

The Political Transformation in India

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ABSTRACT

The political changes in Indian politics by and large is greatly influenced by the present days ruling party at the centre. And this paper aims to keep reader informed about the development of communal ideology based on Hindu Nationalism in the context of Indian society, and Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) as a case study in promoting this ideology. In this study polarisation of votes through riots between Hindus and Muslims is a technical process which is used as a tool to gain political benefits by a very small section of upper caste Hindus. This process has affected negatively to different weaker sections of society in many ways causing damage to the communal harmony and also to the basis of the founding principles of this country. These kinds of activities not only affect badly to the security of the people of minority communities but also in the long run to economy, social psychology and plurality of Indian society which has its own uniqueness across the globe. It is also a thing to watch out that how the BJP's economic policy from Swadeshi (indigenous) economy which was its basis of foundation, started favouring Foreign Direct Investment in the country. And its effect was clearly visible in the BJP ruled state of Gujarat. India with its diversity can be the best example of multiculturalist society in the World but due to its political inabilities, make it an ordinary country like many others in the World. The present political scenario, ruining all the greatness and beauty of the Indian society is ready to serve some selected people from a small section of society. And it is very clear by some of the actions taken by the government in the form of Land acquisition ordinance and some of the unacceptable violent action through some people of its allied organisation against minorities and women. Additionally, the limit of intolerance is crossed when some youths of these groups gang raped a Nun aged seventy years old of a Church to show disrespect to these minorities in a metropolitan city Kolkata. Before the election the present ruling party was promising a lot on development, social and economic security and "Acchhe Din" (Good Days) for the common people but as it came to the power, everything started to go against the common and weaker masses and only "Acchhe Din" for corporates and upper caste of Hindu society.

Keywords: Hindutva, Communalism, Secularism, Development, Governance

Type of Study: Case Analysis

Hindistan'da Siyasal Dönüşüm

ÖZET

Hindistan'da iktidarda olan siyasi parti, Hindistan siyasetinin dönüşmesinde büyük bir etkiye sahiptir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Hint toplumunda hızla gelişen "komünal ideoloji"nin dayandığı Hindu Milliyetçiliğinin yükselmesinde parlamentoda çoğunluğa sahip Bhartiya Janata Party'nin (BJP) katkısını ortaya koymaktır. Bu çalışmada yüksek kasttaki Hindu elitlerin politik çıkar elde etmek için tasarladıkları teknik bir sürecin, Hindu ve Müslüman seçmenlerin birbirleriyle çatışmaları ve böylelikle toplumun amaçlı olarak kutuplaştırılmaları üzerine kurulduğu ele alınacaktır. Bu süreç, hem Hint toplumunun özünde olan toplumsal harmoniye, hem toplumda yer alan birçok farklı zayıf kesime hem de Hindistan'ın üzerine inşa edildiği temel ilkeye olumsuz etki etmektedir. Bu tür hareketler sadece azınlıkların güvenliğini olumsuz biçimde etkilemekle kalmamakta, aynı zamanda ekonominin gidişatına, sosyal psikolojiye ve Hindistan'ın dünyadaki bu eşsiz çoğulcu yanına da zarar vermektedir. Bu durum ayrıca BJP'nin kuruluş ilkesi olan yerel ekonomi politikalarının rafa kaldırılarak, Hindistan'ı yabancı yatırımcılara da açık hale getirmiştir. Yabancı yatırımlar ilk defa BJP'nin iktidar olduğu Gujarat eyaletinde görülmeye başlanmıştır. Hindistan, dünyadaki çokkültürlü toplumlar içerisinde en iyi örneği teşkil edebilir fakat bu yanlış politikalarından dolayı Hindistan, dünyadaki diğer ülkeler içerisinde sıradan bir ülke haline geldi. Şuanki siyasal manzara, Hint toplumunun büyüklüğü ve güzelliğini, toplumun seçilmiş küçük bir grubunun tasarrufuna hizmet ettirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ve açıktır ki hükümet, toprak edinme yönetmeliğinde bazı değişikliklere gitmiştir ve BJP'nin yardımcı kuruluşları da, bu yönetmeliğe karşı olan azınlık ve kadınlara karşı da beklenmedik bazı şiddet hareketleri uygulamaktadır. Ayrıca Kolkata şehrinde, BJP'nin yardımcı kuruluşları içerisinde yer alan gençlerden oluşan bir grubun azınlıklara yönelik saygısızlığı arttırmak için kilisede görevli yetmiş yaşındaki bir rahibeye tecavüz etmesi, azınlıklara yönelik toleransın sınırlarının aşılmasına neden olmuştur. Mevcut siyasi parti olan BJP, seçilmeden önce gelişmede, sosyal ve ekonomik güvenliğin sağlanması konularında söz vermişti ve bu siyasi partinin seçimde kullandığı, tüm halk için (acchhe din) "iyi günler gelecek" sloganı, beklendiği kadarıyla iyi olmamıştır. Öyle ki BJP iktidara geldiğinde pratikte bu slogan tüm halk için değil de, Hint toplumundaki yüksek kast ve büyük şirketler için "iyi günler" şekline dönüştü.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hindu Milliyetçiliği, Komünalizm, Sekülerizm, Gelişme, Yönetme

