

Capturing Hindutva: Rhetorics and Strategies

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Abstract

This article is the second of three in a series surveying research on Hindutva (Hindu nationalism or political Hinduism). Here I review prominent rhetorical characterizations and strategies that scholars have used to come to terms with and politically oppose Hindu religious politics, both in India and transnationally. The essay suggests that this literature represents a distinct approach to the study of hindutva that needs to be separated from other, less politically oriented studies. (The first essay in the series surveyed literature on seminal articulations of hindutva, both historical and contemporary; the third examines writings that take hindutva as a form of practice).

Introduction

The term ‘hindutva’ is all but commonplace in the scholarly literature on South Asian politics. Works on the factors involved in communal violence, the gendered dimensions of hindutva praxis, the percolation of hindutva ideologies into local and grassroots initiatives, and more abound—and yet the task of finding the tools to theorize ‘hindutva’ systematically remains ironically untackled. Indeed, the vast length and breadth of the existing research can at times have the ultimate effect of “fool[ing] us into thinking we know what Hindutva is”, while “reifying and homogenizing it and to some extent by using the same encompassing framework as its proponents” (Simpson 2004, p. 136). For many scholars, it almost goes without saying, studying hindutva has very largely involved studying the ‘other’, or a politics so disconcerting that it demands not merely description, but also outrage, degrees of revulsion and critique. Academic as well as more public descriptions of Hindu nationalism or Hindutva in India have been dominated by such words as ‘medievalism’, ‘fundamentalism’, ‘xenophobia’, ‘fanaticism’, and of course ‘communalism’. Whether directly or tangentially, these studies of hindutva underscore the need for a progressive politics that stands as a bulwark to hindutva’s perceived threat. The task of knowing what hindutva definitively *is*, is consequently complicated by the fact that any attempt at understanding this phenomenon must necessarily navigate a crowd of prior appraisals oriented around the need to assume alternative political positions.

The prior essay in this series of three surveyed accounts of hindutva’s ideological origins: from pre-independence racialist articulations to the humanist emphases of post-independence years, to the strident culturalism of the 1990s. The present article continues the survey of research on hindutva, here using three prominent critical characterizations as benchmarks to track the major analytical shifts in this field of study. My purpose here is to collate those rhetorical constructions of hindutva that marry scholarly analysis with an increasingly outraged political critique, as these have been particularly influential in setting the terms of discussion. I begin by discussing the early debates on hindutva as a pathological response to the failures of the modernist state. These more-or-less diffuse assessments give way, in the wake of the demolition of the 16th century Babri Masjid (mosque) by

hindutva followers in 1992, to the far more certain representation of hindutva as ‘fascist’.¹ The fascist characterization, in turn, is supplanted by a view of hindutva as quintessentially a form of ‘hate politics’, following horrific riots in Gujarat State (in Western India) almost exactly a decade later.² Each of these characterizations speak to progressively more outraged responses to Hindutva; each is directed by the compulsion to identify hindutva in shifting rhetorical terms that most effectively consolidate ethico-moral and even juridical opposition to it. What we understand hindutva to be through this discourse, therefore, is fundamentally inflected by the political imperative to capture it—conceptually, morally, and even legally. ‘Hindutva’ becomes the “essentialized pariah” of contemporary politics, and an instance of what Doug Holmes has termed “illicit discourse” (Holmes 1993, p. 255).

Modern(ist) Pathologies

Scholarly observers of late 1980s and early 1990s hindutva tended to characterize by analogy, placing Hindu nationalism quite easily amidst other resurgent religious nationalisms and fundamentalisms worldwide. For instance, Daniel Gold’s argument in the inaugural volume of Marty and Appleby’s *Fundamentalisms Project* was that “organized Hinduism” was necessarily equivalent to “fundamentalist Hinduism” since both represented “resolute religious reaction[s] to forces of modernity” (1991, p. 533). The characteristic features of hindu nationalism were identical to that of Western Protestant fundamentalisms or, indeed, fundamentalisms everywhere; “group assertiveness, defiance, and proclivities to sporadic violence” (Gold 1991, pp. 275–6) and “the increasing tendency[ies] ... toward absolutism, intolerance and militancy” (Smith 1996, p. 125) therefore justifiably rationalized the application of the ‘fundamentalist’ label.

