

CHAPTER 3

BJP REINVENTS ITSELF: 1989-1996

NINTH LOK SABHA ELECTION – 1989

By the time of Ninth Lok Sabha Election, BJP had already started to pursue ‘Hindutva politics’. Its support to VHP’s ‘Ramshila Pujan Programme’ as well its final endorsement to construct Shri Ram Temple at Ayodhya made the party popular in North India. Meanwhile the non-Communist opposition party formed National Front under the leadership of V.P. Singh to fight against the Congress. The parties like Janata Dal, Assam Gan Parishad, Congress (S), Telugu Desham, and DMK fought the Lok Sabha election in 1989 under the banner of National Front. They worked out an electoral alliance with the BJP in spite of their reservations about its pro Hindu posture, for avoiding any division in the non-Congress votes. However due to political reasons the National Front and BJP could not enter into a comfortable electoral alliance. Although, they could successfully worked out seat adjustments in many constituencies of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, J&K, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi still they fought against each other in some constituencies. While in Maharashtra the BJP shared seats with Shiv Sena, in rest of India it contested the elections independently.

In its election manifesto for 1989 Lok Sabha election, the BJP was strongly committed to the unity and integrity of India. It expressed its commitments to the uplift of the poor and downtrodden. Its promises to the electorate were: formation of a Human Rights Commission with the expansion of the Minorities Commission; free fair and regular elections; cleaning of public life on priority basis; speedy development of the agriculture and rural sector, total ban of the slaughter of the cows; formation of the smaller states for making them economically and administratively viable, and eliminate regional imbalances; introduction of the Uniform Civil Code; deletion of Article 370 of the constitution which provides special status to Jammu and Kashmir; extension of the reservation policy to the economic backward castes/classes; Fundamental Right to Work to be incorporated in the Constitutions; improvement of the quality of the life of the people; preservation and spreading of the Indian culture; and welfare of women, scheduled caste and scheduled tribes.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Manifesto of BJP, 1989

In this election the party contested total 226 Lok Sabha seats (election held to 524 seats), won 86 seats and lost the security deposits in 88 seats and managed to poll 11.4% votes. It made no secret of its Hindu character and took advantage of the Hindu fundamentalism in the wake of Ramjanambhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy which resulted in its sizeable ever presence in the Lok Sabha. The remarkable electoral outcome provide electrifying jubilation for the party leadership as well as cadre.

A state wise performance of the BJP reveals that it received massive support in Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi. In Gujarat it contested 12 seats and won all of them, polling more than 50% of the votes. Similarly in Rajasthan it won 13 out of 17 contested seats. In Madhya Pradesh its candidate were elected in 27 constituencies out of 33 contested. Further in Himachal Pradesh and Delhi the party won 3 seats out of 4 contested and 5 out of 4 seats contested respectively. In terms of the percentage of the votes it secured 30.5% in Gujarat, 45.3% in Himachal Pradesh, 39.7% in Madhya Pradesh, 29.6% in Rajasthan and 26.2% in Delhi. (See Table - 14)

The party received mixed responses in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Maharashtra. In Maharashtra its alliance with Shiv Sena produced good results with considerable expansion of the support base in rural Maharashtra. It won 10 Lok Sabha seats out of 33 contested and captured 23.7% of the popular votes polled in the state. In Uttar Pradesh and Bihar its alliance could not work properly with Janata Dal. In several constituencies of these two states both the party pitted their candidates against each other which led to a considerable division of non-Congress votes. In Uttar Pradesh, it contested 31 seats, in alliance with Janata Dal in 20 seats, but won only 8, forfeiting security deposits in 13 constituencies. In Bihar, the party performed marginally better by winning 9 out of 25 seats contested. It shared 7.6% votes in Uttar Pradesh and 13% votes in Bihar. Thus it could not get any spectacular results in these two populous states of North India.

Its performance in Southern and North Eastern states was remarkably poor. In the states like Karnataka, Kerala, Orissa, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, it fought the election alone but could not secure a single seat. Rather out of its total 56 candidates in these states, one could save his security deposits. In none of these it could poll more than 5% of the votes.

BJP's emergence in Indian politics, particularly in the Hindi heartland is considered by the political analysts as accidental and instantaneous. As a Bala Shankar described "From untouchability to stardom in the power game, from the frayed political fringe to

full glare of flood lights, from uncertain sideways glances to resolute and hawkishly intent state, strait at the target, the magical

Table: 14, Electoral Performance of the Bharatiya Janata Party, 1989 Parliamentary Election

Sr. No.	STATE/UT	Seats			Votes Polled (%)
		Total	Contested	Won	
1	ANDHRA PRADESH	42	2	0	1.97
2	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	2	-	-	
3	BIHAR	54	24	8	11.72
4	GOA	2	1	0	0.71
5	GUJARAT	26	12	12	30.47
6	HARYANA	10	2	0	8.31
7	HIMACHAL PRADESH	4	4	3	45.25
8	JAMMU & KASHMIR	6	2	0	7.15
9	KARNATAKA	28	5	0	2.55
10	KERALA	20	20	0	4.51
11	MADHYA PRADESH	40	33	27	39.66
12	MAHARASHTRA	48	33	10	23.72
13	MANIPUR	2	1	0	2.27
14	MEGHALAYA	2	-	-	
15	MIZORAM	1	-	-	
16	NAGALAND	1	-	-	
17	ORISSA	21	6	0	1.28
18	PUNJAB	13	3	0	4.17
19	RAJASTHAN	25	17	13	29.64
20	SIKKIM	1	-	-	
21	TAMIL NADU	39	3	0	0.29
22	TRIPURA	2	1	0	0.58
23	UTTAR PRADESH	85	31	8	7.58
24	WEST BENGAL	42	19	0	1.67

25	ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS	1	-	-	
26	CHANDIGARH	1	1	-	12.26
27	DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	1	-	-	
28	DAMAN & DIU	1	-		
29	DELHI	7	5	4	26.19
30	LAKSHADWEEP	1	-	-	
31	PONDICHERRY	1	-	-	
	TOTAL	529	225	85	11.36

Source: STATISTICAL REPORT ON GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1989 TO THE EIGHT LOK SABHA, VOLUME I Election Commission of India

88 victories in the November Lok Sabha elections, having infused in it a new life and new confidence, Bharatiya Janata Party is out to consolidate its conquest annex new avenues and demand and get its due, perhaps more”.⁵⁸ But in a realistic analysis of the BJP’s consolidation in Indian politics is not a chance happening in Indian politics rather a gradual rise in its strength. No doubt the BJP had suffered a severe inconsistency so far as gap between the percentage of votes it had polled and the seats it had won is concerned, due to the effective system i.e. “first-past-the-post system”.

