Introduction

It has been widely acknowledged that at the heart of the remarkable success story that marks India's rapid strides in development and its emergence as a front-ranking global player, is its achievement in having built one of the world's most enduring and substantive democracies. Six decades of a democratic national framework that has worked to address the challenge of a sharply variegated social base, including the fact of glaring socioeconomic disparities, have also reflected in the deliberate construction of different political and institutional mechanisms and structures, designed to enhance the democratic content in the political system. As India became a republic in 1950 and adopted a Constitution that emphasised secular governance and a civic national culture, in order to acknowledge the multicultural and composite cultural legacy that had gone into the making of India's national freedom from colonial rule, there have been a series of steps designed to strengthen the representative character of Indian democracy.

The political leadership and the architects of the Constitution, seeking to insulate the emerging Indian Union from the dangers of fragmentation and disintegration, put the forging of national unity right at the top of their agenda of priorities in the construction of the national framework. The trauma of partition had divided families and tore communities apart—a phenomenon that reflected the emergence of discrete communal identities in the political sphere—manifesting as Muslim separatism and Hindu communalism. The fact that
independence and democracy could be put in grave danger by any association with these impulses, ensured that India as an independent nation anchored itself to a democratic vision, founded on the principles of secularism and civic nationalism. The Constitution that was framed, as has been observed, consciously addressed this "fear of disorder". It has been noted that for virtually all the members of the Constituent Assembly, "a strong Centre and a strong Indian state were underlying assumptions" because "fear of disintegration was in the forefront of their minds and they proclaimed that under no circumstances, would any further secessionist moves by any groups or units of the Union or any of its peoples be tolerated." The Union of India was to be "permanent and indissoluble."

With this primary concern as a starting point, the visionary builders of the political framework for the Indian Union recognised that just as secularism and the protection of the rights of religious minorities were imperatives to keep the communal forces at bay, it would be equally important to place emphasis on the protection of regional autonomy and linguistic pluralism. Thus the first decade after Independence saw the emergence of a political structure of power sharing between the Centre and the States, that if not classically federal had strong elements of federalism. The creation of linguistic States, a development that Jawaharlal Nehru, with his zeal for the building of national unity, was not quite in consonance with but nonetheless acknowledged as inevitable, also reflected the structural provisions for a representative democratic process. Another important manifestation of the deep commitment of the Indian nation-state to the idea of equal participation of all its constituents in the national framework was the idea of enacting substantive and comprehensive social justice measures, the most significant being the provision of reservations in education and

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government employment for scheduled castes and tribes, and then by extension, the acknowledgment of the problem of social and educational backwardness of other caste groups by providing quotas to them in these arenas. Thus to sum up, the commitment of the Indian state to democracy was a deep-rooted one, with a strong institutional structure to ensure its correct working. The emphasis laid on economic planning and greater focus on distributive justice ensured that the diverse stakeholders comprising the base of the Indian nation felt connected and participatory, quickly developing a distaste for disintegrative and divisive impulses within the system. What was striking was the manner in which the Indian state has transcended various external and internal threats to its integrity because of its strong consensus on secular democracy and civic nationalism. It was apparent that secularism as part of a larger canvas of democratic rights was seen as a necessary ingredient of modernisation, especially since most Indians shared the aspirations of making India a front-ranking nation and economic power.

Given these strong stakes in pluralism and civic nationalism, the rise of Hindu cultural nationalism and its demand for a reopening of the issue of India's national identity, has presented one of the most formidable challenges to the democratic framework in recent times. Manifesting as a movement for Hindu majoritarianism in the political sphere, the politics of mobilisation and polarisation as practiced by its proponents has sharply tested the political capacities of the secular governing structure. Hindu cultural nationalism is not a new phenomenon in Indian political life, having been an undercurrent since its sprouting before partition and independence but until recently, it did not have the profile or the influence to pose a serious challenge to the definition of Indian nationhood. After independence, it had been marginalised and had remained dormant for the most part of India's historical experience, especially when the Nehruvian consensus on democracy and secularism enjoyed political
dominance. What stands out is its full-blown resurgence in recent decades. The emergence of the movement for Hindu cultural nationalism in the 1980s and 1990s had a deeply divisive effect, triggering two major catastrophes that have sharply polarised Indian society and caused disrepute to this country in the global arena—the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992 and the riots in Gujarat in 2002 in which several hundreds of Muslim citizens were slaughtered and brutalised.

