



Tribal Identity, Religious Conversion and Violence in India

A Preliminary Note

Sarbeswar Sahoo Indian Institute of Technology

On 23rd December 2007, when the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was celebrating the electoral victory of Narendra Modi in Gujarat, a group of approximately 150 to 200 militant Hindutva activists in Kandhamal district of Orissa pulled out a pastor from the bus. He was beaten, tonsured and paraded naked. The next day, a mob of about 3000 people, armed with tridents, axes, crude bombs and kerosene, attacked the Church of our Lady of Lourdes, burnt the altar and destroyed the Christmas decorations. Within the next 72 hours, across the tribal dominated Kandhamal district, 5 parish churches, 48 village churches, 5 convents, 7 hostels and several church-run institutions bore the brunt of a Hindutva onslaught.¹ Not just in Orissa, incidences of such violence against religious minorities, especially Christians and Muslims, have increased in different parts of India since the 1990s. Another recent and most horrific example is the Gujarat riot of 2002 where more than 2,000 Muslims were killed and 150,000 were left homeless.²

Although the recent phase of violence against religious minorities is somewhat unique, religious conflict in general, more commonly known in South Asia as “communalism”, is not new to India. In the post-colonial period, following the reemergence of the Hindu nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in the 1970s after its long exile from the Indian political scene for the killing of Mahatma Gandhi, incidences of religious violence against Muslims and

Christians have increased tremendously. 5 judicial commissions have exposed the role of the RSS in various communal riots: Ahmadabad 1969, Bhivandi 1970, Tellicheri 1971, Jamshedpur 1979, Kanyakumari 1982, Mumbai 1992-93 and others.³ The demolition of Babri mosque in Ayodhya in 1992 by the militant Hindus resulted in the spread of Hindu-Muslim riots across the country. Although anti-Muslim sentiment has been as what Varshney calls the ‘master narrative’ of Hindutva politics⁴, it is observed that since the 1990s the Christian population has increasingly become the targets of Hindutva violence.⁵ As Vinay Lal (2006) has observed, only 38 incidences of violence against Christians were registered in the country between 1964 and 1996. However, in 1997 alone, 24 incidences were noted by the United Christian Forum for Human Rights, and in 1998, the number had gone up to 90, though some Christian spokespersons claimed that the true figure is several times higher.⁶ Recent data from the All India Christian Council suggests that for each year between 2001 and 2005, about 200 anti-Christian attacks were reported in India.⁷

What is interesting about this is that most of these atrocities have occurred in states that not only have a sizable tribal population but are also ruled by the BJP or its allies such as Rajasthan, Gujarat, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Karnataka. These incidences thus raise some uneasy questions about the nature of democratic politics, the relationship be-

tween religion and politics, and the role of the state in Indian society. The central questions, however, are, why have anti-Christian and anti-Muslim violence increased in India in the 1990s as compared to previous years? Why have the BJP-ruled states experienced more cases of violence than the others? How can we explain this increasing religious intolerance in India in general and the BJP-ruled states in particular? Finally, what role has the state in India played in this direction? In order to understand the increasing religious conflict this paper will focus on the north-western state of Rajasthan which has, in recent years, experienced a rise in anti-Christian violence.

A Chronicle of Anti-Christian Violence in Rajasthan

Although Rajasthan has not witnessed large-scale violence like Orissa or Gujarat, it has experienced a large number of violence against religious minorities, for which it is considered as one of the “communally sensitive” (*sambedansil*) states of India. A recent survey of the National Crime Record Bureau shows that Rajasthan has experienced the highest number of riot cases between 1990 and 2001. Attacks against Christian missionaries and converted tribals have increased substantially. These attacks and atrocities against Christians suggest an alarming pattern of violence. The intimidation and physical attack on priests, burning of the Bible, ban on missionary schools, false allegation of forced conversion, destruction of Christian institutions such as schools, hospitals and orphanages, rape of nuns, and attack on Christian meetings and congregations have become regular events in Rajasthan. For example, on 19 February 2004, the RSS and Bajrang Dal activists staged a violent protest against the Emmanuel Mission International (EMI) in Kota. They accused the Mission of converting students and were successful in sending back 270 students from Andhra Pradesh who had come to attend the annual graduation ceremony of Biblical courses.⁸

Similar attacks have continued over the years. In March 2005, the Hindu militants beat up 8 protestant clergymen who had gathered to pray in Koida village of Alwar district and desecrated their copies of

the Bible.⁹ In June 2005, member of the RSS, Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal attacked a peace and spiritual session in Jodhpur organised by Father Paul Mathew.¹⁰ A major blow came when the BJP government of Rajasthan decided to ban the functioning of the EMI in Kota on grounds of religious conversion. The EMI was established in 1960 by Archbishop M.A. Thomas, which today runs around 11,138 churches, 23 Bible institutes, 103 orphanages, 1 hospital, 140 schools and 1 college, among other institutions.¹¹ The government severely harassed the EMI members but it finally lifted all restrictions after a few months. These are only some incidents that have been reported; it is doubtless that many incidents have not been reported at all. In addition, violence against Muslim minorities is also increasing in the state. Such attacks and atrocities on religious minorities have continued over the years, which have tainted the image of Rajasthan in recent years and portrayed it as an intolerant place for religious minorities.

How can we then explain this increasing violence against the religious minorities in India? I would argue that in order to understand the increasing violence it is important to understand the political economy of the tribal society and the larger political developments in India as well as in Rajasthan.

The Political Economy of Tribal Society

Rajasthan is geographically the largest state of India and has a significant tribal population. The southern part of the state is heavily concentrated by the Bhil tribes who comprise 39% of the state's tribal population. In the Udaipur district almost half of the population is tribal and some blocks like Kotra, the focus of my study, have tribal concentrations as high as 90%. Kotra is commonly known as the ‘Kalapani’ – extremely remote and inaccessible – where government officials who are sent there are regarded as having been given a ‘punishment posting’.

The Bhils mainly reside in the hilly regions. The primary sources of their livelihood are shifting cultivation, hunting and collection of forest produce. Dur-

ing feudal rule in Rajasthan, the tribals were heavily exploited as bonded labourers. With the arrival of the British, the Bhils were classified as a violent 'criminal tribe' and their right to use the forest became heavily restricted, which continued even after independence. In addition to this, due to the hierarchical structure of public administration, alarming bureaucratic corruption and huge networks of patron-client relationship, the fruits of developmental planning have not reached the tribal society. The tribal populations of Rajasthan suffer from widespread poverty and marginalisation and are deprived of citizenship and welfare entitlements. In 1981, 54.16% and 1991, 44.73% of Rajasthan's population lived below poverty line, where a majority of them are tribals. The state also suffers from regular draughts accompanied by inevitable scarcities of jobs and food, resulting in acute hunger, malnutrition and disease. The tribals also perform miserably in many of the socio-economic indicators. Illiteracy is very high; life expectancy is very low; and infant and maternal mortality rates among the tribals are very high. All these factors have combined to cause not only economic deprivation but also political powerlessness.