The unprecedented success of the BJP in the November 1989 Lok Sabha election heightened its hope to emerge as a national alternative to the Congress. The party leadership considered the success as a measure of acceptance by the electorate its principles and stand on the issues of national importance like abolition of Article 370, enactment of a common civil code, restoration of Ramjanmbhoomi at Ayodhya and also its outright rejection of ‘Minorityism’.⁵⁹

Tenth Lok Sabha Election – 1991

Differences in outlook of the two supporting parties of the National Front government, the BJP and the CPI-M, became apparent in the drama played by the Janata Dal leaders when they were electing a leader to fill of prime ministership. The event contained in it the seeds of premature dissolution of the ninth Lok Sabha, and subsequent events amply proved these apprehensions. The struggle for power and self-aggrandizement of

⁵⁸ R. Bala Shankar, ‘For its Pound of Flesh’, The Week, February 11, 1990, p. 30.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

the Janata Dal leaders, leading to a hasty decision on the Mandal Commission's recommendation to reserve twenty-seven percent of the government jobs for "other backward classes," hastened the disintegration of the Janata Dal. It also sent alarming signals to the other parties to withstand the onslaught of the game plan of the pro-Mandal leaders.

The BJP, anticipating the negative results of its association with the V.P. Singh government and threatened by the consolidation of the backward castes through the Mandal politics of the Janata Dal, perhaps had no option but to return to its old source of identity, Hindutva, and went all out to agitate, organize, and mobilize Hindus to ensure their support. Encouraged by the rich dividends it received from the Ram shila puja ceremony during the previous Lok Sabha elections in 1989, the BJP launched Advani's Ram Rath Yatra from Somnath to Ayodhya, during which the party symbol was prominently displayed to increase religious fervor among the Hindus and to mobilize their support for the party. With the overwhelming response to the Rath Yatra, on the one hand, and efforts of the other parties to brand the BJP a communal party on the other, the BJP hardened its stand on the temple issue still further. Unlike in the 1989 Lok Sabha elections, this time the party firmly promised to construct the Shri Ram Temple at Ayodhya.

By the time the elections to the tenth Lok Sabha were announced, the BJP was well set to exploit its Hindu identity. Accordingly, it entitled its manifesto Towards Ram Rajya. The BJP extensively mentioned its commitments to a 'Clean Political System', 'Economic Growth with Social Justice', 'Vibrant Social Order' and 'World Fraternity'.⁶⁰ On the whole the party was committed to "Usher in a New Political Culture", a "new era of hope and prosperity" and a "value based politics". Most of the commitments and programmes outlined in the manifesto in nutshell were welcome and non-controversial. However, the pronouncements on 'positive secularism', its views on the Ramjanambhoomi – Babri Masjid issue, on Kashmir, the Minority Commission, Uniform Civil Law, Hindutva and its modus operandi to achieve the overall goal of a 'Hindu Rashtra' had generated acrimonious controversy and agitated the minds of all thinking Indians who hold the country's interests most dear to their hearts.

⁶⁰ Pratap Chandra Swain, "Bharatiya Janata Party: Profile and Performance", A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, p. 209-210.

The party president, Murali Manohar Joshi, also promised that the temple would be constructed at the Ram Janambhoomi in Ayodhya as soon as the party came to power. As the campaign progressed, the BJP coined slogans such as “Jo Hindu hit ki baat karega, wahi desh par raj karega” (Only those will rule the country who would look after the interests of Hindus) and “BJP ko lana hai, ram rajya banana hai” (To bring the Ramrajya in the country, bring the BJP to power) to encourage the Hindutva feeling of the majority community. While these campaign promises echoed the feelings of Hindu fundamentalists, its slogan, “Sabko dekha baar-baar, hamko parkhen ek baar” (You have tested all others many times; why not test us only for once?), appealed to all the sections of the society. As the campaign progressed, the BJP outsmarted all other parties on almost all the fronts. Three video tapes—one on Advani titled *The Man India Awaits*, a second on the BJP titled *The Right alternative*, and the third, and an edited version of the controversial video prepared by the Jain Studios on the events at Ayodhya in October-November 1990—were extensively circulated.

Tactically, while the party’s religious cards were blatantly being played by leaders like Ahok Singhal, Uma Bharati, Sadhavi Ritambhra, and many more at regional and local levels, the star campaigners of the party, Vajpayee and Advani, were propagating the party’s ideology and program to present the BJP as the right alternative. For example, Advani, while welcoming 1500 Muslims who joined the BJP in April 1991, explained in a public meeting at Bilaspur, Madhya Pradesh that “the problems of all Indians, irrespective of caste and religion, were identical and his party’s ideology was to solve them as humanitarian problems without adding political or communal overtones to them.”⁶¹ The top-ranking BJP leaders also made their stand clear on the construction of the Sri Ram Temple. Vajpayee, for example, explained that “Ayodhya is not a poll issue, but a matter of faith.”⁶²

The BJP contested over 400 Lok Sabha seats, which it never had before, not even during its Jana Sangh days. Of the 468 seats it contested in the 1991 Lok Sabha elections, it won 120 of them. Its popular support had also increased; compared to the mere 11.5 percent in 1989, it won 20.11 percent of the votes in 1991. The proportion of candidates losing their security deposits, however, remained the same, about thirty-nine percent. But because the number of contestants in the 1991 elections had almost

⁶¹ Indian Express, April 15, 1991, p. 1.