Being thus focused on generalizing hindutva as fundamentalism, however, these readings fail to account for its cultural specificity. Other scholars have therefore preferred looked to Indian historical experiences, rather than Western protestant or other models, to explain the emergence of Hindu nationalism. Chandra (1984) and Chatterjee (1986, 1992), for example, regard contemporary hindutva as a specific contortion produced by Indian nationalism, as part of the *natural* growth and development of the nation-state idea. Chatterjee, for example, suggests that the “historical imagining in the nineteenth-century of ‘India’ as a nation” is itself a distortion for it is based on a politics of exclusion (1992, p. 112). His arguments directly link *Hindu* nationalism with 19th century *Indian* nationalism: the idea of “nationness”, says Chatterjee, has always been exclusively (or at least predominantly) Hindu, beginning with 19th century nationalist rhetoric and continuing into contemporary Hindu extremist discourse. Hindutva, in this view, is inherently a process of exclusion and distortion carried out in the name of modernist nationalism (cf. also van der Veer 1994, pp. 193–202; Sarkar 2001).

Extending these arguments, Nandy (1998) treats hindutva somewhat more broadly as a particular distortion of Indian modernity. Separating religion-as-faith from religion-as-ideology, he writes that “[i]f [a traditional] religious way of life cannot find normal play in public life, it finds *distorted expression* in fundamentalism, revivalism, and xenophobia” (1990, p. 70; 1998, p. 291). Madan similarly regards the “excess[es] of ideological secularism and its emergence as dogma” as the prime cause for the “perversion of religion”, which then has “less to do with the purity of faith and more with the acquisition of political power” (1995, pp. 260–1). The Indian psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar, too, treats hindutva as a psychological pathology of modernity: a narcissism that has itself become deviant (a “miscarriage of narcissism”) and a dangerous “stoking of persecutory

fantasies” through which “feelings of absolute helplessness” are transformed into “group aggression, which takes on, overtly and covertly, the flavor of narcissistic rage” (1996, pp. 167–8).

Each of these narratives implicitly or otherwise point to a host of issues that have nothing per se to do with religion, but with political machinations of various sorts, simmering discontents over the “failure of India’s bureaucratic rationality, of its capitalist productivity, [and] of its secular progress,” all undergirded by the complex inter-relationships of caste, class, religion, and ethnicity in the subcontinent (Fox 1996, p. 249). The “inherent infirmity[ies] and constitutional weakness[es]” of modernity thereby give rise to “nationalist chest-beating, multicultural stereotyping, sectarian soul-thumping, race-bashing and gender-plundering [that] are the major new forms of enchanted community” (Fox 1996, p. 244). Hindutva is therefore not merely “one of those pathologies that periodically afflict a faith”, as in Nandy’s reckoning (1998, p. 295), but it is *the* failure of the modern world, to which not even a “troglodyte Nazism” (Fox 1996, p. 241) can compare.

Overall, such focus on hindutva as a home-grown modernist creed not only emphasizes its Indian historical roots, it is also self-consciously anti-Orientalizing: concerned with establishing hindutva’s historical specificity while also undoing the notion that “[o]nly India, after all, has vicious communalism” (Nandy 1998, p. 291; Fox 1996, p. 241; cf. Lal 1995). Following the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992, however, the tenor of the discourse on hindutva begins to shift. For a few writers, the events leading up to and the violence accompanying the demolition of the 16th century mosque by Sangh Parivar *kar sevaks* (volunteers) simply reaffirm the accuracy of the ‘fundamentalist’ characterization (e.g. Smith 1996; Wolpert 1993)—which, Juergensmeyer points out, is “less descriptive than it is accusatory” (1993, p. 86). For many others, however, the demolition comes as a jolt that demands newer vocabularies by which to comprehend the forces that hindutva can apparently unleash. Scholarly critique becomes far less general, far less anxious about the Orientalizing tendencies of analysis, and far more directed at identifying condemnatory vocabularies that rally opposition to hindutva, as the next sections demonstrate.