Following this, many non-state actors have taken up the responsibility to improve the lives of the marginalised. Two such major groups are the Christian missionaries and the family of Hindu nationalist organisations – collectively referred to as the Sangh Parivar – that carry out 'development' projects in the tribal areas. In the process of development however, the clash of identity, interest and ideology between these two groups have resulted in confrontation. The Sangh Parivar has accused the missionaries of converting the poor tribals into Christianity through force as well as through allurements; the missionaries have similarly accused the Sangh Parivar of converting the Christian tribals into Hinduism. This may raise questions about the power and agency of the tribals and the Dalits (low-caste people). I would argue that this should not be viewed in a way where the tribals lack an autonomous agency and are easily susceptible to conversion. However, this is a very complex and contingent issue and could be understood only within the social and political context in which it takes place.

Taking the larger political context in the 1990s into account, I argue that there is a direct co-relationship between the rise of the Hindu nationalist BJP to power at the national as well as state level and the increasingly ferocious and frequent attacks against Christians and other religious minorities in different parts of India.¹² The primary reason for this is that the BJP and the Sangh Parivar's tendency toward moral absolutism incline them toward intolerance and, when mobilised politically, such intolerance often results in oppression and violence.¹³ The BJP-led developmental state in Rajasthan has provided significant support – ideological, political, economic and legal – to the Hindu nationalist organisations that are very active at the local level. It will thus be interesting to see how the organisations of Sangh Parivar have collaborated with the state in Rajasthan to strengthen their political ideology and what the implications of such collaboration would be. Before I examine this, it is important to briefly discuss the role of Christian missionaries in the tribal areas of Rajasthan.

Christianity, Conversion and the Tribals in Rajasthan

Until the early 19th century, missionary activity was significantly curtailed by the East India Company's concern about keeping missionaries from disturbing local sensibilities, but the Church pressure in England, the growing legitimisation crisis of empire, and the passing of the Charter Act of 1813 conspired to open India up to Christian proselytisation on a significant basis.¹⁴ According to David Hardiman, the first missionary to work in Rajasthan was James Shepherd of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland. He began his work among the Bhil tribes of Udaipur district in 1877.¹⁵ However, Chaudhary has noted that the Christian missionaries first entered the tribal areas of Rajasthan with the establishment of the Mewar Bhil Corps (MBC) by the British in Kherwada and Kotra in 1841. They provided medical and education services to the tribals in Pai, Baghpura and Banswara.¹⁶ Some reasons for this could be: (1) although the missionaries could manage to convert some caste Hindus into Christianity, it was very dif-

difficult for them to spread their faith amongst the caste Hindus; the missionaries thus concentrated on the tribals and low-caste Hindus who are exterior to and oppressed under Hinduism, and whom they described as a people with no religion¹⁷ and (2) the British considered the tribals as 'aboriginals' and 'backward' and believed that it is their moral duty to 'civilise' these 'backward' people.¹⁸ Colonial medicine in particular proved to be a useful tool in this mission to civilise the 'backward' tribals. In Rajasthan, 'the tribals attracted the attention of missionaries owing to their horrific practice of human sacrifices, deplorable socio-religious and economic conditions and their exploitation by the higher caste Hindus or moneylenders, Rajas, petty police officials, and traders in the tribal areas'.¹⁹

Since then, the number of Churches and missionary activities in the tribal areas has significantly increased. A news report notes that there are more than 10 Churches in Udaipur.²⁰ These churches have been providing medical, educational and social welfare facilities to the poor tribals in Rajasthan. In the process of providing social services to the people, the missionaries also propagate their faith, which eventually resulted in the conversion of many tribals into Christianity. The RSS data shows that the Christian population in India as a percentage of the total population has increased from 2.53% in 1981 to 2.61% in 1991.²¹ In Udaipur, the Christian population has increased by 79.73%; in Rajasthan as a whole they form 0.1% of the total 56.5 million people.²² Following the rise of Christian population, the members of Sangh Parivar have heavily criticised the missionary work and have accused them of indulging in conversion through force and material inducements.

However, the Census data of India shows that Christian population in India has in fact declined from 2.45% to 2.32% between 1981 and 1991.²³ The Justice Wadhava Commission of Enquiry also concluded similar findings and noted that between 1991 and 1998 the Hindu population increased by 2.5%, while the Christian population increased by 0.008%.²⁴ How can we explain this paradox? On the one hand, Hindu nationalists claim that the Christian population in India is rising. On the other hand, the

data shows that the Christian population in India is actually declining. This inconsistency can be explained only if: (1) as V. Sridhar has argued, in their analysis of the Census data the RSS has abused the statistics in several cases, suppressed relevant facts in others, and used bogus figures in still others,²⁵ or (2) as the RSS has argued, the reason why there seems to be a decline of Christian population in the Census data is that since the 1980s the Christians have adopted the strategy of concealing the actual figures of Christian population in India; their goal is to make India a Christian nation in the next three centuries.²⁶ A third reason could also be that many of the tribals and Dalits who have been converted to Christianity are not officially registered as Christians because that would not allow them to access government concessions originally meant for the tribal and Dalit populations. As the *World Christian Encyclopedia* points out, there are substantial numbers of 'crypto-Christians' in India, defined as secret Christian believers not mentioned in census figures.²⁷ Similarly, *Operation World* by Patrick John Stone gives 2.61% as the official figure of the population of Christians in India and 4% as the unofficial figure. It also says that the census figures are 'artificially low' because a number of converts from the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes and other communities do not register themselves as Christians in government records.²⁸

Whatever the reason may be, it is undeniable that Christian missionaries are involved in religious conversion. The Christians see this as their legitimate right because Article 25 of the Indian Constitution has granted all citizens the 'Right to Freedom of Religion' which entails that 'all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice, and propagate religion subject to public order, morality and health'. Although missionaries have accepted that they are involved in religious conversion, they have strongly denied the alleged use of force or inducements to convert people in the tribal areas. They have also declared that conversion is not carried out institutionally or in an organised manner. It is only a matter of personal faith.

Denying all accusations of forced conversion, the Christian organisations in India have condemned the

violence carried out by Hindu nationalists. They have presented themselves as innocent victims and argued that such violence is perpetrated by 'fundamentalists with an ideology of intolerance, cultural exclusivism and dominion, who deny the pluralistic cultural heritage and the right of the poor'. They have further noted that this is 'an attempt by high caste Hindus to retain their hegemony and dominate Indian society'.²⁹ Gauri Vishwanathan has also countered the Hindutva claim and asserts that 'it can, and should be, argued that if missionaries give people services they would otherwise not have had, no one has a right to restrict their activities, particularly when there are no other state-supported or private initiatives. After all, missionaries do not have a monopoly on the opening of new schools and hospitals, and there is nothing to stop Hindus or any other group from doing likewise'.³⁰ Although these arguments explain some aspects of the problem, they do not, however, tell us why the Hindu nationalists find religious conversion a problem. It is thus important to understand the Hindu nationalists' perspective on the problem of conversion in India, which will be discussed in the next section.