The ascendancy of Hindu cultural nationalism or majoritarianism as it implies, in political terms is a serious threat to the secular and civic orientation of the Indian nation-state. For the first time in decades, there was a substantive threat to the essential character of the Indian state, as it had been conceived of and as had evolved since independence. The widespread reach of the political arguments of the Hindu nationalist campaign, many of which were clearly unsubstantiated claims, put pressure as never before on the political and governing agendas, forcing an unhealthy shift of focus from more pressing issues relating to development and governance. Another striking aspect of the pervasiveness of Hindutva's appeal in the 1980s and 1990s among the middle classes, which accounted for its sudden visibility in the public sphere was that a movement that had been regarded as a fringe phenomenon or a historical relic until the late 1980s had suddenly acquired momentum and its doctrines a new respectability.

A number of explanations have been offered for the rise of Hindu nationalism in the recent period. The first and the most obvious is the perception that as the Nehruvian consensus on social and economic policy appeared to be giving way to a new economic vision predicated on greater integration with the global economy, during the '80s, the Nehruvian political framework also came under sharp scrutiny, with the old consensus on the set of democratic values of secularism, social justice and the emphasis on equality,
coming under pressure. It has been noted in a recent study that "already by the mid-1980s, the old grammar of Indian politics had irrevocably changed and national parties were finding it increasingly difficult to operate in old ways." The mode of conceptualisation of economic priorities had so changed with the new regime of "consumer sovereignty" suggesting that "the nation" as a concept was "on the way out in the imagination of the articulate, vocal middle classes."\(^\text{2}\) Several studies have pointed to the fact that the Congress party, until this period, the standard-bearer of secular nationalism had itself by adopting strategies that alternately abetted majority and minority communalism, helped to foster Hindu majoritarianism. There have also been explanations that draw from the perception of flaws in the workings of secular nationalism as conceived of by Nehru and his successors. For instance, Thomas Blom Hansen has argued that one issue was the unresolved contradiction between the cultural sphere where communities were encouraged to assert their own specificity and the political sphere which was not supposed to be "contaminated" by unilateralist celebrations of one community or the open representation of the particularist interests of one confessional group.\(^\text{3}\)

What is of significance in the demonstration of Hindu majoritarian inclinations is that this open challenge to the national identity of the Indian state has been accompanied by a politics of polarisation on the ground, which has targeted minority groups, Muslims and Christians, charging them with "extra-territorial loyalties", with the strategic design of diluting their national credentials and thereby asserting the superior national rights of Hindus. The danger to the democratic structure of these majoritarian assertions cannot be overstated, especially as it puts at risk the remarkable successes scored in economic


\(^\text{3}\) Thomas Blom Hansen, The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India (Princeton University Press, 1999.)
development, the addressing of socioeconomic disparities and of social backwardness, achievements that have put India in a leading position in the developing world. The resurgence of Hindu nationalism, albeit contained at this present moment, marked a costly departure from the constitutionally enshrined understanding of the Indian nation as a civic democracy in which all citizens, regardless of their ethnic, religious, linguistic and regional identities have equal stake. At the core of the tension that had emerged between the original concept of Indian nationalism as embodied in the Indian Constitution and the Hindu majoritarian challenge is also a clash of two conceptual approaches to nationalism, the cultural nationalist versus the civic/territorial view of nationality formation. This is a conflict that has played out on many other sites worldwide with equally painful costs—the struggle between cultural nationalism and civic nationalism has produced brutal outcomes such as the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia. India's own struggle with Hindu cultural nationalism has come perilously close to such moments as was seen in Gujarat in April 2002, where officials of the state and members of the ruling party, the BJP, were seen as actively participating in the mass violence against Muslims.