Fascism

In an influential essay that sparked much debate on the characterization of hindutva, historian Sumit Sarkar builds a case for the ‘Fascism of the Sangh Parivar’ (1993), on the evidence of the Babri Masjid demolition.³ The mosque, he argues, was razed to rubble in a matter of hours, a task which could never have been completed, first, without considerable planning, and, second, without the connivance of the authorities. The demolition was thus not a spontaneous act carried out by a raging crowd but a pre-meditated undertaking in direct violation of a Supreme Court order. Not only were the police and state officials ineffectual in preventing both demolition and the riots that followed, but the state actually incited violence in cities like Mumbai, and that with Muslims as its main target. The demolition and its aftermath, writes Sarkar, make the analogy with fascism clear: in Germany and Italy too fascism had

come to power through a combination of street violence (carefully orchestrated from above but still undeniably with great mass support), deep infiltration into the police, bureaucracy and army, and the connivance of ‘centrist’ political leaders. Crude violations of laws and constitutional norms consequently had alternated in Fascist and Nazi behavior with loud protestations of respect for legality. (p. 163)

Having established this basic analogy, Sarkar then substantiates it with a series of lesser comparisons: in India the “classically Muslim target-area steadily expands” just as in Germany Hitler extended his antipathy beyond Jews and communists “to cover social-democrats, liberals, Catholics, [and] everyone who dared to think with any independence”; in India the Sangh Parivar made clever and efficient use of the latest audio-visual technology in their campaigns, just as in Germany Hitler “had also been a bit of a pioneer in these matters ... fully realizing the importance of spoken propaganda through the then relatively new techniques of the loudspeaker and radio” (pp. 163, 164). There is also an economic analogy, one which likens economic re-structuring in fascist Italy to the Congress government’s wide-ranging changes in economic policy in the early 1990s, a self-conscious movement away from Nehruvian socialism more popularly known as liberalization (For a more detailed reading of the links between liberalization and the growth of fascism, see Ahmed 1993, 1996). And finally there is the analogy of intellectual critique. Pointing to the “molecular permeation” of communal myths and assumptions into commonsensical truths, Sarkar recalls once again the German parallel: “[f]ascist ideology in Europe had combined already quite widespread, crudely nationalist, racist, and in Germany anti-Semitic, prejudices with fragments from much more sophisticated philosophies.” (pp. 164–5). The threat as far as India is concerned is not German Romanticism but perhaps a likeness of it: post-modernism. Sarkar’s argument here may be reduced to two points: the unspoken assumption that Hindutva needs to be fought with every available weapon; and that “academic fashions” like post-modernism are dangerous because they “can reduce the resistance of intellectuals to the ideas of Hindutva” by “stimulat[ing] forms of indigenism not easy to distinguish from the standard Sangh Parivar argument” (p. 165).⁴

Sarkar’s initial essay on the “Fascism of the Sangh Parivar” prompted some lengthy rejoinders and much heated debate, all focused largely on finessing the analogy and harnessing it appropriately toward political opposition. Achin Vanaik takes issue with Sarkar’s use of the word ‘fascism’, establishing approximately what he calls a “fascist minimum”, and arguing essentially that “the fascist paradigm itself is inappropriate or of very limited value for situating ... Hindu communalism” (p. 1740). He continues to say that without an accepted theory of fascism, “the assignment of ‘fascist’ emphasis and weight must remain arbitrary, the method a solipsism” (p. 1740). In this context, the rhetorical use of the word ‘fascism’ could become misleading, even counter-productive, suggesting

‘extreme’ outcomes ... [rather than] the longer menu of options that would presumably be the truer and more open-ended reality on the ground. This could disorient the organization of opposition to the Hindu communal Right (p. 1743).