⁶² Indian Express, April 20, 1991, p. 1.

doubled, its performance showed an improvement. In addition to the 120 seats won, in as many as 167 constituencies the BJP polled more than 16.33 percent of the votes, indicating a potential increase in popular support in many Lok Sabha constituencies. A statewide analysis of the 1991 Lok Sabha elections, as presented in Table no. 15, would suggest that excluding Himachal Pradesh and Maharashtra, where it lost both seats and votes, the party gained at least in votes in all other states. That is to say, even though it lost a few seats in some of the states, its overall share of votes increased. For example, its members from Bihar decreased to five in 1991 from 9 in 1989, but its share of votes increased from thirteen to sixteen percent. Similarly, it lost one seat in Rajasthan, but its poll percentage went up from a mere 29.6 in 1989 to 40.9 percent in 1991. Even in Madhya Pradesh, where it lost heavily in seats, it gained in votes. The party achieved the distinction of getting over fifty percent of the votes in Gujarat, where it also won twenty of the twenty-six Lok Sabha seats and no lost deposits. The case was similar in Uttar Pradesh, where despite stiff competition, the BJP polled 32.82 percent of the votes and won

Table: 15, Electoral Performance of the Bharatiya Janata Party, 1991 Parliamentary Election

Sr. No.	STATE/UT	Seats			Votes Polled (%)
		Total	Contested	Won	
1	ANDHRA PRADESH	42	41	1	9.63
2	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	2	2	0	6.11
3	ASSAM	14	8	2	9.6
4	BIHAR	54	51	5	15.95
5	GOA	2	2	0	15.61
6	GUJARAT	26	26	20	50.37
7	HARYANA	10	10	0	10.17
8	HIMACHAL PRADESH	4	4	2	42.79
9	KARNATAKA	28	28	4	29.28
10	KERALA	20	19	0	4.61
11	MADHYA PRADESH	40	40	12	41.88
12	MAHARASHTRA	48	31	5	20.2

13	MANIPUR	2	2	0	8.1
14	MEGHALAYA	2	2	0	6.89
15	MIZORAM	1	-	-	
16	NAGALAND	1	1	0	3
17	ORISSA	21	21	0	9.5
18	RAJASTHAN	25	25	12	40.88
19	SIKKIM	1	-	-	
20	TAMIL NADU	39	15	0	1.65
21	TRIPURA	2	2	0	2.99
22	UTTAR PRADESH	85	84	51	32.82
23	WEST BENGAL	42	42	0	11.66
24	ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS	1	1	0	4.85
25	CHANDIGARH	1	1	0	28.8
26	DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	1	1	0	35.39
27	DAMAN & DIU	1	1	1	31.88
28	DELHI	7	7	5	40.21
29	LAKSHADWEEP	1	-	-	
30	PONDICHERRY	1	1	0	1.97
	TOTAL	524	468	120	20.11

Source: STATISTICAL REPORT ON GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1991 TO THE EIGHT LOK SABHA, VOLUME I Election Commission of India

Fifty-one of the eighty-five Lok Sabha seats while only four of its eighty-four candidates lost their security deposits. In Delhi, too, it polled over forty percent and won five of the seven seats. Similarly, it captured the lone seat of Daman and Diu Union Territory and polled over one-third of the total valid votes. In Dadar and Nagar Haveli, although it did not win, it polled 35.39 percent of the votes.

The party expanded its base in south as well, winning four seats in Karnataka and one in Andhra Pradesh and polling 29.28 percent and 9.63 percent of votes, respectively. Three major states of the eastern zone—Assam, West Bengal, and Orissa—where the party had a weak support base in the past also contributed to the BJP's success. While it won two of the fourteen seats in Assam, it also made inroads in West Bengal, the

bastion of the left front, by polling 11.7 percent of the votes. In Orissa, too, it polled about ten percent of the votes (see Table 15).

In brief, in the tenth Lok Sabha elections the BJP not only increased its seats from eighty-six to 120 but also garnered support from one-fifth of the total electors in the country who voted in the 1991 elections. Notwithstanding the setbacks of seats lost in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra, its popular support base, measured by the percentage of votes polled, either increased or remained the same. It may be noted that most of the seats lost by a very narrow margin in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra were those in elections in the second phase, i.e., after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. And, finally, the substantial gains the BJP made in the southern as well as eastern zones of India amply proved that the party had potential to emerge as a national alternative to the Congress.

Ramjanmbhoomi-Babri Masjid Controversy

The demolition of the Babri mosque was justified by Hindu zealots as an attempt to rid India of a relic of Muslim domination.⁶³ While proponents of Hindutva continue to advocate for the construction of a temple where the mosque hitherto stood, several Indians view the events of 1992 as an onslaught on Indian secularism and democracy.⁶⁴

Precursors to the Demolition: Shah Bano and the Uniform Civil Code Debate

Sensing the heightened insecurity among Muslims following the Partition in 1947, the Congress government under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru sought to assure members of the community that they were an integral part of India. It did so, ironically, by excluding them from what was to have been a uniform civil code (UCC).⁶⁵ Accommodation of religion became a matter of intense controversy with the enactment of the Hindu Code Bills in 1950.⁶⁶ While the Bills replaced Hindu personal law governing marriage, divorce, adoption, and inheritance with a uniform civil code, they left Muslim customary law unchanged. This infuriated Hindu nationalists, who claimed that the proposed directives undermined traditional Hindu practices.⁶⁷

⁶³ Robert E. Frykenberg, "Hindutva as a Political Religion," in *The Sacred In Twenty-First Century Politics*, ed. Roger Griffin, Robert Mallett, and John Tortorice (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), p. 189.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Frykenberg, *Sacred In Twenty-First Century Politics*, 189.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

Through the 1960s and 1970s, proponents of Hindutva decried the government's pampering of minorities, and denounced pseudo-secularism—state policies that accorded special rights to Muslims in matters pertaining to personal law. The issue reemerged in a 1985 Supreme Court Case involving a seventy-three-year-old Muslim woman, Shah Bano, who was divorced by her husband after forty-three years of marriage. By requiring that Shah Bano receive monthly maintenance from her husband, the Court's decision broke with the legal precedent of adjudicating Muslim family disputes under the Islamic Personal Law Application Act.⁶⁸ Hindu nationalists opposed the Supreme Court's decision, maintaining that it was unnecessarily sympathetic towards Indian Muslims. They were equally critical of the Congress Party, which was in power at the time.