Religious Violence and the Politics of Hindu Nationalism

If profession, practice and propagation of one's religion are legitimised by the Constitution of India, why do the Hindu nationalists and the Sangh Parivar oppose religious conversion that is carried out by the Christian missionaries? This question lies at the heart of the problem and can be explained through an understanding of: (1) the ideology of Hindu nationalism and its perception of Christianity and conversion, (2) conversion and the post-colonial anxiety, and (3) the decline of secular nationalism and the rise of the BJP to power.

The Ideology of Hindu Nationalism

Although Hindu nationalism, for the first time in Indian history, managed to capture political power at the national level only during the 1990s, it has a long history. Its origin goes back to the founding of the

RSS in Nagpur in 1925 by Dr. K.B. Hedgewar, who understood the multiple divisions within Hindu society and wished to unite all Hindus against both British colonialism and Muslim separatism in India. Eventually, Hindu nationalism began to be developed as an 'alternative political culture to the dominant idiom in Indian politics, not only because it rejected non-violence as a legitimate and effective *modus operandi* against the British...but also because it rejected the Gandhian conception of the Indian nation'.³¹ Mahatma Gandhi's idea of India was based on religious pluralism and harmonious living of all communities. Although the leaders of India's religious minorities also resisted Gandhi's universalistic conception, Gandhi strongly believed that he spoke for the well-being of all communities. For Gandhi and for the Congress, 'the Indian nation was to be defined according to territorial criterion, not on the basis of cultural features: it encompassed all those who happened to live within the borders of British India'.³²

Hindu nationalism, however, rejected Gandhi's universalistic idea of the Indian nation and advocated for a cultural/religious one where India's national identity will be based on Hinduism which constituted the original and dominant religion of India, and the minorities were to be assimilated with the dominant culture.³³ This notion of nationhood is best described by Savarkar, known as the father of Hindutva ideology, in his book *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* A similar account is also written by the second supreme chief (*sarsanghchalak*) of the Sangh Parivar M.S. Golwalkar, popularly known as Shri Guruji, in his book, *A Bunch of Thoughts*. Savarkar provided an exclusive, extremely radical, and uncompromising form of nationalism and citizenship, which maintained that India, that is Hindustan, is the land of Hindus and its identity is embodied in Hindu culture and civilisation. According to him, there are three essential characteristics of Hindutva or Hinduness: a common nation (*Rashtra*), a common race (*Jati*), and a common civilisation (*Sanskriti*); and a Hindu is he who looks up this land as not only a Fatherland (*Pitribhu*) but also a Holyland (*Punyabhū*).³⁴

Savarkar further pointed out that religions like Sikhism, Jainism, and Buddhism qualify to be

considered as a part of the Hindu Dharma as their forefathers once belonged to the Vaidik Hindu religion and as they share the common cultural and civilisational conceptions of the land. The Muslims and the Christians, however, asserts Savarkar, cannot be identified as Hindus. Although they carried the blood of the Hindus before being converted, they do not consider India as their Holyland. For them, Arabia or Palestine is the Holyland because it is where their mythology and ideas originated.³⁵ For Savarkar, Muslims and Christians are foreign aggressors and 'culturally alien' people (*Mlecchas*) who have forcibly converted Hindus into non-Hindu religions. As a result, the love and loyalty of the converted community has been divided between their Fatherland and their Holyland.

Hindu nationalism thus does not visualise the Christians and Muslims as a part of the Indian nation. They are regarded as aggressors, who pose a threat to the unity of India's culture, identity and nationhood. The history of Muslim conquest of India, the memories of Hindu-Muslim communal violence, the killing of cows and the Partition of India have all established Muslims as the enemies of Indian/Hindu nation. There is, however, not much corresponding narrative that will establish Christians as the enemies.³⁶ This issue has been cleverly articulated by the Hindu nationalists, who have equated Christianity with colonialism/imperialism and provided narratives that depict various kinds of colonial oppression such as the forced mass conversion of the Hindu population by missionaries, which was supported by the British colonial state.³⁷ The Hindu nationalists thus see conversion as a major threat, which is used by the Muslims and Christians to increase their demographic strength as well as to divide the Hindu/Indian society. For them, conversion is 'violence against humanity' and 'converting religions are necessarily aggressive, because conversion implies a conscious intrusion into the religious life of a person and is violence against people who are committed to non-violence.'³⁸

Gandhi was also similarly very much opposed to religious conversion and argued that there should be no attempt to 'wean out' anyone from his or her religious affiliation. He strongly 'deprecated the offering

of material advantages like money, educational facilities and medical services to secure religious conversion'.³⁹ He feared that the British divide and rule policy, expressed particularly through the provision of separate electorates not only for Sikhs, Muslims, Anglo-Indians, Europeans and Indian Christians but also for 'the depressed classes', might eventually separate the great mass of lower-caste Hindus from the rest of the Hindu community. He was also concerned that the Muslim and Christian proselytisation might draw large numbers of untouchables from the Hindu fold. For this reason, he became increasingly opposed to missionary activity, especially those that aimed at converting Hindus, and also often described them as 'anti-national' activities.⁴⁰

Gandhian opposition to conversion thus provided some legitimacy to Hindu nationalist claim. The Muslims and the Christians continued to be considered as the conflicting 'non-self' or 'the intimate enemy' of Hindutva's homogenising nation-state project. This project of homogenisation and denial of pluralism is a reflection of Hindutva's moral absolutism, which not only breeds intolerance towards 'the other' but also justifies violence in society. When such intolerance is supported by the political authority or the state, which has the monopoly over coercive forces, the matter may become more disastrous as it has been observed during the BJP rule in India in general and Gujarat and Rajasthan in particular.