This thesis seeks to explore in depth the significant trends of the emergence of Hindu cultural nationalism as a political phenomenon in Indian historical experience. The focus of this study is an ambitious one, seeking to connect the threads of the pre-independence discourse of the Hindu nationalists as represented by the ideologues of the Hindu Mahasabha to the ideological and discursive themes of the latter day Hindu majoritarian campaign that was assembled in the late 1980s and the 1990s, culminating in the Gujarat developments of 2002. Equally striking is the evidence that the advance of Hindutva has been effectively stalled as a result of the defeat of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance in 2004. But while Hindu nationalism appears to have receded into the background in the last three years, some of its basic
themes are critical elements in the ideological platform of parties of the Hindu Right like the BJP. These themes reflect the core doctrines of Hindu nationalism—such as the attack on secularism, derisively characterized by its ideologues as "pseudo-secularism", the suggestion that minority groups, particularly Muslims are being "appeased" by the Congress and other secular parties and finally the most politically debilitating assertion that the secular parties and politicians, by practicing "vote-bank politics" were encouraging secessionist and terrorist tendencies among Muslims, endangering India's national security. Therefore it is essential to identify the core elements of the Hindu nationalist strategies of communal mobilisation and polarisation, in order to understand how it gained the momentum it did in the period between the late 1990s and 2002. It is also important to understand what were the factors that enabled the Hindu nationalist discourse to acquire the influence and credibility that it did, among sections of the Hindu middle classes at a certain point of time, thereby opening up unprecedented political space for a challenge to India's secular democratic framework.

An important aim of this thesis is to explore the challenge to the prevailing definition of nationhood as a civic-territorial one from the majoritarian demand for a more Hindu orientation of Indian nationhood. The thesis which is based on a detailed scrutiny of the Hindu nationalist discourse and its salience in terms of its particular relationship to the broader political context at given points in time, explores the context of the evolution of the Hindu nationalist challenge. A number of studies, as will be noted in the brief review of the literature below on this subject, have explained how Hindu nationalism acquired the political space for its reentry into the political discourse. What needs further explanation is how the demand for a reopening of the issue of national identity, several decades after the question had originally been settled, gained the momentum and credibility that it did in the recent
period. It is the main hypothesis of this study that Hindu cultural nationalism *per se* had very little resonance in the first three decades after independence as other development and governing priorities took over, with issues like nationhood and definition of national identity receding into the realm of historical speculation. It required a dramatic makeover by the forces of Hindu cultural nationalism to launch a re-entry, and that was effected by transforming its original movement for Hindu nationhood into a platform showcasing demands for a Hindu majoritarian orientation of the Indian national identity. In other words, by challenging the idea of a secular and affiliation-free public sphere, the cultural nationalists were challenging the very basis of Indian nationhood.

A critical aspect of this challenge, which is a central theme of this dissertation and is one of its main subjects of discussion, was the strategic compulsion on the part of Hindu nationalism to link its core discourse of nationhood relying on the postulates of claimed prior antiquity, sacred geography and numerical preponderance, to a vigorous campaign primarily criticising and stigmatising the Muslim community. A large part of the focus of this thesis is on this aspect. Since the issue of nationhood is of paramount importance to cultural nationalist campaigns, it is an obvious strategic imperative to ensure the stigmatisation and isolation of minority groups that stand in the way of the majority cultural group gaining hegemony. In the case of the Indian nation-state, given the historical circumstances of the birth of Pakistan and the claims made that it represented the homeland of Muslims of the subcontinent, the Hindu nationalists had found it strategically necessary and tactically convenient to launch periodic campaigns against Muslims, charging them with dual loyalties, or being conduits for Pakistan's alleged strategic designs to break up India. This thesis has a detailed exploration of this aspect, linking up the Hindu nationalist narrative on this theme from the pre-independence period to the vigorous denunciations of the alleged Pakistan-
Indian Muslim connection, that surfaced in the anti-Muslim campaign in Gujarat all through 2002.

Review of literature

The various stages and aspects of the rising phenomenon of Hindu nationalism have been documented in detail and significant conceptual ground has already been covered in mapping out the nature and the reach of the Hindu majoritarian challenge. What has been established is that the rise of Hindutva is not just a passing cloud on the Indian political horizon but is a political phenomenon of long-term significance. Another feature that highlights the strategic skill of the Hindutva forces in manipulating the current set of political circumstances, that in essence, reflect a secular and civic national orientation, is their expressed readiness to function within this context. Thus, it has been pointed out that the efforts of the Hindu nationalists to capture the commanding heights of the Indian polity are circumscribed by their desire to function within and draw legitimacy from the existing democratic discourse.