Çalışma Türü: Olgu Sunumu

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INTRODUCTION

India's most noble commitments to secularism and democratic governance have been under the shameless attack in the last couple of decades. The radical Hindu forces have been steadily undermining the hard fought accumulated secular achievements of the freedom struggle movement and the Nehru period in independent India. After Nehru's death, successive governments have more or less allowed the communalist forces in the country to go unchecked. They have been appeasing communal elements among majority population (the Hindus) before and after the destruction of the mosque in Ayodhya in December 1992, and simultaneously encouraging the most communal reaction amongst Muslims, as is evident from the Congress government's support of the Muslim Women's Bill. They must do this for their survival because it is the only way for them to retain some measure of their once populist base, given the fact that that base has weakened because of the governments manifest failure to solve the basic problems of economically deprived majority of its population and social discrimination against its lowest castes and tribes. Communal politics grow under these conditions and even explicitly secular governments and political parties too take a beating to it. It would be an understatement to say that there exist a crisis now, because the crisis has set in deeply, communal forces are in power in some of the most politically important regions of this country, and the destruction of the mosque in Ayodhya has proven that these forces have no respect for the basic constitutional values of the country. It is not just secularism, but democracy that is at stake. The turmoil in the current political scenario of India is deeply affected by the present ruling party's (BJP) influence on Indian politics which has to be taken into account while talking about political situation of this country. Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) which has a root in Bhartiya Jana Sangh formed by Shyama Prasad Mookherjee in 1951, which has a close ideological and organisational links to the Hindu nationalist Rashtriya Swamsevak Sangh.

Emergence of BJP

When the BJP was formed, it was technically different from the Jana Sangh, in many manners this party was identical to its predecessor, with Atal Bihari Vajpayee as its first president. Historian Ramachandra Guha in his book writes that the early 1980s were marked by a wave of violence between Hindus and Muslims. (Guha, 2007) The BJP initially moderated the Hindu nationalist stance unlike the Jana Sangh to gain a wider appeal. This was unsuccessful, as it won only two Lok Sabha seats in the elections of 1984. (Malik & Singh, 1992 pp 318-336) The assassination of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi a few months before the election also contributed to the bad performance of this party as the main ruling party of that time Congress won a record number 415 out of 543 number of seats. (Guha, 2007 pp 579)

The rise of The Hindutva movement

The Hindutva movement had a very significant role in the promotion of Jana Sangh Ideology, as the failure of Vajpayee's moderate strategy led to a shift in the ideology of the party toward a policy of more hardline Hindu fundamentalism. (Malik & Singh, 318-336) In the early 1980s, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) began a campaign for the construction of a temple dedicated to the Hindu deity Rama at the site of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya. The mosque had been constructed by the Mughal Emperor Babur in 1527. There is a dispute about whether a temple once stood there or not. In 1984, Lal Krishna Advani was appointed president of the party, and under his leadership the political voice of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement was fueled. The agitation was on the basis of the belief that the site was the birthplace of Rama, and that a temple had been demolished to construct the mosque. The BJP threw its support behind this campaign, and made it a part of their election platform. It won 86 Lok Sabha seats in 1989, a tally which made its support crucial to the National Front government of V. P. Singh. (Guha, 2007)