Religious Conversion and the Post-Colonial Anxiety

At the onset of independence, British India became divided into the Muslim dominated Islamic state of Pakistan and the Hindu dominated but secular India. Large-scale Hindu-Muslim communal violence erupted in different parts of the country, which resulted in the killing of 600,000 to 1 million people.⁴¹ The fear of disorder, violence and separatism engulfed the post-colonial state of India. Various secessionist movements also emerged in different parts of the country. Political integration of the Princely States, which were autonomous during the British rule, became rather difficult and threatened the unity of the country. For example, the Nizam of Hyderabad

expressed his will to remain independent. The independence of Hyderabad, however, was considered as a threat to peace and security, which forced Nehru to send the Indian Army and to integrate Hyderabad with India. Several other Princely States like Kashmir, Junagarh, Tripura and Manipur insisted for separation. This period also witnessed violent tribal and peasant uprising in West Bengal and in Andhra Pradesh. The peasants, led by the militant Marxist groups, demanded their rightful share in agriculture and violently resisted the feudal oppression. Added to this, movement for the creation of new states on the basis of language emerged which resulted in the linguistic reorganisation of states in 1956. The southern states also strongly opposed to the imposition of Hindi as the national language. Taking into account these fissiparous tendencies, Selig Harrison in his book *India: the Most Dangerous Decades* concluded that India would soon lead to balkanisation or a dictatorship.⁴²

The territorial unity of the post-colonial state in India was constantly threatened. One such major challenge came in the early 1950s from the tribals of central India, especially from Chhotanagpur region, who demanded a separate state on the basis of their tribal identity. They even submitted a petition to the Linguistic State Reorganisation Committee, which was rejected on the grounds that the tribals of the region did not share a common language.⁴³ This movement came to be known as the Jharkhand movement and threatened the territorial integrity of the Indian nation. It so happened that a majority of these tribals who demanded a separate state were Christians and several Christian missionaries had also been active in this region. As a result of the missionary work during the colonial period, many tribals had been converted to Christianity in this area.⁴⁴ Furthermore, when the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister R.S. Shukla visited the tribal areas, he was strongly protested with black flag and asked to go back. This created the suspicion that the missionaries are involved in inciting the tribals and conspiring to divide the country.

The number of missionaries in the country was also increasing considerably: from 4,683 in 1952 to 5,700 at the beginning of 1955.⁴⁵ This rise in the

number of missionaries and increasing conversion of tribals alarmed the government and created suspicion in the mind of many Indians. Two major steps were taken by the government in this direction. First, following the advice of Thakkar Bappa, well-known for his work among tribals, the government of Madhya Pradesh invited Balasaheb Deshpande, a RSS volunteer, to work among the tribals, which eventually resulted in the establishment of the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA) in 1952 with the objective of tribal welfare and prevention of religious conversion. This organisation is currently working among the tribal populations in all States of India. Second, the government of Madhya Pradesh appointed a Christian Missionary Activities Inquiry Committee in 1954 under the chairmanship of B.S. Niyogi, a retired chief justice of High Court at Nagpur. The committee submitted its report in 1956 which concluded that 'Christian missionaries were inducing low-caste Hindus and tribal peoples to convert with promises of employment, education, or health and other social services'.⁴⁶ The report also suggested that 'large numbers of Dalits and tribals were converting to Christianity, that the number of Hindus in the region was declining, and that the ultimate goal of Christian evangelistic work was secession – either in the form of a Christian-dominated State within the Indian Union or an independent Christian nation along the lines of Pakistan'.⁴⁷

The Niyogi report alarmed many state governments for which they increasingly sought to curb conversion and Christian activity. As Chad Bauman has rightly argued, 'resistance to conversion to Christianity in this context emerged not out of concern for the spiritual state of converts so much as out of anxieties, real or perceived, about the survival of the fledgling Indian nation'.⁴⁸ A number of states introduced the anti-conversion legislation ironically known as the Freedom of Religions Act. This Freedom of Religions Act was first passed in Orissa in 1967, then in Madhya Pradesh in 1968, and in Andhra Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh in 1978. The Indian government refused an unprecedented number of visa applications for new missionaries of recognised societies. As a result, the number of foreign missionaries decreased to 4,800 by early 1959.⁴⁹ The Nehruvian Congress

government was pressurised to pass an anti-conversion law at the national level. Even the Hindu lobbies pressed for a constitutional ban on conversion during the Constituent Assembly debates (1946-50). However, Nehru's uncompromising commitment to secularism, which he had adopted as the 'official ideology' of the post-colonial state, led him to block the Indian Conversion (Regulation and Registration) Bill before the Indian parliament in 1954. In fact, on October 17, 1952 he actually distributed a letter to his chief ministers instructing them to clamp down on the harassment of Christians in their states.⁵⁰ Nehruvian state strongly followed 'religious neutrality'; all religions enjoyed equal status and none either determined citizenship or dominated the functioning of the state.⁵¹ By propagating the secular ideology, which intended to 'reassure the religious minorities that they would be secure in the newly independent state', the Congress party established itself as the legitimate guardian of the Indian state.⁵² However, the progressive deinstitutionalisation and decline of the Congress in the 1970s and the rise of the BJP to power radically transformed the political climate and also the relationship between religion and politics in India.

The Decline of the Congress and the Rise of the BJP

The Nehruvian secular nationalism had provided a pluralistic and secular model of nation-building. However, after the death of Nehru, the Congress experienced severe internal contradiction during the leadership of her daughter, Indira Gandhi. A series of corruption scandals were exposed. Mrs. Gandhi's tenure also witnessed a highly centralised, autocratic and confrontational style of personal rule, which was heavily opposed by a Gandhian named Jaya Prakash Narayan (known as JP) along with Gandhian NGOs, the RSS and other Hindu nationalist organisations. With the fear of being deposed, Mrs. Gandhi imposed Emergency rule in the country on June 26, 1975 for 21 months, which also ultimately resulted in her defeat in the 1977 election and the coming of the Janata party to power. In Rajasthan, the Hindu nationalist leader B.S. Shekhawat was also elected as a result of his resistance to the Emergency rule. After

coming to power, the Janata government heavily supported the Gandhian NGOs and Hindu nationalist organisations who were its allies during the anti-Emergency movement. It is important to note here that it was during this time that the VKA, the tribal welfare wing of the RSS that was confined only to Madhya Pradesh, became an All India organisation and its Rajasthan branch was opened on August 25, 1978 in Kotra Block of Udaipur district.

The Hindu nationalist BJP was founded on April 5, 1980 as an alternative to the Congress. Although it performed relatively well in the state assembly elections in 1980 in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat, the murder of Indira Gandhi in 1984 by her Sikh bodyguards generated a wave of sympathy vote for the Congress and as a result, Rajiv Gandhi came to power. During his rule, the principle of secularism was heavily undermined and religious minorities were left unprotected. For example, in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots which followed the assassination of Indira Gandhi, more than 2,700 people were killed over the course of a few days, roughly 2,150 in Delhi alone, and the government did not do anything to protect them.⁵³ The Congress also followed both Hindu and Muslim communal policies to appease the members of these communities. In order to capture the Muslim vote, Rajiv Gandhi followed the decisions of Muslim fundamentalists and overturned a 1985 Supreme Court ruling that gave Shah Bano and all Muslims the right to seek alimony. Similarly, to appease the Hindu majority, it supported the Hindu nationalist led Ram Janmabhoomi movement, which had begun with the goal to build a temple for Lord Rama at his birth place in Ayodhya by replacing the Babri Mosque.⁵⁴ In addition to all this, Rajiv Gandhi and his party were also implicated in a number of corruption scandals, which created popular disillusion among the masses.