Rajeev Bhargava has argued ⁴ that "the discursive field set out by liberal democracy continues to shape, enable and constrain the political strategies and discursive performance of Hindu nationalists....liberal democracy is part of the standing discursive conditions in Indian society and that therefore Hindu nationalists frequently possess a motive to legitimate their actions in terms of its normative vocabulary." Bhargava also observes that "what might be called the residual normative power of the Constitution; no matter how mauled, abused or neglected, the Constitution still retains instrumental value even for Hindutva

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forces...the political party of Hindu nationalists, the BJP is an electorally-driven, culture-sensitive party in search of moral hegemony and looking to extend by all possible means its moral legitimacy across diverse groups. Therefore wherever possible it hopes to co-opt the language of the Constitution. Since the BJP lacks complete legitimacy in the moral climate in which it finds itself it cannibalises other values in order to legitimate its behaviour.” Other studies have noted that unlike other fundamentalist or theocratically oriented movements, Hindu nationalism in principle accepts the separation of religion and politics but criticises the Indian state for failing to adhere to that principle in its "appeasement" of Muslims. Amrita Basu 5 notes that "the very grounds on which the BJP supports secularism in fact undermine it". As she has explained, the BJP's majoritarian redefinition of secularism draws from the Indian concept of Sarva Dharma Samabhava or an equal respect for all religions rather than the western concept of secularism, which allows the BJP to claim that the religious majority was being discriminated against in the state's "appeasement" of Muslims in its fear of "hurting" Muslim religious sensibilities. Basu points out that the implication is that 'whereas Hindu religious practices are part of the fabric of Indian cultural life, Muslim observance is not." The major impediments to secularism in India are thus the state and the Muslim community. "By opposing the state's attempt to protect minority interests, the BJP seeks to redefine democracy as majority rule and minority rights as a matter of special bargaining." 

Thomas Blom Hansen in his 1999 study, cited above, has made similar points that Hindu nationalism's political success "does not grow out of the deficiencies of democracy but is the product of a series of intensely fought elections over the last decade and of equally intense battles over religious sites,

5 Amrita Basu, "The Transformation of Hindu Nationalism? Towards A Reappraisal", Frankel, et.al., (ed) Transforming India, op.cit,
rituals and spaces, over the meanings of shared symbols of Indian culture; over the meaning of secularism, history...the movement has grown and come to power largely by obeying the procedures of parliamentary democracy.” Hansen also makes the important point that “democracy gives rise to a new imagination of society that makes new identities and claims possible but also makes possible new forms of violent conflict and new fantasies of power and xenophobias.”

The sources of the Hindu nationalist imagination lie deep in India's pre-Independence past and it is from these, that the latter-day ideologues of the BJP, VHP and the RSS draw their ideological sustenance. The evolution of the Hindu nationalist movement has been panoramically laid out by Christophe Jaffrelot in his seminal study 6 in which he has detailed the strategies and tactics of the Hindu nationalists in terms of ideology and mobilisation. Jaffrelot’s main argument is that Hindu nationalism which was constructed as an ideology between the 1870s and the 1920s and evolved into a movement relied primarily on a strategy of “stigmatising and emulating threatening Others” which enabled the movement at an ideological level to stigmatise Muslims and mobilise Hindu sentiment while also emulating threatening Others such as the British colonialist.

Jaffrelot points out that “throughout its formative stages the Hindu nationalist movement has employed a strategy of stigmatisation and emulation of ‘threatening Others’. In the first phase the dominating presence of these Others often exaggerated aroused strong feelings of vulnerability....The second phase was characterised by efforts to reform Hindu society through a selective imitation of those cultural traits from which the Other was believed to have gained its strength and hence its superiority. " He also notes that "from its inception the RSS acted within the logic of a strategy of stigmatisation and emulation in the manner of the Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha. Founded

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like these predecessors to defend Hindus against ‘threatening Others’, the RSS immediately set itself the task as did the earlier organisations, of inscribing in Hindu society the values identified as the basis of the strength of the British and the Muslims." The mimetic movement, according to Jaffrelot, was concerned above all with "the principle of national solidarity seen as characteristic of the British and contrasting strongly with the social fragmentation of Hinduism. From the Hindu nationalist point of view Muslims fulfilled the role of ‘threatening Others’ while the British colonialists represented the Other to be emulated."