In September 1990, Advani began a "rath yatra" to Ayodhya in support of the Ram temple movement. According to Guha, the imagery employed by the yatra was "religious, allusive, militant, masculine, and anti-Muslim," and the speeches delivered by Advani during the yatra accused the government of appeasing Muslims and practising "pseudo-secularism" that obstructed the legitimate aspirations of Hindus. (Guha

2007) Advani defended the yatra, stating that it had been free of incident from Somnath to Ayodhya, and that the English media were to blame for the violence that followed.(Reddy 2008) Advani was placed under preventive detention on the orders of the then Bihar chief minister Lalu Prasad Yadav. A large number of kar sevaks(worker of Hindu right wing) nonetheless converged on Ayodhya. On the orders of Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav, 150,000 of them were detained, yet half as many managed to reach Ayodhya and some attacked the mosque. Three days of fighting with the paramilitary forces ended with the deaths of several kar sevaks. Hindus were urged by VHP to "take revenge" for these deaths, resulting in riots against Muslims across Uttar Pradesh. The BJP withdrew its support from the V.P. Singh government, leading to fresh general elections. It once again increased its tally, to 120 seats, and won a majority in the Uttar Pradesh assembly.(Guha, 2007)

On 6 December 1992, the RSS and its affiliates organised a rally involving thousands of VHP and BJP activists at the site of the mosque. Under circumstances that are not entirely clear, the rally developed into a uncontrolled attack that ended with the demolition of the mosque. Over the following weeks, waves of violence between Hindus and Muslims erupted all over the country, killing over 2,000 people. The government briefly banned the VHP, and many BJP leaders, including Advani were arrested for making provocative speeches for the demolition. Several historians have said that the demolition was the product of a conspiracy by the Sangh Parivar, and not a spontaneous act.(Guha, 2007 pp 633-659)

A 2009 report, authored by Justice Manmohan Singh Liberhan, found that 68 people were responsible for the demolition, mostly leaders from the BJP. Among those named were Vajpayee, Advani, and Murli Manohar Joshi. The report also criticised Kalyan Singh, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh during the demolition. He was accused of posting bureaucrats and police officers who would stay silent during the demolition. (Al Jazeera) Anju Gupta, an Indian Police Service officer in charge of Advani's security, appeared as a prominent witness before the commission. She said that Advani and Joshi made provocative speeches that were a major factor in the mob's behaviour(Venkatesan, Frontline Magazine)

In the general elections of 1996, the BJP benefited on the communal polarisation that followed the demolition of Ayodhya Mosque to win 161 Lok Sabha seats, making it the largest party in the parliament. Vajpayee was sworn in as Prime Minister, but was unable to attain a majority in the Lok Sabha, forcing the government to resign after 13 days. In 1998 and 1999 BJP remained the largest party and ran a coalition government under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee which lasted for five Years. This was the first government in the history of the republic of India that a Non- Congress government lasted for a full term. And the practise of polarising votes by using riots between the people of Hindu and Muslim community as a tool before the elections really worked every time for this party to gain more seats in the parliament. In 2004 elections it lost badly due the riot which Broke under the then BJP Chief minister of Gujrat Narendra Modi and he was unable to control the situation and involvement of some of his minister in encouraging the incident between Hindus and Muslim.(Guha, 2007 pp 633)

Social base

The basic ideology of the BJP is "Integral humanism," a philosophy that was first formulated by Deendayal Upadhyaya in 1965, who described it as advocating an "indigenous economic model that puts the human being at center stage." It is committed to Hindutva, an ideology articulated by Indian independence activist Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. According to the party, Hindutva is cultural nationalism favouring Indian culture over westernisation, thus it extends to all Indians regardless of religion.(Malik & Singh 1992) However, scholars and political analysts have called their Hindutva ideology an attempt to redefine India, recast it as a Hindu country to the exclusion of other religions, making it a Hindu nationalist party in a general sense. The BJP has slightly moderated its stance after the NDA was formed in 1998, due to the presence of parties with a broader set of ideologies. (Sen, 2005)

The BJP's Hindutva ideology has been expressed in different instances and in many of its government policies. It supports the construction of the Ram temple at the site of the Babri Mosque. This issue was its major poll plank in the 1991 general elections. However, the demolition of the mosque during a BJP rally in 1992 resulted in a backlash against it, leading to a decline of the temple's prominence in its agenda.

