering the ideology of religious resoluteness. The conflict of interest over the lordship will be more acute amongst Shiv Sainiks and Shree Ram Sainiks. Similarly, the plight of women in this Hindu state will be more precarious as they would have to be selective about their role as either Veerangana (Durgavahini is the name of the RSS' women wing) or Veerdhatri (women giving birth to brave men—Jeejabai Shivaji). The role model for them at the most can be Sadhvi Prajna Thakur rather than Kalpana Chawla. The grand vision that every Hindu woman should produce (!) ten children (males only!) to fight infidels would keep women shuffling between the kitchen and bedroom. Only then they will fit into the appropriation of the role of the ideal Hindu women. Looking at the idea of the Akhand Hindu Rashtra as a paradox, its corner-pieces themselves point to its idiosyncratic way of being impossible. The idea of Hindi/Sanskrit as the language of the divine nation makes it more exclusive, not inclusive. However, Sanskrit as far as popular implemen-tation is concerned, is a tough nut to crack. So did come the benefits of Hindi. Hindi and its dialects are spread across an area, which is traditionally, friendly to the religious Hindu ideologies.

Brahminism, which is the corner-stone of the ideological pool of Hindutva, has always relied upon this idea of exclusivity, to preserve the hierarchy and resulting power structure. Obviously, a single language made superior against the 'other' languages makes its users exclusive when compared to the haramzadons. The way language has been time and again used as a political weapon by the Right-wing forces easily shows the conflict between the ideas of being exclusive by being pure—be it in the food one eats, the occupation one is engaged in or the language and its form being used—with the reality of amassing political power in an electoral democracy. The Jana Sangh, at first and in its ideological Puritanism, believed that Hindi is the most befitting candidate for the national language. However, finding the idea difficult to reap electoral benefits, since it alienated the large masses from the non-cow belt area of the country, who speak Dravidian and non-Hindi dialects, they have diluted their stance for electoral benefits. Since numbers are paramount in the democratic system, the idea of Akahand Bharat and its idea of legitimate language again exclude a larger part of what is now geographi-cally identified as India.

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