Another important point highlighted by Jaffrelot and pertinent to further studies of Hindu nationalism is that the Hindu nationalist movement apparently discovered along the way that the more ‘militant’ strategic option was more effective than the ‘moderate’ option adopted by the Jan Sangh which relied on the Sangathanist method of having a network of activists penetrate civil society in an ethno-religious mobilisational effort. It was felt that the Sangathanist techniques did not allow for an expansion of base of the Hindu nationalist movement as effectively as the more aggressively xenophobic approach of the RSS-trained leaders who decided that Hindu nationalist ideology could only “gain unqualified support in a situation where the ‘Other’ (Muslim and Christian) was subjectively perceived as posing a threat sufficiently serious to create an inferiority complex among sections of the majority community.” Jaffrelot points out that in 1980, Hindu nationalists felt they had reached a deadlock and the RSS which now considered the BJP’s ‘moderate’ approach irrelevant, evolved a strategy of “ethno-religious mobilisation, the main agency of which was the VHP.” Its aim was the creation of a Hindu vote bank...the 1980s saw a gradual return by the BJP to the combination of ‘militant’ strategies.” Hindu nationalist identity found itself “invigorated” through the reactivation of a vulnerability complex among many Hindus that was sparked off by conversions to Islam in
1981 and sustained by the Shah Bano affair. “The militant Hindu identity was once again refashioned through a strategy of stigmatisation and emulation of threatening Others.” In essence, Jaffrelot’s thesis that the Hindu nationalist movement has grown in strength and influence as a result of its strategy of ‘stigmatisation and emulation’ has been echoed by many other scholars who agree that the Hindu nationalists require an ‘enemy’ to mobilise communal sentiment in its favour. Richard H Davis in an essay on “The Iconography of Rama’s Chariot”, part of a collection of essays edited by David Ludden (Making India Hindu: 1996) makes a similar observation-“like many fundamentalist movements worldwide, the VHP required a worthy adversary to warrant its dichotomising strategy of confrontation and accordingly they aggrandised, reified and mythologised their Islamic antagonist…framing Muslim identity around a history of medieval conquest and iconoclasm embodied in the persons of Mughal rulers rather than the social state of contemporary Muslims rendered the Indian Muslim community much more of a threat.”

Most of the studies that have been done on the Hindu nationalist movement have highlighted the requirement for an "enemy" to be positioned in the cultural nationalist narrative seeking hegemony for the Hindus and the obvious targets were the Muslim and Christian communities. As noted above, the targeting of the Muslim community served two purposes, the first to establish the "enemy" standing in the way of the Hindus coming into their own and the second, to reassert the Hindu nationhood demand by contrasting this to the fact that Muslims already had a nation in Pakistan.

This dominant aspect of the Hindu nationalist campaign was most effectively captured by Jaffrelot’s phrase “stigmatisation and emulation” which appears to be the conclusion reached by most other analyses, that the advance and spread of the Hindu majoritarian movement in India through the decades have been facilitated and accelerated by the launch of campaigns on the basis of
identifying the minority communities, primarily the Muslim community, as “enemies” and “alien”. Studies by Paul R. Brass (Language, Religion and Politics in North India, Cambridge, 1974) and Bruce D Graham (Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics, Cambridge 1990) have highlighted how the majority-minority contestation took place on issues like the protection of Urdu, which came under substantial pressure from Hindu nationalist activists, underscoring the battle over nationhood even while having gone underground in the 1970s was still being fought in the cultural sphere.