(Seshia, 1998 pp 1036-1050) The education policy of the NDA government reorganised the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and tasked it with extensively revising the textbooks used in Indian schools. Various scholars have stated that this revision, especially in the case of history textbooks, was a covert attempt to "saffronise" Indian history. (Sen , 2005 pp 63) The NDA government introduced Vedic astrology as a subject in college curricula, despite opposition from several leading scientists.

Taking a position against what it calls the "pseudo-secularism" of the Congress party, the BJP instead supports "positive secularism". Vajpayee laid out the BJP's interpretation of Mahatma Gandhi's doctrine of Sarva Dharma Sambhava and contrasted it with what he called European secularism. He had said that Indian secularism attempted to see all religions with equal respect, while European secularism was independent of religion, thus making the former more "positive". (Vajpayee 2007 pp 318-342) The BJP supports a uniform civil code, which would apply a common set of personal laws to every citizen, replacing the existing religious laws for each community. According to historian Yogendra Malik, this ignores the differential procedures required to protect the cultural identity of the Muslim minority. The BJP favours the abrogation of Article 370 from the Indian constitution, which grants a greater degree of autonomy to the Jammu and Kashmir in recognition of the unusual circumstances surrounding its accession to the Indian union. (Malik and Singh 1992)

The BJP opposes illegal migration into India from Bangladesh. The party states that this migration, mostly in the states of Assam and West Bengal, threatens the security, economy and stability of the country. Academics have pointed out that the BJP refers to Hindu migrants from Bangladesh as refugees, and reserves the term "illegal" for Muslim migrants. Academic Michael Gillan writes that this is an attempt to use an emotive issue to mobilise Hindu sentiment in a region where the party has not been historically successful. (Gillan, 2002 pp73-95)

In 2013, the Supreme Court of India reinstated the controversial Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which, among other things, criminalises homosexuality. There was a popular outcry, although clerics, including Muslim religious leaders, stated that they supported the verdict. The BJP president said that the party supported section 377, because it believed that homosexuality was unnatural, though its stand has softened after its victory in the 2014 general elections. (Ramaseshan 2013)

Policies on Economy

The BJP's economic policy has changed considerably since its founding. There is a significant change of economic ideologies within the party. In the 1980s, like the Jana Sangh, it reflected the thinking of the RSS and its affiliates. It supported swadeshi (the promotion of indigenous industries and products) and a protectionist export policy. However, it supported internal economic liberalisation, and opposed the state-driven industrialisation favoured by the Congress.

During the 1996 elections, the BJP shifted its stance away from protectionism and towards globalisation; its election manifesto recommended increasing foreign investment in priority sectors, while restricting it in others. When the party was in power in 1998, it shifted its policy even further in favour of globalisation. The tenure of the NDA saw an unprecedented influx of foreign companies in India. This was criticised by the left parties and the BJP's affiliates (the RSS and the Swadeshi Jagran Manch). The communist parties said that the BJP was attempting to appease the World Bank and the United States government through its neoliberal policies. Similarly, the RSS stated that the BJP was not being true to its *swadeshi* ideology. (Shulman 2000 pp 365- 390)

The two NDA governments in the period 1998-2004 introduced significant deregulation and privatisation of government owned enterprises. It also introduced tariff-reducing measures. These reforms built off of the initial economic liberalization introduced by the Congress government in the early 1990s. India's GDP growth increased substantially during the tenure of the NDA. The 2004 campaign slogan "India Shining" was based on the party's belief that the free market would bring prosperity to all sectors of society. (Guha 2007 pp 710-720). After its unexpected defeat, commentators said that it was

punished for neglecting the needs of the poor and focusing too much on its corporate allies.(Sen, 2005 p 70)