The erosion of secularism and growing corruption scandals questioned the credibility of the Congress party. The BJP opposed the Congress government's minority appeasing policy and supported the Hindu nationalist cause, which was already set in motion by the 'soft Hindutva' policies of the Congress party during Rajiv Gandhi's rule. The Hindu nationalists also

opposed religious conversion and strongly reacted to the 1981 mass conversion to Islam at Meenakshipuram by non-caste Hindus. The Ram Janmabhoomi movement provided political mileage to the BJP. The ideology of the BJP appealed to the middle and upper caste/class people and eventually led to its victory in the 1998 general election. The increasing political dominance of BJP since the 1990s has simultaneously led to increasing anti-minority policies. The enactment of Anti-conversion law became an important issue for the BJP for which it called for a national debate on conversion in 1999. Following the national mood, Chhattisgarh in 2000, Tamil Nadu in 2002 and Gujarat in 2003 passed the anti-conversion legislation. Rajasthan also attempted to pass a similar law in 2006 but failed to do so due to the disapproval of the Governor of the State. The confrontation between Hindu nationalists and Christian missionaries significantly increased in the tribal areas, and Rajasthan was no exception to this. It should be noted here that in Rajasthan, the BJP came to power in 1990 and has since then ruled the state several times. It is thus important to understand the tribal encounters with Hindu nationalism and the implications of the BJP led state for the religious minorities in Rajasthan.

The Tribal Encounters with Hindu Nationalism in Rajasthan

The recent anti-Christian violence in Rajasthan should be understood in a historical perspective. The tribals of Rajasthan first encountered an organised form of Hindu nationalism on August 25, 1978 when the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (Tribal Welfare Association - VKA) opened its Rajasthan branch, known as the Rajasthan Vanvasi Kalyan Parishad (RVKP), in the tribal dominated Kotra region of Udaipur district. Although the objective of the RVKP was to promote tribal development and welfare, its latent agenda has always been to stop religious conversion in the tribal regions. As mentioned earlier, the Christian missionaries first came to Rajasthan following the establishment of Mewar Bhil Corps by the British in 1841 and began working among the Bhil

tribes of Kherwada and Kotra region. Missionaries have since then been very active in the region and, as a result of their social service, many tribals had been converted to Christianity. This had worried the Hindu nationalists. The Janata government at the centre and B.S. Shekhawat's government in Rajasthan in the late 1970s facilitated the entry of Hindu nationalists into the tribal regions of Rajasthan. Some other reasons for which the VKA decided to establish its branch in Kotra were: (1) this region provided a series of historical narratives that reflected the strong bonding between the Bhils and the caste Hindus, (2) the tribals of this region had a long history of fighting against the so called 'alien' or foreign forces such as the Mughals and the British, and (3) besides active Missionary work, this region has also been dominated by the other so called 'disruptive' force – the Muslims – who were largely brought to the region by the British. Kotra thus provided a fitting space and the Hindu nationalists have exploited the historical context to strengthen their position in the region.

One major objective of the Hindu nationalists has been to dissociate the tribals from the missionaries and bring them into the so called 'mainstream' of Hindu society. There is a long debate about the identity of the tribals in India. The missionaries regard them as animists and non-Hindus and thus justify their conversion. However, the Hindu nationalists have disagreed with such pronouncements and have held that the British colonialism leveled the tribals as *adivasis* or indigenous people (thus, the Hindus as aliens) and their religion as animism as a part of its 'divide and rule' policy to prolong colonial rule. The Christian missionaries played an important role in this direction by linking up humanitarian activities with proselytisation.⁵⁵ Although the Hindu nationalists accept that there is geographical distance between the tribals and the caste-Hindus as the former live in the forests (*Vanvasis*) and the latter live in the villages (*Gaonvasis*) or cities (*Shahrvasis*), there is no cultural distance between the two. For them, the tribals constitute an indispensable part of Hindu social and religious order and thus justify their opposition to conversion. This Hindu nationalist view has also been bolstered by the Census of India which has classified

the tribes as Hindus, unless explicitly claimed otherwise.⁵⁶

However, according to Ghanshyam Shah, 'if Hinduism means the institutional four-fold brahminical social order, the model presented by *Manusmriti*, accepting Vedantic philosophy, etc, the adivasis [tribals] are certainly not Hindus'.⁵⁷ He further points out that the caste-Hindus also do not consider the tribals as part of them; the tribals are always looked down upon and placed outside the caste based social order.⁵⁸ N.K. Bose has argued that although the tribal groups existed outside the Hindu social organisations they have been acculturated and absorbed into the lower structures of Hindu society.⁵⁹ According to Mann and Mann, such acculturation or 'Hinduisation' among the west-Indian tribes occurred when the tribals first came in contact with the dominant caste Hindus who entered the tribal belt not only as rulers but also as trading, priestly and serving castes. The tribes acquired the cultural traits of the caste Hindus as their reference group behaviour with the objective to elevate their position as well as to attain higher social status in their society.⁶⁰ As a result of such acculturation, argues Beteille, '[i]n India...some tribes have ceased to be tribes and have become castes or something else, and this has happened extensively elsewhere as well'.⁶¹

In Rajasthan, although such contact between the Bhil tribes and the caste Hindus - especially the Rajputs - existed for a very long period, it increased to intimacy in the medieval period during the rule of Maharana Pratap, who was helped by the Bhils to fight against the Mughal emperor Akbar during the battle of Haldighati in 1576.⁶² This was further strengthened by the Bhagat movement, which was first started by Mavji Maharaj in the 18th century and popularised by Govind Giri in the early 20th century, especially between 1907 and 1913. It propagated the Sanskrit traits and Hindu religious values, such as believing in Karma, reincarnation and the omnipresence of god, practising vegetarianism, not to kill animals, stop drinking alcohol and so on among the tribes of Rajasthan.⁶³ Due to this long acculturation, a majority of the tribals today follow Hindu rituals, worship Hindu gods and goddesses, and celebrate Hindu festivals like *Durga Puja*, *Ganesh Puja*, *Deep-*

avali, and others.⁶⁴ Such celebration of rituals or what is referred to as 'quintessential customs' has served as an all-purpose social glue that has bound the tribals with Hindu society.⁶⁵

This long history of cultural closeness of the tribals to the Hindus has also, in a sense, justified the activity and claims of the Hindu nationalists in Rajasthan. However, the tribals have constituted one of the most economically backward and marginalised group. The welfare benefits of the post-colonial state have not reached them. The Hindu nationalists have thus come to improve their economic conditions as well as to stop the missionaries who have manipulated their tribal brothers to be converted into Christianity. In Rajasthan, data suggests that there is also a strong resentment among people against religious conversion (67%) and inter-caste marriage (74%) compared to the all-India level (54% and 57% respectively).⁶⁶ The Hindu nationalists have thus organised *Gharwapsi* (home coming) or *Shuddhikaran* (purification) programmes in the tribal areas to bring back those Christian tribals who, through conversion, have left the Hindu religion. In this context, the Hindu nationalists, in their effort to curb conversion and doing development in the tribal region, have received significant economic, political, legal and ideological support from the BJP led state, which came to power in Rajasthan in 1990 and has since then ruled the state several times.