Indian Muslims found their own set of religious rationales for opposing the Bills. Islamic clerics condemned the decision as an interference with *Sharia* law, and a step towards a uniform civil code that would deny Muslims the right to profess their faith. In an attempt to stem the withdrawal of Muslim support from the Congress Party, the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi announced his support for the Muslim Women Protection of Rights on Divorce Bill. The Bill became law in 1986, despite widespread agitation by conservative Islamic clerics, progressive Indian Muslims (who genuinely desired Hindu-Muslim cohesion), and Hindu nationalists (whose communal agenda was severely compromised due to the law).

The Shah Bano controversy provided proponents of Hindutva with a tailor-made opportunity, for it dramatized the dilemma of instituting democracy in a multicultural, multi-religious society. The courts bolstered Hindu nationalist aims by situating the issue of women's rights in the conflict between a monogamous Hindu society and a polygamous Islamic tradition. Appeals to gender problematized the debate on personal law within an intensely religious setting.⁶⁹

Recognizing the benefits that would accrue from cashing in on these events, Hindu nationalists used the consensus in favor of a national civil code to their advantage. They repeatedly emphasized that the Congress response to the Shah Bano case proved that

⁶⁸ Thomas Blom Hansen, "Democracy, Populism and Governance in India in the 1980s," in *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 147.

⁶⁹ Flavia Agnes, "The Supreme Court, Media and UCC Debate," in *Religion, Power and Violence: Expression of Politics in Contemporary Times*, ed. Ram Puniyani (New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt. Lmt., 2005), p. 234.

the party was courting the Muslim vote. This affirmed, in their view, that Indian secularism was a sham, that it was, in fact, anti-Hindu. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), by contrast, stood for a “positive secularism” that embodied a uniform civil code—albeit a Hinduised version. By framing the Shah Bano case as one involving the sentiments of a Muslim woman, the BJP expressed a clear move against womanhood and Islam. In reality, the UCC debate reflects the communal tendencies of the Hindu right-wing. Proponents of Hindutva deliberately overlooked the persistence of personal law in other communities, among the Indian Parsi community, for instance. That they consciously appealed to the structural patriarchy in Islamic society indicates how Hindu nationalists used the Shah Bano case, and the related debate on personal law, to promote their anti-Muslim agenda.⁷⁰ The BJP was forced to return to its militant roots in the wake of its electoral defeat in 1984. L.K. Advani, who possessed closer ties with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), replaced the more moderate A.B. Vajpayee as party president. This change in the BJP’s leadership, the aforementioned Hindu Code Bills controversy, and the Shah Bano episode were events that crystallized the Hindu revival movement of the 1980s. In search of an outlet to express their grievances against Congress pseudo-secularism and the Muslim minority, the BJP-RSS-VHP⁴⁷¹ triad launched the Ramjanambhoomi movement: The drive to erase the Babri mosque at Ayodhya encompassed the gambit of fears that plagued votaries of Hindutva.

The Historical Background of the Ayodhya Case

The Babri mosque was built, probably in the sixteenth century, by order of the first Mughal emperor of India, Babur. The Hindus believe that the Babri mosque was built on the ruins of a Hindu temple which had been destroyed by a Muslim commander in chief. Many Hindus believe that the temple was built to commemorate the birthplace of *Rama* the king of Ayodhya.⁷¹ Ayodhya is one of the seven holy towns of India, lies in the Indian State of Uttar Pradesh has a many mosques and Hindu temples. The Babri mosque was the largest mosque in Ayodhya. In the past, it had been used as a house of worship by Muslims and by Hindus as well. Between 1853 and 1855, the first riots between Muslims and Hindus were noted when Hindus wanted to occupy the mosque

⁷⁰ Upendra Baxi, “Citing Secularism in the Uniform Civil Code: A Riddle Wrapped Inside an Enigma?,” in *The Crisis of Secularism in India*, ed. Anuradha Dingwaney Needham and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2007), 284-286.

⁷¹ Pradeep K. Chhibber, Subhash Misra and Richard Sisson, “Order and the Indian Electorate: For Whom does Shiva Dance?” *Asian Survey* 32, no. 7 (July 1992), 610-613.

and its terrain. After this, the British colonial administration mediated a compromise between Hindus and Muslims. Hindus were prohibited from accessing the inner area of the mosque, but they were allowed to worship in its courtyard. In 1883, the British colonial administration dismissed a request by some Hindus who wanted to build a Hindu temple on the mosque's terrain.

In 1934, Hindu riots led to damage of one of the domes of the mosque. In 1949, someone placed idols of *Ram* and *Sita* (the wife of *Ram*) inside the mosque. As a result, the police administration gave the order to remove the idols. Instead of this, the council of the district of Fayzabad asked the Imam to leave the mosque, and closed it. Only Hindu priests and a limited number of Hindu believers were allowed access to the mosque. In the aftermath of this, Muslims took legal action in order to overturn this decision. Hindus also tried to change the situation by taking legal action as well, but the courts decided to keep the situation unchanged.⁷²

The Ayodhya Campaign since the 1980s

In 1984, the Hindu nationalists, namely the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) started their Ayodhya campaign. They were looking for a new symbol for their political campaigns and found it in the person of Ram. Even when nobody could prove the truth of the story, the legend of Ram and the story of the temple of Ram in Ayodhya were very popular and widespread in India. For the Hindu nationalists, both the fight against the use of the Babri mosque as a mosque, and for construction of a Hindu temple at the birthplace of Ram, was a logical continuation of a centuries old fight of Hindus against Muslims. Because of this, Ram was the ideal figure for Hindu identification. The religious diversity of Hinduism was reduced by making *Ram* a symbol of Hinduism and national unity.⁷³ Yet, this Hinduism was different from the peaceful Hinduism offered by Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru. According to Corbridge, it was the kind of Hinduism which Savarkar had propagated, "... a Hinduism which could defend the

⁷² Jaffrelot, "The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India", 91-96. And Peter van der Veer, "God must be Liberated! A Hindu Liberation Movement in Ayodhya," *Modern Asian Studies* 21, no. 2 (1987), 283-301.