Paul Brass in a more recent study has traced in some detail the trajectory of Hindu nationalist political activity which consists of a process of "historical rectification" accompanied by a "demonisation of the Muslims as a separate people, a foreign body implanted in the heart of Hindu India." Brass has also pointed to the fact that the move to assert Hindu hegemony has involved the identification of Indian Muslims and Pakistan as obstructions in achieving this goal of hegemony. Studies of the RSS and the VHP have highlighted this aspect. These organisations have developed strategies and tactics that hinge upon anti-Muslim mobilisation. Pralay Kanungo's study of the RSS, (RSS’s Tryst with Politics, 2002) based on extensive interviews at RSS training camps, noting that the RSS is essentially in search of long-term Hindu cultural hegemony, observes that the swayamsevaks in their daily discussion circles are repeatedly reminded of “Muslim oppression” and “Muslim atrocities” against the Hindu community. Kanungo notes that “community consciousness becomes communal consciousness...in a 'communalised' situation, the intensity of communal consciousness is related to one’s perception about ‘others’ who are considered enemies.” Kanungo argues that the construction of a Muslim stereotype has rendered it easier for the RSS to persuade so many Hindus to its

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anti-Muslim views. Further, by linking the anti-Muslim campaign to a larger challenge to the secular national ethos, the RSS was able to craft new strategies of mobilisation of the Hindu community for the BJP. Another study by Manjari Katju, *Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Indian Politics*, 2003, notes that the VHP moved from a relatively moderate agenda to a militant and revivalist one in the 1980s. Using the metaphors and cultural symbolism of *yatras* which aimed at popularizing the idea of a united Hindu society, the VHP launched a narrative that hinged on the theme that Hindus needed protection from Islam and Christianity, both religions with global backing. The VHP took the lead in attempts to consolidate the Hindus as a political community and entrench them in India as a permanent political majority.

These studies have identified the pattern of Hindu cultural nationalist mobilisation as centring on two key aspects. The first is the stigmatisation and stereotyping of minority groups, particularly Muslims as obstacles in the path of Hindu hegemony. The second is an assertion of majoritarian cultural nationalism which demands the cognition and acknowledgment of the importance of Hindu cultural symbols in the public sphere. As has been noted, these add up to a challenge to the idea of a secular national identity and an affiliation-free governing structure.

**Objectives of the Study**

It is the objective of this thesis to take the understanding of the trajectory of Hindu cultural nationalism further by a study of its discourse and its principal themes. The cultural nationalist discourse as it has played out in the public arena is an important tool of mobilisation for the campaign of Hindu cultural nationalism. The aim of this exploration of the discourse is to examine as to
whether the discourse has helped legitimate the goals of the majoritarian campaign and validate the demand for a reopening of the issue of Indian nationhood. This thesis seeks to address several important questions that are of relevance to an assessment of the nature and significance of the challenge of Hindu cultural nationalism.

The first issue requiring further investigation is the process by which Hindu cultural nationalism, a movement that had been marginalised and rejected as India became an independent nation, returned to the political arena, several decades after, retaining much of the same core discourse of nationhood. This thesis examines the processes by which cultural nationalism managed to retain its presence in a largely secular and civic nationalist political environment. One focus of this exploration is whether the strategic conversion of a movement for a Hindu nation into a more modest political platform concentrating on a majoritarian agenda of mostly cultural demands within the existing national framework, helped Hindu nationalism acquire legitimacy in a secular public sphere.

Another important aspect requiring further examination is the utility of the stigmatisation of the Muslim community in the larger context of the Hindu nationalist strategies. While the substantive research on Hindu nationalism has highlighted the aspect of the stigmatisation of the Muslim community, the critical link between the stigmatisation aspect and the nationhood aspect has not been effectively made, in studies so far. The studies of Hindu nationalism, including that of Jaffrelot while identifying the stigmatisation of the Muslim community as an important element in the Hindu nationalist strategies of mobilisation, have not explained the importance of this issue in terms of the nationhood claims of Hindu cultural nationalism. This thesis attempts an exploration of this important dimension. The question that requires further scrutiny is whether because of the formation of Pakistan, described as a
symbolic homeland for Muslims of the subcontinent, it was found useful to single out the Muslim community among all the minority groups in order to highlight the "alienness" of Muslims in India, and conversely claim stronger national credentials for the Hindu community, suggesting that it was only the Hindu community which could have feelings of pure nationalism towards the Indian nation. This thesis which is based on a study of the Hindu nationalist discourse from the pre-Independence period to the present, looks closely at the ideological and political connections that surface in the Hindu nationalist narrative between the stigmatisation of Muslims and the claim for a Hindu nation. The question that is being explored here is whether in the absence of this strategy of stigmatisation of the Muslim community and its purported links with Pakistan, Hindu cultural nationalism could have the resonance or momentum that it did in the political arena in the 1980s and '90s. A secondary focus of this enquiry is whether the establishment of the stereotype of a "disloyal" Muslim community with unbreakable ties to Pakistan, the perceived "national enemy" in the public arena, helped consolidate Hindu majority opinion around the idea of a national identity with a greater Hindu orientation.