Today, the RVKP is working amongst all six major tribal communities (Bhil, Mina, Damor, Kathodi, Garasia and Sahriya) spreading across 3,000 villages in 32 administrative Blocks in all 10 tribal districts of Rajasthan.⁶⁷ Like the Christian missionaries, the major strategy of the Hindu nationalists has also been developmental in nature. Data suggests that the RVKP currently runs 813 developmental projects, 248 village committees, 7 urban women committees, and 116 rural women committees in Rajasthan.⁶⁸ Each of these projects intends not just to dissociate the tribal populations from the missionaries and Muslim business communities but also to bring them closer to the organisation and ideology of the Sangh Parivar. The RVKP has utilised these developmental projects as a medium to enter the tribal region, to gain

legitimacy and to spread its ideology amongst the tribals.

These development projects carried out at the grassroots level by the RVKP have also acted as means for political mobilisation and often helped the BJP gain political power. The BJP government has also in return provided financial support to the RVKP and funded many of its development projects. As Abdul Aziz Khan, a Muslim leader in Kotra mentioned:

...the [R]VKP was actively promoted during the eight-year-long BJP rule [1990-98 – when B.S. Shekhawat was the chief minister] in Rajasthan. In a bid to provide legitimacy to the Sangh Parivar outfit, the previous BJP government had allocated a number of projects under the tuberculosis control programme, Shiksha Karmi Yojana [an education scheme], and Vidyalaya Viheen Ikaai [units outside schools] to the [R]VKP for popularising among the tribals.⁶⁹

Such types of state support to the RVKP intensified with the return of the BJP to power in Rajasthan in 2003. Although the BJP lost in the 2008 Assembly Election, during its rule from 2003 to 2008, it heavily promoted the organisations of the Sangh Parivar by facilitating their communal campaigns and ensuring that the state machinery turns a blind eye on their misdemeanours. The various institutions of law and governance such as the courts, the police, the legal system, instead of providing security to the minorities, acted as facilitators of violence. This type of endorsement emboldened RVKP activists who felt protected by the state machinery. According to data, the BJP government in Rajasthan (2003-2008) led by Vasundhara Raje used to allocate up to 5 million rupees per annum to the RVKP to run hostels.⁷⁰ Mrs. Raje also continuously visited *Beneswar Dham*, a sacred place for the tribals in Rajasthan, and donated money for religious activities. Her government lifted the ban on *trishul* (trident) distribution in Rajasthan and selectively withdrew a large number of cases related to communal conflicts filed during the previous Congress government in the state.⁷¹ As per a news report, the government withdrew 122 communal cases, which were against the activists of the RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal, RVKP and Shiv Sena for inciting communal violence in the state. However, cases registered

against members of the minority community in the same communal incidents have not been withdrawn. Many of these cases pertain to 2002 in the areas adjoining Gujarat and are linked to the Gujarat genocide.⁷²

The BJP led state in Rajasthan has also taken a beligerent stand on religious conversion. Besides its attempt to ban the Kota Immanuel Mission, it also introduced the Rajasthan Dharma Swatantraya (Religious Freedom) Bill in the State Assembly in 2006, which aimed to stop 'conversion from one religion to another by the use of force or allurements or by fraudulent means' and promote freedom of conscience. The Bill was sent to the Governor for approval. But the Governor refused to approve it on the grounds that it violated the fundamental rights to religion of the individual. In response, the BJP argued that a law restricting forcible religious conversions was the need of the hour as such activities had adversely affected communal harmony. Jogeshwar Garg, a BJP MLA declared that 'problems of fanaticism, terrorism and secessionism have always arisen in the areas where Hindus were reduced to minority by large-scale conversions'.⁷³ Madan Dilawar, the Social Welfare Minister in the BJP government in Rajasthan, also pointed out that 'in tribal areas and localities of poor Dalits, all kinds of efforts were being made to tempt or force people to change their religion and we will not tolerate these designs'. Thus, the BJP government reintroduced the Religious Freedom Bill with certain changes, which was passed in the Assembly on March 20, 2008.

The new Bill makes the provision of stricter punishment – 2 to 5 years of punishment – if the convert is under age, a woman, a tribal or a Dalit.⁷⁴ It also makes it mandatory for anyone intending to convert to send a notice of at least 30 days in advance or face a fine up to 1,000 rupees. However, it adds that the same requirement and penalty will not be applied to a person who is wishing to 'reconvert' people to their 'original religion' or to the 'religion of one's forefathers'.⁷⁵ The Hindu nationalists also do not consider *Gharwapsi* or *Shuddhikaran* as conversion because they are just bringing those who have 'strayed' from the Hindu fold back to their native religion. By

providing legal protection, the BJP government has thus actively encouraged the Hindu nationalists to re-convert the Christian tribals into the Hinduism. These examples show that the BJP led state is in some way related to the increasing violence against the Christian minorities in Rajasthan. It has provided extensive economic, political and legal support to the Hindu nationalists and facilitated their expansion into the tribal areas. Such support from the state has provided moral and political confidence to the Hindu nationalists to 'control' the activities of the so-called anti-national forces as well as to prevent the tribal population from being converted and to bring the already converted ones back into the Hindu social and religious fold in order to strengthen its political project of 'making India Hindu'.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IRD Project: MI00940 & Planning Project: MI00935) and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for providing financial support to carry out this research. I would also like to thank Prof. Martin Fuchs (Max-Weber-Kolleg) for his valuable comments and suggestions.

Notes

- ¹ Anand, S. (2008) 'Next Stop Orissa,' *Tehelka Magazine*, Vol. 5, Issue 2
- ² Sabrang Communications and SACW (2002), p. 8.
- ³ Lobo, L. (2002), p. 63; see also Heredia, R.C. (2003), p. 208
- ⁴ Varshney, A. (2002), pp. 55-57
- ⁵ Heredia, R.C. (2003), p. 207; for a similar account see, Sarkar, S. (2002), p. 215.
- ⁶ Lal, V. (2006), pp. 767-774
- ⁷ <http://indianchristians.in/news/content/view/439/43/>; accessed on 15 November 2011.
- ⁸ Rajalakshmi, T.K. (2005) 'A Saffron Assault,' *Frontline*, Vol. 22, Issue 7, March 12-25.
- ⁹ <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Hindu-fundamentalists-attack-Christian-preachers-in-Rajasthan-2785.html>; accessed on 15 November 2011.
- ¹⁰ <http://indianchristians.in/news/content/view/89/45/>; accessed on 15 November 2011.
- ¹¹ Rajalakshmi, T.K. (2005)