⁷³ Thomos B. Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*, 172-181. Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*, 363-368 and 388-392.

timeless glories of Indian civilizations.”⁷⁴ And, in addition, by defining the Muslims as the “Others,” identification of Hinduism had another cornerstone. First, the campaign was one of processions and pilgrim parties, but in 1986, a district judge decided to open the gates of the mosque in order to allow Hindus to worship there. This decision led to reactions by Muslim organizations, which started to organize peaceful marches to Ayodhya. But, the Muslim planning did not lead to coordinated actions because the Muslims were more focused on the case of Shah Bano, its discussion in public, and the consequences for Muslims in India.

However, the VHP used the opportunity to use this Muslim lack of coordinated action as a signal for expanding the VHP campaign. The VHP emphasized the importance for all Hindus of the birthplace of Ram on this holy ground and expanded the campaign to get more support. And, they declared that marches of Muslims to Ayodhya were to be judged as an attack on Hindu society which would lead to counter measures. The leader of the BJP, Lal Krishan Advani, argued in 1989 that the Ayodhya issue was not simply a dispute, but a symbol of pseudo secularism and appeasement of the minorities.⁷⁵

Although local Muslim and Hindu leaders declared that they could find a peaceful agreement for the use of the area of the Babri mosque, the VHP provoked a confrontation and spread the dispute all over India. The VHP planned to lay the foundation for a new Hindu temple on the site of the Babri mosque in September / October of 1989. This date was planned purposely because elections for the Lok Sabha were also scheduled for the end of 1989. By choosing this date, the VHP carried the dispute into the political arena and put the Indian government under pressure. The VHP thought that it was now a matter for the government to avoid any clash on the site of the Babri mosque by taking a position pro Hinduism. By doing so, the Indian government, and hereby the Indian National Congress (Congress), could prove their efforts in doing something for the Hindu majority, and thus for the majority of the voters of India.⁷⁶

The government of India finally permitted laying the foundation for a Hindu temple about sixty meters from the Babri mosque, but still on the disputed site of the mosque. The VHP promised that no further action would be taken. With this agreement on

⁷⁴ Corbridge, ‘The Militarization of all Hindudom’? The Bharatiya Janata Party, the Bomb, and the Political Spaces of Hindu Nationalism, 235.

⁷⁵ Malik and Singh, *Hindu Nationalists in India: The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party*, 83. 61.

⁷⁶ Hansen, *op. cit.*, 181-185.

November 09, 1989, the foundation for a Hindu temple was laid on the site of the Babri mosque. The soft attitude of the Indian government led to further development of the Ayodhya campaign as a cornerstone of the Hindu nationalist movement. In October 1990, the situation escalated again when the VHP announced the beginning of the temple's construction. Prime Minister V.P. Singh made a speech on television and explained that the VHP and BJP rejected his wish for a court decision about the Ayodhya case. The BJP Minister Advani was arrested because of his participation in the Ayodhya campaign. As a result, the BJP withdrew its support for the Janata party ruled government.

Between October 30, 1990, and November 1, 1990, approximately 10,000–40,000 Hindu nationalists tried to reach the site of the Babri mosque. Officially, they wanted to begin the construction of the Ram temple. Probably, they wanted to destroy the mosque in order to build the Ram temple on the former site of the mosque. In a first rush, the Hindu nationalists were able to destroy one dome of the mosque. But, on the following day, the security forces which protected the mosque were able to set the Hindu nationalists back by using armed fire. Because of the ten to one hundred deaths during these incidents, the Hindu nationalists decided to break off the attacks on the mosque. The events on October 30, 1990 and November 01, 1990 were the prelude for the demolition of the Babri mosque on December 06, 1992.

Explanations

The Ayodhya campaign was part of a process to define Hinduism in a new way and to transform it. Ram and the dispute with the Muslims in Ayodhya were in this sense only symbols for the awakening of a new Hinduism. The Ayodhya movement was part of the Hindu nationalist's campaign to reaffirm the nation's cultural identity and a signal to other political parties to end, in the sense of the BJP, their pseudo secular politics which favored minorities for the sake of a Western style secularism. Yet, BJP officials argued that the Ayodhya campaign was not an anti-Muslim campaign because Hindu nationalists were not per se anti-Muslim.⁷⁷ The argument offered by Van der Veer after the beginning of the Ayodhya campaign in 1985 is highly applicable. Religious feelings

⁷⁷ Gurdas M. Ahuja, "BJP and the Indian Politics", (New Delhi: Ram company, 1994), 317-340. Gurdas is a supporter of the BJP.

and values do matter, but “... they cannot be divorced from the political processes in which they are produced and managed.”⁷⁸

The political processes were the struggle between the Congress and the BJP to gain Hindu votes. Malik argues, “By pitting Ram against Babur, the BJP changed the context of Indian politics. For the majority of Hindus Ram represents the tradition (*maryada*) of Hindu culture; now he became a national symbol. Babur, on the other hand, was an invader and conqueror who expressed dislike for both the people and the country which he had conquered.”⁷⁹ This shows not just the political dimension of the Ayodhya case, but the underpinnings of the emotional importance for India’s Hindus as well.

Additionally, the explanations of the Hindu nationalists show the power of symbols and the way Hindu nationalists combine religion with politics. Religious symbols, for example in the processions of Hindu nationalists, had a tremendous emotional effect on the Hindu population. Due to the combination of ideology and religion, it was not easy for the authorities of the state to intervene because this could have been judged as being against the religion of the Hindus. In addition to this, the processions had another effect on the connection between Hindus and Muslims. Even in areas where Hindus and Muslims lived normally together in peace and harmony, processions created tensions, and in some cases were the reason for riots between Hindus and Muslims.⁸⁰ So, even when the original aim of the processions could not be reached, they led to another result which was in the interest of the VHP, Hindus seeing Muslims as “different” citizens.