In spite of his rejection of the fascist paradigm for the Indian context, however, Vanaik does not completely let go of the fascist idea as one that is *potentially* relevant to India. He writes: “In post-colonial societies, the political vehicles of religious fundamentalism or religious nationalism are not fascist formations, but ... *potential fascist formations*” (p. 1740, emphasis added). So the rise of present-day communalism may be evidence only of a failed Nehruvian post-colonial project and not of fascism, but this greater threat is always waiting in the wings, always a potential danger within ethnicism itself. Further, given Vanaik’s doubts on the rhetorical value of words like ‘fascism’, witness with what a looming sense of danger he leaves us:

If [the Sangh Parivar] appropriates the Indian state, ... [the] task for secularists, democrats and socialists will become immeasurably more difficult as the dark night of an authoritarian and communal Hindu state descends upon us (p. 1745).

We in India may not have a full-blooded fascism on our hands, then, but we do have something very close to it in form—"a dangerous and pernicious phenomenon ... responsible for barbarous actions *akin to those perpetrated by fascists of the past*" (p. 1742, emphasis added)—which is only slightly less frightening. The political position delineated by Sarkar remains, even after Vanaik's essay, more or less intact.

Still, stopping just short of naming fascism is not enough for Rustom Bharucha. If Vanaik was searching for a "good social science theory or paradigm [that] must above all explain and understand things better" (1994, p. 1742), Bharucha, like Sarkar, is more concerned with political positioning. In his view Vanaik "minimizes, if not elides altogether the very real features of fascism that are echoed uncannily in the activities and philosophy of the Hindu communal and fundamentalist combine" (1998, p. 117). One must *name* fascism, says Bharucha, with the "forthrightness" and "boldness" of a Sumit Sarkar or an Aijaz Ahmed. And, following Ahmed, who held the distinction between fascism and rightwing authoritarianism as "surely academic" (1996, p. 1338), Bharucha too writes that

while the discrimination of 'fascism proper' from 'xenophobia' and 'cultural relativism' needs to be kept in mind, it should not be so fetishized that it prevents one from reading the 'writing on the wall'; the very real signs of violence and brutality by which the boundaries between 'xenophobia,' 'exclusivism,' and 'fascism' are blurred if not obliterated. Only the most pedantic and self-defeating scholarship would insist on such a discrimination. (1998, p. 118)

What is at stake in the characterization of hindutva as fascism, then, is not merely effective analysis, but the increasingly urgent *political* need, in Raychaudhuri's words, to keep the hindu swastika, a traditional symbol of bliss and well-being, from tilting right into dreaded Nazi form (2000, p. 278). "Staying aloof", Witzel avers, just as ominously invoking the Nazi German commitment to "*Ein Volk, Ein Reich ...*", is "not a responsible stance" (2006, pp. 225, 226; cf. also Smith 1996). Aijaz Ahmed reminds us that until the Babri Masjid was demolished "in a fascist spectacle of gigantic proportions ... liberal/Left intellectuals, among whom I too belong, [were] a bit too sanguine about what we took to be the chances of Hindutva prevailing" (1996, p. 1331). Naming fascism is thus a call to action born of the realization that Hindutva might well prevail over the discourses of Marxism or liberal multiculturalism. So, although other scholars take issue with Sarkar's argument on different levels, there is broad consensus on the need for intellectual and political opposition. For instance, Achin Vanaik argues that without knowing exactly what constitutes a "fascist minimum", "the assignment of 'fascist' emphasis and weight must remain arbitrary, the method a solipsism" (1994, p. 1740). And yet his concern about likening hindutva to fascism is simply that it might "disorient the organization of opposition to the Hindu communal Right" (1994, p. 1743). Ahmed is far more matter-of-fact: making analytical distinctions between fascism and rightwing authoritarianism is "surely academic", he writes (1996, p. 1338). The point is echoed strongly by Bharucha (1998): distinctions between fascism, xenophobia, and cultural relativism are obliterated by violence and thus should not be academically "fetishized" by "self-defeating scholarship" (1998, p. 118). As if to rescue the fascist label from pedantry once and for all, Marzia Casolari offers a lengthy and detailed account of early hindutva leaders' actual engagements with fascists in the 1920s and 1930s so as to be able to "legitimate[ly] conclude that such influence[s] are] still alive in today's militant Hinduism" (Casolari 2000, p. 227; cf. also Udayakumar 2005). By resting thus on irrefutable 'fact' and not merely conceptual analogy, Casolari's narrative about hindutva in a particular period provides renewed justification to rally in contemporary opposition to it. Naming fascism, in words

