Center for Global & Strategic Studies
Islamabad

BJP's Diaspora and Hindutva Strategy: Saffronisation of India

Published on 3rd May, 2019

Saffronisation is not a new phenominon, in fact, it has seeped into the national conscience of India. It refers to the policies of policies of Hindu right-wing nationalists (Hindutva) to recognize the glory of ancient Hindu culture. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has frequently been accused for its fascist policies especially during the era of Nerendra Modi since 2014.

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The **general elections 2019** in India has entered in its **third phase** where the BJP's leader Modi and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi are contesting in elections holding parallel manifesto. The elections seem like a referendum of the five years rule of Modi. Prime Minister Nerendra Modi has adopted a nationalist approach to win the polls by projecting the "**Hindutva**' ideology and rhetoric against Muslims.

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (**USCIRF**) published its annual report of 2018 regarding India, The report observed the downward trend in the condition of religious freedom in India, in 2017. The Indian multicultural and multireligious state is endangered by the increased exclusionary impression of national identity based on religious founding.

Further, the USCIRF elaborates that the Hindu Nationalist units sought to "Saffronize" the Indian state through intimidation, violence, and harassment against the minorities and low caste Hindus. The government has enforced "anti-conversion" and "anti-cow slaughter" laws related to non-Hindus, especially Muslims.

The "**homecoming**" (**ghar wapsi**) ceremonies in which the forced conversion of non-Hindus to Hindu religions has been reported in 2017 and various NGOs have been used against the minorities. Many incidents have recorded persuading the "cow protection" under which 10 victims were killed by mobs.

Moreover, the report highlighted that despite the statistical findings of increased communal violence by the Indian government, Prime Minister Nerendra Modi

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remained silent about the worse situation. In 2018, USCIRF has placed India on its "**Tier 2**" list for the violation of religious freedom[1].

The Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (**RSS**) the pro-Hindu group, having a political wing like BJP, advocating "**chauvinist nationalism**" and defining Hindu culture in a glorified manner, critically examines the secular policies of Indian National Congress (INC)[2].

While promoting the divisive strategy, BJP's President **Amit Shah** labeled Bangladeshi immigrants as "**termites**" and said that "The illegal immigrants are termites. They are eating the grain that should go to the poor, they are taking our jobs" and gave them the status of "illegal immigrants"[3].

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) promises to repeal "**article 35 A and Article 370**" of the constitution of India as its election manifesto. The article 370 endorse a special status to Jammu and Kashmir and restricts parliament to formulate law concerning this particular territorial entity. Meanwhile, article 35 A authorizes the state to define permanent residents for conferring special rights and privileges to them[4].

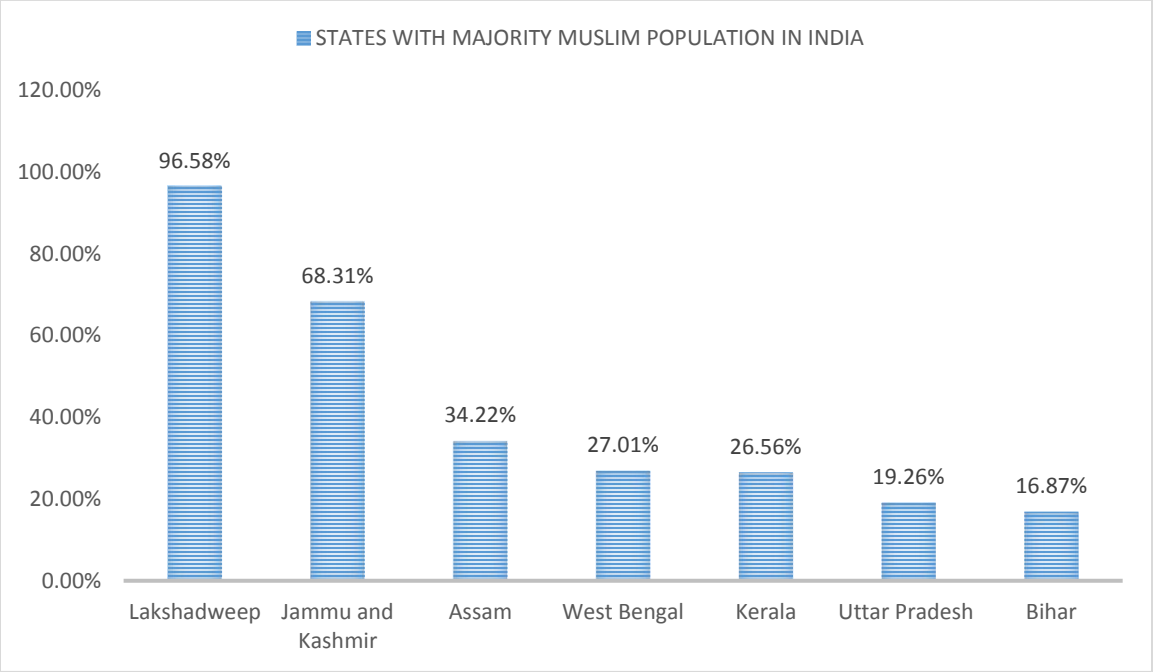
[1] USCIRF | ANNUAL REPORT, 2018, INDIA.