In combination with the rhetoric of Hindu nationalists, the processions addressed different groups of Hindus due to political and religious reasons and formed a desire for solidarity among the Hindus.⁸¹ Yet, the Hindu nationalists did not just use traditional religious symbols and religious means like processions. They used modern media, such as videos, as an instrument for political transformation of religious symbols and for manipulation of the people as well. With this combination of religious symbols and modern media as a means to connect the realm of religion with the realm

⁷⁸ Van der Veer, ‘God must be Liberated!’ A Hindu Liberation Movement in Ayodhya, 300.

⁷⁹ Malik and Singh, op. cit., p. 83.

⁸⁰ Jafferlot, op. cit., 392-398

⁸¹ Banerjee, *Hindutva – Ideology and Social Psychology*, 98.

of politics, one aim of the Hindu nationalists became clear. This was the superseding of the secular Indian state by a non-secular Hindu state.

In addition to the religious reasons for the rise of Hinduism, the VHP was able to push this process of transformation and to use the symbol of Ram because since the case of Shah Bano the Muslims had been fragmented into two factions. One was the faction of modern Muslims. The other faction supported traditional Islam under the rule of Sharia. In contrast to the weak and loosely organized religious community of the Muslims, the Hindu nationalist ideology and its network consisting of Hindu nationalist organizations and a Hindu nationalist party had existed since India's independence. According to Crawford, the VHP was able to transform "... cultural identity into political identity"⁸² Without having a strong and united opponent, the division of the

Muslims made it easier for the VHP to pursue its goals.

The above-mentioned reasons were not, however, the decisive ones for the successful mobilization of the masses and the outbreak of riots beginning in the late 1980s. The decisive factor was the weakness of the state in combination with a weak ruling party. Indian nationalism was key for the founding and developing of a modern Indian state. But, Indian nationalism was a construct based on the ideas of the leadership of the Congress in order to overcome the difficulties and complexities of the multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, multi-caste and multi-religious society of India. And this concept of a secular nationalism competed, from the beginning, with another concept of religious Indian nationalism, the Hindu nationalism.⁸³ The further development and existence of democracy and peace within India was dependent on India's leadership and its ability to bring all groups together, to balance interests and demands and to find acceptable compromises. Snyder shows the importance of elites for the development path of democratizing, but his theoretical explanations end when a country reaches one of four types of nationalism.⁸⁴ The case of India shows that the process does not end with establishing one type of nationalism. In India, the Ayodhya case shows that civic nationalism may be change to ethnic nationalism. Civic nationalism can change when

⁸² Beverly Crawford, "The Causes of Cultural Conflict: An Institutional Approach" In *The Myth of 'Ethnic Conflict,'* eds. Beverly Crawford and Ronnie Lipschutz (Berkeley: University of California, 1998), p. 19.

⁸³ Ashotosh Varshney, "Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India", 55-86.

⁸⁴ Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict*, 45-91.

elites lose their ability to persuade people of their ideas. Any nationalism, created by elites as a unifying idea to establish democracy, needs an unchallenged and acknowledged leadership to survive during times of crisis in the marketplace of ideas.⁸⁵ In India, one could argue, it was the elite who lost the ability to protect civic nationalism. And indeed, this would have been true if one could identify such an elite. During the first thirty years of India's history (after independence), the elite could be identified within the Congress. The Congress was equal to the state, ran the country and was the stabilizing factor during the first thirty years of the country. But, the Congress weakened from the first voting out of Indira Gandhi and never regained its old unlimited strength.⁸⁶ After 1977, it became clear that the Congress could not any longer be the sole guarantor of a peaceful India.

The Janata party, the successor of the Congress as the ruling party, was not a cohesive party coalition primarily founded in order to beat the Congress. The Congress, which came to power again between 1980 and 1989, was hampered by economic problems, the state government ruled by the BJP, and a bribe affair. Additionally, the Congress acted weakly and unfortunately in religious matters when in power to rule India. According to Banerjee, there was "... a marked contrast between the Indian state's intolerance and suppression of ideas and activities (mainly pursued by minorities – ethnic or religious) that are suspected to be 'secessionist' on the one hand, and its permissive – almost deferential – treatment of propaganda and acts carried out openly by self-proclaimed revivalists of the majority community, which incite violence on religious issues."⁸⁷ However, sixty per cent of the Hindu supporters of the destruction of the Babri mosque felt that the Congress-ruled government showed preference for some groups (Muslims) over others (Hindus).⁸⁸ This result, shown in a survey, may be interpreted in two ways. First, it can be interpreted as evidence for the preference of the government for the Muslims, and therefore as a sign for state weakness, because the government was not able to ensure a neutral position towards religion. Second, it could be interpreted as an indicator for the success of the campaign of the Hindu

⁸⁵ Ashutosh Varshney, *op. cit.*, 74-78

⁸⁶ Maya Chadda, *Ethnicity, Security, and Separatism in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 102-122

⁸⁷ Banerjee, *op. cit.*, 97.

⁸⁸ Pradeep K. Chhibber and Subhash Misra, "Hindus and the Babri Masjid: The Sectional Basis of Communal Attitudes," *Asian Survey* 33, no. 7, South Asia: Responses to the Ayodhya Crisis (July 1993), p. 670-671.

nationalist network to make the Hindus feel threatened by a government which supported minorities.

One additional indicator for the weakness of the state is given by a survey of Chhibber, Mishra and Sisson. In 1991, after the election, they asked voters to identify the two most important problems confronting the locality, the state and the nation. As the major recent problem on all three levels, they identified the problem of order / community (47% of the voters on the national level, 50% on the state level and 32% on the local level), and problems of economics ranked on the national level and on the state level in second place (30% on national level, 26% on the state level).⁸⁹ Maintaining order and ensuring the security of its citizens is one of the main tasks for any government. The results of the survey show that even in the eyes of Indian voters, the state was weak.