often used with reference to the Sangh Parivar, becomes ironically about “constructing the enemy”, defining the “target-area”, moving away in alignments of clear opposition from the “suicidal wobbling” (Sarkar 1993, p. 164) of intellectual critique.

Hate

Such scholarly characterization of hindutva as incontrovertibly fascist marks a unique moment: when the profound sense of hindutva outrage that expresses itself in the Ram-janmabhumi movement begins to be matched by an equally profound sense of intellectual outrage that India’s secular polity could be thus claimed by identitarian religiosity. Lesser disagreements on what constitutes a fascist minimum or where hindutva does not exactly fit a fascist mould (Basu *et al.* 1993; Nanda 2004, pp. 10–1; Sarkar 2005, p. 205) notwithstanding, the normalization of hindutva logics in the decades since the Babri Masjid demolition has gone ironically hand-in-hand with the normalization of the fascist designation—now a virtually commonsensical categorization of hindutva (cf. Raychaudhuri 2000, p. 268).

And yet another significant rhetorical switch seems to occur in the wake of the 2002 Gujarat riots, giving form to outrage in another idiom. Several writers have pointed out that BJP ministers in Gujarat and at the Center were quick to label the attack on *kar sevaks* in the Sabarmati Express as a “pre-planned act of collective terrorism”, with other terms like ‘atrocities’ and ‘massacre’ thrown in for good measure (Sundar 2004, p. 154; emphasis added). Such descriptions make obvious use of dominant, U.S.-mobilized, national and international discourses of terror to simultaneously characterize and condemn (Varadarajan 2002). Descriptions of the riots, in turn, which left an estimated 2000 dead and an additional 150,000 homeless, have hardly invoked ‘fascism’—in spite of the fact that here, too, by most accounts, violence was meticulously orchestrated, Muslim residential areas and even individual homes specifically targeted, all with at best complicity, at worst active participation of law enforcement and the political establishment (cf. Nussbaum 2007; Spodek 2008; Varadarajan 2002). Instead, the Gujarat riots have been almost universally classified as ‘pogrom’, ‘genocide’, and ultimately a ‘crime against humanity’ in its egregious expression of undiluted *hatred* (Brass 2004; Communalism Combat 2002; Concerned Citizens Tribunal 2002; Jaffrelet 2007).⁵ Such new terminologies re-locate hindutva in a genealogy akin to, but distinct from, fascism by equally drawing upon a different, but also increasingly universal “language of condemnation” (Visvanathan 2001, p. 2513) in order to define alternative, critical political stances. Tellingly, the intellectual and activist response to hindutva in Gujarat has been articulated as much by citizen’s groups within India as by South Asian groups in the United States and Europe. There is therefore a distinctly trans-national or even supranational (Hardt & Negri 2000, p. 5) dimension to this new expression of outrage, which cuts across national boundaries in the mobilization of both communities and rhetorics.

The Campaign to Stop Funding Hate (CSFH) is a case in point. The CSFH was spear-headed by Indian-American professionals, scholars, and students associated with Forum of Indian Leftists (FOIL)—a self-described “a clearinghouse for radical Indian activists in the United States, Canada and England” (<http://www.proxsa.org/resources/foil/foilpg.html>)—in the aftermath of the Gujarat riots, with the explicit goal of “exposing to public scrutiny the activities of the Sangh Parivar in the U.S.”⁶ The CSFH’s 2002 report, *The Foreign Exchange of Hate*, was evidently a trans-national collaborative effort, conceptualized by FOIL activists in the U.S., but published jointly by the South Asia Citizen’s Web (sacw.org, a ‘citizen’s group’ and information repository, hosted in France) and Sabrang