Another critical dimension which has not received scrutiny in studies of Hindu nationalism so far, is the impact of the conceptual imagery of "Islamic terror" which has entered the discourse of Hindu nationalists after the demolition of the Babri Masjid and the retaliatory terrorist strikes in various Indian cities, is the strategic focus in the Hindu nationalist narrative on the concept of Islamic terrorism. The mid-90s saw an enormous preoccupation on the part of Hindutva ideologues with building the stereotype of Muslims as terrorists and separatists. It was a focus that sharpened after the bomb attacks on the World Trade Center in the U.S on September 11, 2001 with Hindu nationalists eagerly stepping forward to make common cause with the Western world's campaign against terror, directed at West Asia. The question that this
thesis seeks to pursue further in this regard is as to how much of an impact the new focus on Islamic terror had on the mobilisational aspect of the Hindu nationalist strategies of majoritarian consolidation.

A larger question that is the crux of the enquiry being undertaken here is as to what is the relationship of this aspect of minority stigmatisation to the efforts to put pressure on the national consensus for secularism. The thesis explores the political efforts to discredit the secular national ethos, primarily the BJP's campaign against secularism, calling it "pseudo-secularism", its allegations that it is tantamount to "minority appeasement". The question sought to be explored here is whether the attack on the secular national consensus, linking it to "minority appeasement" was seen by the Hindu nationalists as the only way forward to create fresh conceptual space for the reopening of the issue of Indian national identity.

Another issue that requires further explanation is as to why the Hindu nationalist strategies of stigmatisation and cultural revivalism did not add up to an effective challenge to the consensus on a secular national ethos. This thesis places this question as an undercurrent of the entire exploration, in an exercise to evaluate the proposition that secularism as a governing doctrine still retains high credibility in the public discourse.

It must be noted that a study of the discourse would have to be placed in the larger context of the political environment that it operated in. Thus the contention between the cultural nationalist discourse and the prevailing secular consensus, the impact of the two trajectories on each other and the relative salience of the cultural nationalist narrative at times when the secular consensus has been particularly strong, are factors that this thesis takes into account in its analysis.
Methodology

This thesis has based its research on an extensive use of primary sources. The exploration of the dynamics and strategies of Hindu nationalism and majoritarianism has been greatly aided by a number of interviews of the leading spokespersons of Hindu nationalism. The leading figures of the movement, LK Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, Narendra Modi, Bal Thackeray, Balraj Madhok, Govindacharya, S. Gurumurthy, along with several other BJP, Shiv Sena, RSS and VHP sources have offered their perspectives for this study which has helped illuminate the strategies behind the discursive themes of Hindu cultural nationalism. Other primary sources include a wide range of Hindu nationalist literature from the pre-Independence period to the present. The writings of V.D Savarkar, M.S Golwalkar, Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, Deendayal Upadhyaya and Balraj Madhok have been examined in detail to highlight the emergence of the core discourse of Hindu nationhood. This thesis has also extensively drawn from the archives of the RSS weekly Organiser, (1947 to the 1990s) for a deeper scrutiny of the core themes of the discourse at various points of time in the Indian historical experience and for an understanding of the dynamics of its confrontation with the secular political environment and the priorities of the governing agenda. The documents of the Hindu Mahasabha, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh and the Bharatiya Janata Party, pertaining to significant party resolutions and speeches have also provided valuable material for discursive analysis of the trends of the Hindu nationalist ideological perspective.

For an understanding of the evolution and resilience of the secular national consensus, the thesis has drawn from the abundant material available in the Constituent Assembly debates, the writings of Jawaharlal Nehru, B.R Ambedkar and Abul Kalam Azad.
The archives of *The Hindu* newspaper have been a valuable source enabling a detailed scrutiny of the evolution of the Hindu nationalist political positions on the various issues on the national agenda at different historical moments.