But the detailed evaluation of the data shows that in the state of Uttar Pradesh (where Ayodhya is located), economic/infrastructural problems ranked in place one (45%) and the problem of order and community ranked in place two (45%). Additionally, consensus among religions in Uttar Pradesh was relatively weak with just 64%.⁹⁰ This result could lead to the conclusion that economic reasons were one driving factor for religious tensions and the eruption of riots in Ayodhya. But such an argument is too superficial because economic problems in other states also ranked in place one but did not lead to a lack of consensus among religions or riots between religious groups. The reason for this is that economic problems are not the decisive independent variable for religious tensions. Economic problems, only in combination with a problem of order, lead to tensions among religions.⁹¹

Economic problems hampered the Janata Dal government which ruled India from 1989 until 1991, as well, and reached their height during the Congress rule between 1991 and 1996. And, in combination with the force to liberalize the domestic market, they changed the circumstances for the traditional “social contract” of society. But social contract in this case meant that the state had for many years protected its own industries by opting for an import-substituting industrialization (ISI) after independence. The reason for this was that Indian business dominated the government. According to Chhibber, “Indian capitalists in the years immediately after Independence refused to

⁸⁹ Chhibber, Mishra and Sisson, *op. cit.*, 606-616.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 612.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 612-613.

countenance a state with wide-ranging regulatory and interventionist powers, and organized effectively against it.”⁹² For Indian industry, it was not necessary to become competitive because the ISI protected Indian industry from foreign imports. But, with the economic crisis of the late 1980s, a change in Indian policy became necessary. In the eyes of the classes with lower economic status, concerns about economic problems were high⁹³ but globalization became more a threat for the ruling elite. Thus, economic reasons were not necessarily decisive for the increasing tensions between Hindus and Muslims. They were, however, one reason for the increasing support of the BJP by capitalists and landowners. These property-owning classes felt threatened by free markets and were attracted by the BJP’s rhetoric of national self-reliance because measures for self-reliance would strengthen their market position.⁹⁴

Additionally, economic problems and globalization led to reforms in India, which weakened the power of the center and strengthened the power of the states. Together with the rising self-consciousness of marginalized groups, this led to fragmentation of India’s political system and to the development of new parties which had their strongholds in different states.

Altogether, this political context prepared the stage for the success of Hindu nationalists between the Ayodhya campaign in 1992 and the BJP’s success in 1996 when the BJP seized power. As Jaffrelot argues, the political context and the weakness of the state were the opportunity for the Hindu nationalist network to mobilize the masses and show the power of Hindu nationalism.⁹⁵ Between 1980 and 1992, one can find factors in India, identified by Tarrow as key dimensions for evoking a mass movement: “... (1) the opening of access to participation for new actors; (2) the evidence of political realignment within the policy; (3) the appearance of influential allies; (4) emerging splits within the elite; and (5) a decline in the state’s capacity or will to repress the dissent.”⁹⁶ With this came the opportunity during this time period allowing the rise of Hindu Nationalism.

⁹²Vivek Chibber, *Locked in Place. State-Building and Late Industrialization in India* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 9.

⁹³ Chhibber, Misra and Sisson, *op. cit.*, 615.

⁹⁴ Radhika Desai, “Culturalism and Contemporary Right – Indian Bourgeoisie and Political Hindutva,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 34, no. 12 (1999), 704.

⁹⁵ Jaffrelot, *op. cit.*, 8.

⁹⁶ Sidney G. Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge England: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 76.

What was decisive for the increase of violence in Ayodhya was the combination of two sets of elements.

First, representatives of the Hindu nationalistic network were able to mobilize the masses by provoking the Hindu majority's fear of the Muslim minority. They presented the people with a mix of historical memories, myths and emotive issues which built up the framework for the polarization of society. In addition, they were able to gain the support of capitalists and landowners. Finally, actions of one side in the conflict provoked counteractions by the other side. "Together, these inter-group and intra-group interactions combine ... to create a vicious cycle that threatens to pull multi-ethnic societies into violence."⁹⁷ And the only power which could theoretically break through this vicious cycle was the state.

Second, the Indian state and its institutions were weak and often used the same symbols and codes of behavior which were being used by the Hindu nationalists to mobilize the masses. And there "... has never been any dispute between the state and the Hindu communal leaders over the sacrosanctity of these components of Hindu symbolism and behavioural pattern." With this, the state became unable to arbitrate between Muslims and Hindus and powerless to react vigorously in any case of provocation and violence. According to Basu, the accommodating Indian state radicalized, with its actions, the demands of religious nationalists. "Hindu nationalists are likely to gain a sympathetic hearing from the state because their core supporters, upper-caste Hindus, are so heavily represented within it."⁹⁸ And hereby, the stage for increasing violence was set.

In sum, with the Ayodhya movement, the Hindu nationalist network used the institutional flaws of India's political system and the favorable situation of a weak Congress to gain political advantages by mobilizing the masses and provoking violence between Hindus and Muslims. According to Brass, "It should be clear enough by now, therefore, how valuable Hindu-Muslim opposition, antagonism, and violence have been for the fortunes of the BJP."⁹⁹

1996 Lok Sabha Election

⁹⁷ David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, "Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict," *International Security* 21, no. 2 (Autumn 1996), 44.

⁹⁸ Amrita Basu, "The Transformation of Hindu Nationalism?" In *Transforming India*, eds. Francine R. Frankel and others (Berkeley: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 397.

⁹⁹ Paul Brass, "The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India", p. 8.

The 1996 Lok Sabha election was held amidst the shadow of a number of Scams Security Scam, Sugar Scam, Hawala Scam alleged MP's purchase scam, and the House allotment scam etc. This election experienced the eclipse of the so called 'National Constituencies' syndrome which dominated the national politics in the past two decades. The nation's voice in the election did not reflect any majority choice. It was split election that generated little voter enthusiasm and hung parliament. The political parties participated in the election by identifying themselves in three different combinations. The congress (I) and its partner in Tamil Nadu, the AIADMK along with certain minor allies like Kerala Congress (M) and Indian Union Muslim League in Kerala constituted the first political combination. The BJP and its Maharashtra based partner the Shiv Sena along with Samta Party and the Haryana Vikas Party (HVP) became the second political formation. The United Front emerged as a Third Force comprising of the Janata Dal, CPI, DMK, and Tamil Manila Congress.