- ¹² Similar arguments are also made by Copland, I. (1998), p. 204 and Lal, V. (2006), pp. 767-774.
- ¹³ See McGraw, B.T. (2010), p. 30
- ¹⁴ Smith, D.E. (1963), pp. 194-198; Dirks, N. (1996), p. 116; Jaffrelot, C. (1996), p. 14
- ¹⁵ Hardiman, D. (2006), p. 144
- ¹⁶ Chaudhary, N.D. (1986), p. 130
- ¹⁷ Sinha, A. (1991), p. 65
- ¹⁸ Hardiman, D. (2006). The idea of 'civilizing mission' was used as a powerful tool to legitimise colonial rule around the world. The basic assumptions were: (1) western culture was superior, and (2) the colonial subjects or the natives were too backward to govern themselves and thus required 'upliftment'. Froerer, P. (2007), p. 14.
- ¹⁹ Shyamlal (1989), p. 193
- ²⁰ Ahmed, S. (2010) 'Churches in Udaipur: An Untold Story,' *Udaipur Times*, 23 December. <http://www.udaipurtimes.com/churches-in-udaipur-an-untold-story/>; accessed on 15 November 2011.
- ²¹ Cited in Sridhar, V. (1999) 'A Numbers Game,' *Frontline*, Vol. 16, Issue 25, Nov. 27- Dec 10.
- ²² Cited in Sridhar, V. (1999). The Christian Solidarity Worldwide data suggests that in 2006, Christians are estimated to make up no more than 100,000 of Rajasthan's population of 70 million. <http://dynamic.csw.org.uk/article.asp?t=press&id=513&search=rajasthan>; accessed on 18 November 2011.
- ²³ Cited in Sridhar, V. (1999)
- ²⁴ Cited in Lal, V. (2006)
- ²⁵ Sridhar, V. (1999)
- ²⁶ Chadha, R. (2000) 'Christian Population,' *Frontline*, Vol. 16, Issue 27, Dec. 25, 1999 - Jan. 7, 2000.
- ²⁷ Cited in Chadha, R. (2000); see Barrett, D. et.al. (2001), pp. 370-381.
- ²⁸ Cited in Chadha, R. (2000); see
- ²⁹ Kim, S. (2005), p. 226
- ³⁰ Vishwanathan, G. (2007), p. 347
- ³¹ Jaffrelot, C. (2007), p. 4
- ³² Jaffrelot, C. (2007), p. 4
- ³³ Jaffrelot, C. (2007), p. 5
- ³⁴ Savarkar, V.D. (2003), p. 67
- ³⁵ Savarkar, V.D. (2003), p. 69
- ³⁶ See Sarkar, S. (2002), p. 217
- ³⁷ For example, Lord William Bentinck, while governor of Madras, gave every encouragement to the missionaries to carry on their work of converting Hindus. Such support was significantly increased with the passing of the Charter Act in 1813. Even a governor of a province publicly declared that he looked forward to the Christianisation of all India.

See Smith, D.E. (1963), pp. 195-197

³⁸ See Kim, S. (2005), p. 229

³⁹ Rao, K.L.S. (1999), p. 144

⁴⁰ See Bauman, C.M. (2008), p. 6

⁴¹ Frankel, F. (2000), p. 6

⁴² Harrison, S. (1969)

⁴³ Bauman, C.M. (2008), p. 28

⁴⁴ In Jharkhand, the Permanent Settlement of 1793 turned the traditional tikhedars (tax collectors) into zamindars (landlords). Tribal land began to be alienated to the zamindars. At that stage, the Belgian Jesuit Constant Lievens who studied their land laws and helped them to save their land came to be viewed as their saviour and, as a result, mass conversions followed. Fernandes, W. (1999), p. 82; Bauman, C.M. (2008), p. 26

⁴⁵ Smith, D.E. (1963), pp. 199, 206

⁴⁶ Cited in Bauman, C.M. (2008), p. 3

⁴⁷ Cited in Bauman, C.M. (2008), p. 3

⁴⁸ Bauman, C.M. (2008), p. 3

⁴⁹ Smith, D.E. (1963), pp. 200, 206

⁵⁰ Bauman, C.M. (2008), pp. 6, 23

⁵¹ Varshney, A. (1998)

⁵² Seshia, S. (1998), p. 1039

⁵³ Hibbard, S.N. (2010), p. 152

⁵⁴ See Van der Veer, P. (1987); Hibbard, S.N. (2010), p. 157-160

⁵⁵ Sinha, A. (1991), p. 65

⁵⁶ See Baviskar, A. (2005), p. 5107; Froerer, P. (2007), p. 10

⁵⁷ Shah, G. (1999), p. 314

⁵⁸ Shah, G. (1999), p. 314

⁵⁹ Bose, N.K. (1949/1996), pp. 168-181. Considering their cultural closeness to the Hindu social and religious order, Indian sociologist G.S. Ghurye has declared them the 'backward Hindus'. See Ghurye, G.S. (1959).

⁶⁰ Mann, R.S. and Mann, K. (1989), pp.156-183

⁶¹ Beteille, A. (1998), p. 190

⁶² Mann, R.S. and Mann, K. (1989), pp.158-159

⁶³ See Mann, R.S. and Mann, K. (1989);

Vashishtha, V.K. (1997)

⁶⁴ Discussion with some tribal people in Kotra on 21 September 2006.

⁶⁵ Comaroff, J. and Comaroff, J.L. (1993), p. xv

⁶⁶ Lodha, S. (2004), p. 5461

⁶⁷ RVKP Booklet (2006), pp. 1-3

⁶⁸ Bappa Rawal (April 2006), p. 17

⁶⁹ <http://www.islamicvoice.com/january.2002/investigation.htm>; accessed on 18 October 2006.

⁷⁰ Singh, D.K. (2004)

⁷¹ Rajalakshmi, T.K. (2005)

⁷² *The Hindu*, 13 August 2004; Taneja, N. (2004)

⁷³ *The Hindu*, 21 March 2008

⁷⁴ <http://www.worthynews.com/1622-india-ra->

[jasthan-passes-new-anti-conversion-bill](#); accessed on 25 Nov. 2011.