This shift in the economic policies of the BJP was also visible in state governments, especially in Gujarat, where the BJP held power for 16 years. Modi's government, in power from 2002 to 2014, followed a strongly neo-liberal agenda, presented as a drive towards development. Its policies have included extensive privatisation of infrastructure and services, as well as a significant rollback of labour and environmental regulations. While this was praised by the business community, commentators criticised it as catering to the BJP's upper class constituency instead of the poor.(Bobbio 2012, pp 652-668)

Current Political Scenario of India

The practices of the Indian state had been found to be obsolete but no political parties recognized this. This was true of both the Congress Party and the principal opposition party. In any other democratic system, the opposition would have seized these issues as an opportunity to lambast the government. However, in India's case the opposition was also implicated in this system, making it difficult for people to mobilize through conventional channels of politics.

Both parties had closed systems. The Congress Party has no inner party democracy. Similarly, while the BJP is more of an open system, given its origins in Hindu nationalism it has always been governed by a small group of organizations outside the party. Therefore, it became very hard for new entrants and social formations to find expression in these entrenched political parties.

Furthermore, events such as the gang rape incident in Delhi, which saw a breakdown in law and order, sparked serious civil society mobilization, but the inability of these movements to channel themselves through conventional political parties gave rise to fierce anti-political sentiment. This sentiment was first channeled in the anti-corruption movement, and now the AAP(Aam Admi Party), or Common Man Party, has just scored a major electoral victory in Delh.

The AAP's rise demonstrated a number of things. First it is possible to fight elections in India based on new and clean sources of funding. Older parties would justify corruption by citing the need to fund elections, which are actually more expensive than those of the United States, even in absolute terms. Secondly the AAP's presence is forcing the two main parties to respond. The passing of anti-corruption legislation and the creation of the anti-corruption Lokpal entity is a testament to the success of the AAP. Furthermore, the party has also reengaged the Indian middle class in politics, which as a highly privatized class had been distancing itself from the state apparatus. (Wochi Kochi Magazine)

It was squarely fought on a new institutional architecture and on the promise of better service delivery. Even the BJP Party's candidate, Narendra Modi, despite his controversial past, presented himself as a new political force. In the 2014 Indian general election, the BJP won 282 seats, leading the NDA to a tally of 336 seats Lok Sabha. This was the first instance since 1984 of a single party achieving an outright majority in the Indian Parliament and the first time that it achieved a majority in the Lok Sabha on its own strength. The BJP parliamentary leader Narendra Modi was sworn in as the 15th Prime Minister of India on 26 May 2014. Political analysts have provided several reasons for this victory, including the popularity of Narendra Modi, and the loss of support for the Congress due to the corruption scandals in its previous term. The BJP was also able to expand its traditionally upper-caste support base and received significant support from middle-class and Dalit people, although its support among Muslims remained low.(Ndtv India)

Conclusion

The kind of environment which is being created after the general election in which BJP started behaving like a dictatorial government by passing ordinance on many issues is highly against the weaker sections of society. And most recently an ordinance is brought on Land acquisition Bill in the parliament which in many aspect is against the interest of farmers and favouring the interests of Big Corporate houses. Many anti-government protests have been called recently by different civil society groups and also by some political parties on this issue. And the government still has to take a final call on this. Some of the members of parliament (MP) from BJP also issued statements which were highly communal and anti

religious minority especially to the community of non-indian religion like Islam and Christianity. Sometimes, MP's of these party tried in their speeches tried to impose their conservative ideas on women which shows their patriarchal thinking which is again aggressive and oppressive. In recent past many churches were vandalised by these right wing activists and the government is silent on all these issues. The limit of intolerance is crossed when some youths of these groups gang raped a Nun aged seventy years old of a Church to Show disrespect to these minorities in a metropolitan city Kolkata. (Ndtv India)Before the election the present ruling party was promising a lot on development, social and economic security and "Acchhe Din" (Good Days) for the common people but as it came to the power, everything strated to go against the common and weaker masses and only "Acchhe Din" for corporates and upper caste of Hindu society.

Unfortunately, all the aforesaid incidents are completely opposite to the idea and principles of the republic of India but due to the lack of political will and a weak opposition, the people of India have to be the victim of their own choice. Indian society currently is in need of emergent social and psychological reform of itsociety if in real sense it wants to take an important place in the map of the World.

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