[2]Britannica, "Bharatiya Janata Party." Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 17 Dec. 2018, www.britannica.com/topic/Bharatiya-Janata-Party.

[3]Editorial, the Wire. "Indian Election Commission's Silence on Hate Mongering Is Complicity." DAWN.COM, 16 Apr. 2019, www.dawn.com/news/1476500/indian-election-commissions-silence-on-hate-mongering-is-complicity.

[4] "BJP Manifesto Promises to Abrogate Article 35A, Article 370." Business Today, 8 Apr. 2019, www.businesstoday.in/current/economy-politics/bjp-manifesto-promises-to-abrogate-article-35a-article-370/story/335132.html.

Approximately, **172 million Muslims** are living in India. The 2011 consensus of India reveals Muslim majority areas in India as **Lakshadweep, Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, West Bengal, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar**[5] percentage wise mention in the following graph:



Source: India's Conesus 2011.

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report of 2015 and 2016 reveals that the ratio of crimes reported against "Dalits" has increased from 38,670 to 40,801 in the

[5] "Muslim Religion Census 2011." Muslim Religion in India - Statewise Census 2011, www.census2011.co.in/data/religion/2-muslims.html.

states of Uttar Pradesh (UP), Bihar and Rajasthan, ruled by BJP. In 2016, the crime ratio against Dalits increased by 25%[6].

BJP wants to deepen the wedge between the Hindus and Muslims, and from the launching of the election campaign, BJP was overwhelmed by the Hindu majoritarian sentiments and hit the Muslim community, committed to an aggressive "chauvinist nationalism" based on the RSS manifesto of "Sankalpit Bharat". Having 42 constituencies, Bengal has special concern for the BJP emancipating its anti-Muslim attributes, and identifying its electoral strategy of pitting the various religious sects against each other, thus riling up a majoritarian base against vulnerable minorities, not confined to any one state. In fact, BJP is indeed playing with fire which has a strong legacy of communal violence.

Conclusion:

India claims to have the world's largest democracy having the deteriorating condition of religious violence due to multifaceted campaigns by Hindu Nationalists Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sang (RSS), Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), Sangh Parivar, and to alienate non-Hindus or lower-caste Hindus.

[6] "BJP and Its Hindutva Politics—the Slow Saffronisation of India." The Week, www.theweek.in/news/india/2018/04/25/bjp-and-its-hindutva-politics-the-slow-saffronisation-of-india.html

BJP has faced a massive setback in 2018 Assembly elections, in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Mizoram as people did not cast votes for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party for its aggressive policies.

Massive violent incidents are more likely to reoccur if the Modi Administration and state governments continue to sponsor the individuals who engage in violence against religious minorities.

The Election Commission of India has a constitutional responsibility to sustain not just the Model Code of Conduct but the Representation of People Act, under which speeches of the kind Modi made are essentially considered a criminal offense. The EC's silence in the face of this continuous electoral hate mongering in the current general election is one of the most alarming aspects of the contemporary scenario.

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