⁷⁵ See Coleman, J. (2008), p. 264

References

- Ahmed, S. (2010) 'Churches in Udaipur: An Untold Story,' *Udaipur Times*, 23 December.
- Anand, S. (2008) 'Next Stop Orissa,' *Tehelka Magazine*, Vol. 5, Issue 2.
- Barrett, D., et.al. (2001) *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*, Oxford University Press.
- Bauman, C.M. (2008) 'Postcolonial Anxiety and Anti-Conversion Sentiment in the Report of the Christian Missionary Activities Enquiry Committee,' *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp.181-213.
- Baviskar, A. (2005) 'Adivasi Encounters with Hindu Nationalism in MP,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 40, No. 48, pp. 5105-5113
- Beteille, A. (1998) 'The Idea of Indigenous People', *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 39, No. 2, April, pp. 187-91.
- Bose, N.K. (1949/1996) 'Hindu Method of Tribal Absorption' in *The Structure of Hindu Society*, Calcutta: Orient Longman, pp. 168-81.
- Chadha, R. (2000) 'Christian Population,' *Frontline*, Vol. 16, Issue 27, Dec. 25, 1999 - Jan. 7.
- Chaudhary, N.D. (1986) 'Tribal Development in Rajasthan: Past Efforts and New Challenges', in J.P.
- Singh and N.N. Vyas (eds.), *Tribal Development*, Udaipur: Tribal Research Institute.
- Coleman, J. (2008) 'Authoring (in)Authenticity, Regulating Religious Tolerance: The Implications of Anti-Conversion Legislation for Indian Secularism,' *Cultural Dynamics*, Vol. 20, pp. 245-277.
- Comaroff, J. and Comaroff, J.L. (1993) 'Introduction', in J. Comaroff and J. Comaroff (eds.), *Modernity and Its Malcontents*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, pp. xi-xxxvii.
- Copland, I. (1998) 'The Further Shores of Partition: Ethnic Cleansing in Rajasthan 1947,' *Past and Present*, No. 160, pp. 203-239.
- Dirks, N.B. (1996) 'The Conversion of Caste: Location, Translation, and Appropriation', in P. van der
- Veer (ed.), *Conversion to Modernities*, New York: Routledge, pp. 115-136.
- Fernandes, W. (1999) 'Attacks on Minorities and a National Debate on Conversions,' *Economic and*

- Political Weekly*, Vol. 34, No. 3/4, pp. 81-84.
- Frankel, F.R. (2000) 'Introduction: Contextual Democracy' in F.R. Frankel (et.al), *Transforming India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-25.
- Froerer, P. (2007) *Religious Division and Social Conflict: The Emergence of Hindu Nationalism in Rural India*, New Delhi: Social Science Press.
- Hardiman, D. (2006) 'Christian Therapy: Medical Missionaries and the Adivasis of Western India, 1880-1930,' in *Healing Bodies, Saving Souls: Medical Missions in Asia and Africa*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, pp.137-67.
- Harrison, S. (1960) *India: The Most Dangerous Decades*, Princeton: Princeton University Press
- Heredia, R.C. (2003) 'Globalisation and Cultural Nationalism,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, 18 January, pp. 207-208.
- Hibbard, S.N. (2010) *Religious Politics and Secular States: Egypt, India, and the United States*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Jaffrelot, C. (1996) *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics: 1925 to the 1990s*, London: Hurst & Company.
- Jaffrelot, C. (2007) 'Introduction: The Invention of an Ethnic Nationalism,' in *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 3-25.
- Kim, S. (2005) 'The Debate on Conversion Initiated by the Sangh Parivar, 1998-1999,' *Transformation*, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp- 224-237.
- Lal, V. (2006) 'Anti-Christian Violence in India,' in R. Puniyani (ed.) *The Politics Behind Anti-Christian Violence*, Delhi: Media House, pp.767-774.
- Lobo, L. (2002) *Globalisation, Hindu Nationalism and Christians in India*, Jaipur: Rawat.
- Lodha, S. (2004) 'Rajasthan: India Shines as BJP Trounces Congress,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, Dec. 18, pp. 5456-5462.
- Mann, R.S. and Mann, K. (1989) 'Hinduisation among Western Indian Tribes,' *Tribal Cultures and Change*, New Delhi: Mittal Publications, pp.156-183.
- McGraw, B.T. (2010) *Faith in Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rajalakshmi, T.K. (2005) 'A Saffron Assault,' *Frontline*, Vol. 22, Issue 7, March 12-25.
- Rao, K.L.S. (1999) 'Conversion: A Hindu/Gandhian Perspective,' in C. Lamb and M.D. Bryant (eds.) *Religious Conversion*, London: Cassell, pp. 136-50.
- Sabrang Communications and SACW (2002) *The Foreign Exchange of Hate*, Mumbai & France.
- Sarkar, S. (2002) 'Christianity, Hindutva and the Question of Conversion,' in *Beyond Nationalist Frames*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 215-243.
- Savarkar, V.D. (1989/2003) 'Excerpts from *Hindutva*', in B. Chakrabarty (ed.), *Communal Identity in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 63-71.
- Seshia, S. (1998) 'Divide and Rule in Indian Party Politics: The Rise of Bharatiya Janata Party', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 38, No.11, pp. 1036-1050.
- Shah, G. (1999) 'Conversion, Reconversion and the State: Recent Events in the Dangs,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 34, No. 6, pp. 312-318.
- Shyamlal (1989) 'Planting a Mission among the Bhils of South Rajasthan', in M.K. Raha (ed.), *Tribal India, Vol. II*, New Delhi: Gian Publishing House, pp. 192-212.
- Singh, D.K (2004) 'Rajasthan: Draws Adivasis into the Hindu Fold', *Communalism Combat*, October, Vol. 11, No. 102.
- Sinha, A. (1991) 'The Jesus Path', *Against the Few: Struggles of India's Rural Poor*, London: Zed Books, pp. 65-82.
- Smith, D.E. (1963) *India as a Secular State*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Sridhar, V. (1999) 'A Numbers Game,' *Frontline*, Vol. 16, Issue 25, Nov. 27- Dec 10.
- Taneja, N. (2004) 'Sangh Parivar on Offensive in Rajasthan', *Peoples Democracy*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 34, August 22.
- van der Veer, P. (1987) "'God Must be Liberated': A Hindu Liberation Movement in Ayodhya', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 283-301.
- van der Veer, P. (1994) *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Varshney, A. (1998) 'The Twelfth Election of India's Lok Sabha', *Contemporary Asia Series*, February, New York: Asia Society, pp. 3-22.
- Varshney, A. (2002) *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Vashishtha, V.K. (1997) *Bhagat Movement: A Study of Cultural Transformation of the Bhils of Southern Rajasthan*, Jaipur: Shruti Publications.
- Vishwanathan, G. (2007) 'Literacy and Conversion in the Discourse of Hindu Nationalism,' in A.D. Needham and R.S. Rajan (eds.) *The Crisis of Secularism in India*, Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 333-355.

Sarbeswar Sahoo is concurrently Assistant Professor of Sociology, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi, India, and Alexander von Humboldt Post-doctoral Fellow, Max Weber Center for Advanced Cultural and Social Studies, University of Erfurt, Germany. He received his PhD from the National University of Singapore. His recent publication is: *Civil Society and Democratisation in India: Institutions, Ideologies and Interests* (London: Routledge, 2013). His research interests include Globalisation, Civil Society and Democratisation, and Sociology of Religion and Violence.