Communications (www.sabrang.com, an organization based in India that publishes the *Communalism Combat* magazine). The report is an exposé that focuses on a new set of “foreign tie-ups”: those of the India Development and Relief Fund (IDRF, a Maryland-based registered charity). It holds the IDRF to be “not a secular and non-sectarian organization as it claims”, but “a major conduit of funds” that eventually support “violent and sectarian Hindu supremacist organizations in India” (CSFH 2002, pp. 1–2; emphasis added). CSFH’s burden is then to locate the Maryland charity with its avowed commitment to development firmly under the wing of the “Sangh Parivar and the Hindutva movement in India”, by pointing to the affiliations of its office-bearers and sources of its organizational support (CSFH 2002, p. 10).⁷ The report therefore systematically sets out to uncover the ties of all major IDRF office-bearers and all major IDRF-funded projects to ‘hindutva’ (loosely defined)—the final implication being that any association with hindutva or the Sangh Parivar is invariably complicit in supremacist violence against India’s minorities (an argument more formally presented by two of the report’s authors in Mathew & Parshad 2000).

Outrage is integral to the CSFH’s undertaking on multiple levels. Clearly the communal violence in Gujarat and the association of hindutva organizations with violence in general evokes great anger and upset, and is a spur to activism. But there is also another sort of building outrage about the co-optation of ‘development’ to provide a “cover of respectability for funding organizations engaged in hate campaigns” (<http://stopfunding-hate.org/resources/FAQ.htm>). Left organizations in India have long complained that the terms of secular discourse were being claimed by hindutva—so much so that women’s groups were compelled to rethink their positions on everything from pornography to street harassment to the Uniform Civil Code, simply because they found themselves strangely allied with the BJP on these issues. The CSFH seems similarly troubled by the apparent communalization of development, or the deployment of the ostensibly non-sectarian for decidedly sectarian ends. Even further, it seeks to evoke a sense of betrayal on the argument that those organizations and individuals who gave willingly to the IDRF are, in fact, duped innocents who have unwittingly supported hate and violence.⁸

One metaphor seems to capture all these different levels of outrage, providing both a rationale for hindutva and the vocabulary by which to oppose it: *hate*, with ‘pogrom’, ‘genocide’, and ‘crimes against humanity’ becoming the methods of the violent enactment of hatred. A 2004 report by the British organization Awaaz—South Asia Watch, also concerned with tracking how British humanitarian charity is used to raise funds for hindutva organizations, establishes hindutva straightforwardly as a ‘politics of hate’, its activities all incontrovertibly hate-driven. The CSFH and Awaaz reports are significant in that they, too, like the literature on fascism and fundamentalism before, seek to understand hindutva by analogy. The CSFH report calls the IDRF’s professed non-sectarianism “disingenuous at best”, a ploy to invoke goodwill and make the IDRF a “charity of choice” within a diasporic cultural milieu (CSFH 2002, p. 2). And yet, CSFH’s own strategy to cast the problem of hindutva’s foreign funding as a “foreign exchange of *hate*”, draws on distinctly North-American/European outrage at, and history of legislating against, hate crimes and hate speech. Awaaz, too, is a project of The Monitoring Group (TMG), a civil rights and anti-racist organization concerned with (among other things) the monitoring of hate crimes in the UK. The point is not just to oppose hindutva by whatever means available, it is to provide the analogies that make such opposition meaningful within local contexts—which now extend to the United States and the UK. If the fascist label piggy-backs 1990s hindutva onto the histories of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, the association with ‘hate’ pins hindutva to the histories of racism, anti-Semitism,

and bigotry in the United States and Europe. Such rhetorical moves generalize hindutva so as to render it analogous to these other established, already recognized forms of discrimination that naturally demand (and thus easily attract) wide censure.