A number of secondary sources have also been used, including newspaper and magazine reports on the various campaigns and political strategies of the Hindutva campaign. There are also numerous websites of a Hindutva orientation which also contain themes of strategic import to the Hindu nationalist cause. This thesis has also drawn on the previous research in the scholarly studies that have highlighted various aspects of the workings of the Hindu nationalist movement, including studies on the Jana Sangh, the BJP, the Shiv Sena, the RSS and the VHP. For an understanding of the establishment of the secular national ethos, this thesis has also drawn from research in studies on the Congress party and other analyses of the historical processes establishing secularism as the dominant national ethos in India.

**Chapter Scheme**

This thesis has been placed in a historical periodisation from the pre-Independence period to the present in an exercise to provide a connected account of the evolution of the Hindu cultural nationalist perspective and its existence as a political challenge in a secular national environment.

The first chapter examines the historical context of the pre-independence period and the emergence of a core discourse of Hindu nationhood. This chapter notes that even at that stage, the Hindu nationalist ideologues led by Savarkar and Golwalkar appeared to realise that theirs was a losing battle against the mighty force of the mass movement of Indian nationalism that was fast moving towards the adoption of a secular democracy based on civic nationalism.
In the second chapter, the dynamics of the confrontation between the dying movement for cultural nationalism and the fast-evolving consensus for a secular national identity is examined. In both the first and the second chapters, the effect of the birth of Pakistan on the strategies of the Hindu nationalists vis-à-vis their attempts to marginalise the Muslims, is also taken into account.

The third chapter explores the context in which secularism was seen as reflecting only one aspect of a commitment to a democratic vision intended to power a higher scale of economic growth and distribution. It also studies the strategies and tactics of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh to retain the relevance of Hindu cultural nationalism by attempting to revive the suspicion about Muslim loyalties using slogans such as "Indianisation" This chapter also scrutinises the political efforts of the Jana Sangh and other Hindu nationalist organisations to utilise the context of the wars and strains with Pakistan to create space for majoritarian mobilisation. The impact of Indira Gandhi's campaign for national unity in the context of her emphasis on socialist transformation on the Hindu nationalist political activity, is also considered.

The fourth chapter highlights the resurgence of Hindu nationalism. The political circumstances that allowed the Hindu nationalist organisations like the Jana Sangh and later the Bharatiya Janata Party to reenter the mainstream of the political arena by becoming part of anti-Congress political coalitions is noted. Other factors that helped legitimate the BJP's strategies of mobilisation such as the anti-reservations stir are briefly examined. The focus of this chapter is however the turning point of the Ayodhya movement and its consequences. This chapter draws extensively from interviews of the key players of this period, to explain the emergence of a distinct majoritarian political assertion in this period that took on combative overtones vis-à-vis the secular national consensus and the Muslim community, as it was moving to a more ambitious strategic
mode that had in its sights a challenge to the governing structure and the Constitution.

The fifth chapter examines the impact of cultural nationalist strategies and tactics, including its discourse on the political arena, using the example of the ground situation in Gujarat in 2002. The idea here is to explore the impact of the Hindu cultural nationalist campaign against the Muslim community, particularly the canvassed stereotype of the Muslim as being a terrorist with separatist inclinations and pan-Islamic sympathies, on the psyche of the majority community. The material for this chapter is also culled from interviews, the extensive news reports on the Gujarat events and the Hindu nationalist discursive interventions. This chapter also notes the negative impact of the Gujarat carnage on the fortunes of the Hindu cultural nationalist campaign, with the national elections of 2004 repudiating the BJP-led NDA rule, suggesting that the cultural nationalist campaign does not have enduring appeal.

It is the endeavour of this thesis to take the understanding of the dynamics and strategies of Hindu cultural nationalism forward. But a more important aim of this study is to examine whether such challenges, inherently premised on the strategy of polarisation and tactics of stigmatisation, can pose any real threat to the secular and democratic essence of the Indian national identity, a critical underpinning for its success as a front-ranking democracy and economic power.