But the rhetorical switch from fascism to hate has a further significance that cannot be ignored: the classification of hindutva as hatred lays the ground for opposition not just in moral terms, but also legalistically. News of the Babri Masjid's demolition was met with the shocked realization that hindutva could prevail. News of the Gujarat riots has been met with a further sense of outrage that the state (under the BJP's Narendra Modi) was not only complicit in the violence, but would "penaliz[e] or demot[e]" anyone within its ranks trying to stop it (Nussbaum 2007, p. 22; Spodek 2008, pp. 8–11). In the face of not merely state failure, but state orchestration of religious violence, the need for supranational condemnation is all the more urgent, and it calls for analogies that render complex local realities not only internationally recognizable but also operational within an international juridical framework. For the "processes of globalization are no longer merely a fact", as Hardt and Negri write, but also a "source of juridical definitions" that circumvent the nation-state and thus herald the "coming of Empire" (2000, pp. 9, xii). Fully convinced of the withering of civil society, and cognizant of the decline of national boundaries brought on by the ascendance of international law, local groups thus take their outrage directly to supranational bodies like the United Nations or the International Criminal Court for more universalist frameworks of adjudication (Hardt & Negri 2000, pp. 336–7, 9; Reddy 2005; Tisdall 2009). "[N]othing is more global than modern language and its categories", avers Lal (2005, p. 235), and Sundar deploys both in no uncertain terms when she reminds us that

[w]hat happened in Gujarat from February 28 until at least mid-April fits most of the provisions of the definition of genocide provided by the 1948 UN Convention on Genocide, to which India is a signatory (2004, p. 154).

In the context of 'Empire', local and cultural particularities matter only insofar as they illuminate generalized classifications. Naming thus becomes a specific manifestation of outrage: a strategy to create analogies, place hindutva within identifiable genealogies, and thus enable access to international/universal frameworks of condemnation. The move uses the threat of legal redressal to embarrass the Indian state at just the moment when its agreement with the United States on civil nuclear co-operation and emergence as a humanitarian donor in its own right give it a certain stature in the international community.⁹

Capturing Hindutva

There are a few things to observe about the shifting rhetorics harnessed to capture 'hindutva', in conclusion. First, that initial assessments of hindutva as generalized modern pathology give way to much more specific constructions that pinpoint its *essential* fascist or hate-based orientations. Second, as the ethnicist violence associated with hindutva becomes all the "more impersonal, organized, rational and calculative", it comes not merely to represent "a pathology of rationality" (Nandy 1998, p. 290), but now fully demands national, moral and above all supranational legal censure. In other words, as outrage intensifies, so also does the urgency, mode, and scope of opposition. This implies that, third, by the time hindutva is classified as a form of 'hate politics', of course, it is far from being a localized phenomenon. Indeed, the argument of the CSFH is that fundraising and other development-related operations associated with Hindu nationalism have

grown trans-nationally so dispersed that they are no longer so easy to identify in singular terms, as hindutva. Funding flows then represent the only means by which to track hindutva organizationally—itsself a distinctly post-9/11 global strategy.¹⁰ The strategies, rhetorics, and analogies used to assess hindutva in this phase are thus apparently also derivatives of a post-9/11 context. Early concerns over the need to account for the cultural specificity of hindutva (even in diaspora) or to work against Orientalizing analytical tendencies are replaced by a greater concern with capturing hindutva—conceptually and criminally.

As such, this body of literature under review here needs to be separated from other studies of hindutva that focus less on political opposition, and more on the multiple and complex processes by which national(ist) ideologies like hindutva comes to inflect local, regional, vernacular politics, even in diasporic contexts (which will be the focus of the third and last essay in this series, “Hindutva as praxis”). The tools used to critique and oppose hindutva altogether too easily become shorthand reifications: sound bites that slip easily from essays to newspapers and world-in-a-minute media reporting, flattening the complexities of the massive contest over rights and representation that hindutva metonymically represents. Scholarly purposes might be better served by reading hindutva through less politically tinted glasses, as a sometimes troubling but always insightful commentary on the present forms of democratic debate. The third and last paper in this series of three reviews literature that, although still often opposed or ambivalent, nonetheless regards hindutva as a form of *praxis*, whose considerable grassroots impact makes it near-impossible to cordon or unilaterally oppose.

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Short Biography

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was published in 2006. She has also written on the internationalization/globalization of “caste” through the discourses of race and human rights, as also about “blood” donation and sample collection in the context of sample collection for genetic research.

Notes

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¹ The Babri Masjid in Ayodhya was built in the 16th century by a general of the Mughal emperor Babur, on what is believed to be the site of a temple marking the birthplace of the Hindu deity, Rama (*Ramjanmabhumi*). The legend of the temple and its destruction, and stories of the use of the disputed site by Hindus and Muslims alike over the years were well known in the colonial period, and may even have been a product of colonial historiography (Gopal 1991; van der Veer 1994, pp. 152–62). The movement to demolish the mosque and replace it with a Rama temple gathered momentum in 1990, and despite a Supreme Court injunction barring any action on the site of the mosque, *kar sevaks* (volunteers) associated with various hindutva organizations succeeded in demolishing the structure on December 6, 1992.

² The 2002 Gujarat riots are really a subsequent chapter of the still-unresolved Ramjanmabhoomi dispute. In February 2002, an altercation at the Godhra train station in Gujarat State between *kar sevaks* returning from Ayodhya and local Muslims resulted in a compartment of the Sabarmati Express being set on fire, killing 59. I refer to the ‘post Godhra’ violence as the Gujarat riots: a period of wide-spread and at times intense violence that targeted primarily Muslim residential areas and businesses, ostensibly with the complicity and sometimes active participation of police and state representatives. Official estimates suggest that 1000 were killed and many more left homeless, but unofficial estimates are roughly twice as high.

³ Parts of this section are revisions of arguments originally presented in Chapter 2 of my book, *Religious Identity and Political Destiny* (2006), which offers a more detailed critique of the implications of the fascist characterization.

⁴ Other scholars have similarly held the commitment to cultural relativism responsible for weakening intellectual stances of opposition to hindutva: Ahmed 1993, pp. 51–5; Balagopal 1993, p. 790; Nanda 2004; Smith 1996.

⁵ Paul Brass’ work is to be distinguished from others in that it interrogates the processes of classification and the discursive contests over the meanings of the riot before offering its own assessment (2003).

⁶ <http://www.stopfundinghate.org/about.html>. There is also the Coalition Against Genocide: ‘a spectrum of [some 30 mostly South Asian] organizations and individuals in the United States and Canada’ that claims to have formed ‘in response to the Gujarat genocide to demand accountability and justice’, but seems to have rallied mainly in opposition to the visit of Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi, under whose watch the riots occurred, in 2005. (<http://www.coalitionagainstgenocide.org/about.php>).

⁷ CSFH’s strategies are mirrored by those of Awaaz, a British watch group that produced a report on the fund-raising operations of Sewa International and its links to ‘hindu extremism’ (2004).

⁸ Readers will recall here that the figure of the ‘duped innocent’ appears not infrequently in debates on hindutva, particularly in the claim that conversion to Christianity surely involves trickery of the innocent and ignorant (Menon 2003).

⁹ Interestingly, it is only at this juncture is the term ‘genocide’ applied to partition violence (e.g. Hansen 2002) and ‘pogrom’ get retrospectively applied to the anti-Sikh riots that followed the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her two Sikh bodyguards in late 1984 (Grewal 2007), though, as even Nussbaum points out, there were significant differences between that episode of targeted violence and the events in Gujarat (2007, p. 23). Finally, it is not only critics of hindutva who call upon analytical analogies to create recognition in non-Indian contexts; Kuri-en notes that American Hindu groups have likened Islamic invasions into Northern India to a ‘holocaust’ that rivals that perpetrated on Jews in Nazi Germany (2007, pp. 150–1).

¹⁰ As the (Hindu) critics of the CSFH report point out, “the intense campaign against the IDRDF started only after 9/11 when the U.S. government began worrying about Islamic charities being used as fronts by terrorist groups” (<http://www.letindiadevelop.org/indiaabroad041803.shtml>).

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