BJP's performance in 1996 elections: Despite all odds, the BJP's success in 1996 elections was enviable. In the 1996 elections the BJP proved that its support base was not entirely dependent on a wave in its favour. One most astounding aspect of the BJP's performance was its success in substantially increasing its representation in parliament compared to the last election without any increase, in its vote share. Its national vote share remained stagnant. In 1996 the party polled 20.29 per cent of national votes compared to 20 per cent in 1991. Congress (I) stood ahead of the BJP with its tally of 28 per cent of national vote. In UP, the party won 52 of the 83 seats contested and thus added one seat to its 1991 tally. The party made an impressive gain in Bihar by winning 18 out of 32 seats contested. This was a big improvement over its performance in 1991 when it won only five out of 51 seats contested. In Gujarat on the other hand the party won only 16 out of 26 seats contested. In the 10th Lok Sabha elections, the party had won 20 of the 26 seats contested in Gujarat. The party also showed its muscle in Haryana by winning four seats out of only six contested. This was impressive compared to none in the last election. Its gains in Madhya Pradesh were equally impressive with a win of 27 out of 39 contested seats. In the last election it had emerged victorious in only 12 of the 40 seats contested. The party continued to advance in Karnataka winning six seats against four seats it won in 1991. In both elections the party contested 28 seats in Karnataka. In Rajasthan the party, as in the last election contested 25 seats, and won 12 seats.

Another noteworthy aspect of the BJP's performance was the strengthening of its vote share in various states. For example, in Arunachal Pradesh the party polled an impressive 17.41 per cent of the votes over only 6 per cent that it received in the previous election. It also made impressive gains in Assam and Orissa where it polled 15.92 and 13.42 per cent over its 1991 tally of 9 and 1 per cent, respectively. In the absence of any wave in favour of the BJP, two factors were mainly responsible for the BJP's impressive seat gains. First, the ability of the party to forge pre-election alliances with other parties, i.e., the Samata Party in Bihar and Haryana Vikas Party in Haryana and Shiv Sena in Maharashtra. Secondly, the party also succeeded in consolidating its support among the upper castes while fracturing the votes of the OBC. The success of BJP-Samata combine in Bihar was the best example of this delicate strategy.¹⁰⁰

Another factor enabling BJP's success was the concentration of BJP's votes. BJP's votes were concentrated both in terms of region, i.e., in the Hindi belt and in terms of caste. The average national share of the BJP of 21 per cent does not tell anything about its regional concentration. The BJP and its allies had an average vote share of 36 per cent compared to 23 per cent for the Congress (I) in the Hindi belt where the BJP was strong. BJP also performed exceptionally well among a small group of forward castes and highly educated Hindus. The BJP and its allies secured about 52 per cent of the votes among these groups. Such concentration of votes combined with the plurality system effectively translated its vote concentration into seats. With almost the same percentage of votes as the last election the party gained an additional 40 seats. Tough competition for non-BJP votes was another factor that worked in favour of the party. For example, the Congress commanded 28 per cent of Muslim votes, 18 per cent less than in 1991. Congress's loss became windfall for the NF-LF parties which came to have a greater share of the Muslim votes than Congress.¹⁰¹

BJP's impressive electoral gains notwithstanding, the party's influence in the south remained negligible. The party thus failed to extend its support beyond what is known as the Hindi belt. In fact in 1996 elections the party even lost already insignificant level of support that it had in the coastal regions. The BJP thus showed no sign of success in overcoming its major limitation of being limited to the Hindi heartland, a weakness characterised by Graham as the "limitations of its origins" (1990: 253). As Graham

¹⁰⁰ Tilak D. Gupta, 'News Analysis', India West, November 10, 1995, p. 5.

¹⁰¹ India Today, May 31, 1996, p. 25-26.

points out, the party's identification with issues and concerns of the Hindi belt and its support for an activist role of Hindu nationalism drawing more on the values of Brahmanism has continued to limit the party's appeal beyond the Hindi belt. Graham argues that this was why the party failed in 1950s and 1960s to fill the space that the left leaning orientation of Congress had created for a right wing party. By successfully combining the elements of Hindu traditionalism with mild form of social conservatism and political and economic liberalism, the Jana Sangh could have made it into the mainstream of Indian politics (1990: 253-54). Instead, the RSS dominated Jana Sangh chose to follow a strategy of building strength in isolation. On the positive side, this enabled the party to emphasize discipline and maintain internal cohesion and maneuverability. However, the party lost many sympathisers who did not want more internal democracy in the Jana Sangh (1990: 257).

The critical role being played by caste in the electoral arena was undercutting the strength of BJP's Hindutva plank. The BJP's attempt to counter caste politics had been the cult of Ram. It pushed Ram as the ideal Indian, pious yet militant royal but able to mix easily with all classes. BJP's hopes to submerge caste antagonism with this kind of appeal encountered challenge from leaders like Kanshi Ram and Mulayam Singh Yadav.¹⁰² Even the BJP campaign for the construction of a huge

Table: 16, Electoral Performance of the BJP, 1996 Lok Sabha Election

Sr. No.	STATE/UT	Seats			Votes Polled (%)
		Total	Contested	Won	
1	ANDHRA PRADESH	42	39	0	5.65
2	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	2	2	0	17.41
3	ASSAM	14	14	1	15.92
4	BIHAR	54	32	18	20.54
5	GOA	2	2	0	13.75
6	GUJARAT	26	26	16	48.52
7	HARYANA	10	6	4	19.74
8	HIMACHAL PRADESH	4	4	0	39.62

¹⁰² Hanish McDonald, 'Revivalist Retreat', Far Eastern Economic Review, December 9, 1993, p. 18 and 20.

9	JAMMU & KASHMIR	6	5	1	19.04
10	KARNATAKA	28	28	6	24.85
11	KERALA	20	18	0	5.61
12	MADHYA PRADESH	40	39	27	41.32
13	MAHARASHTRA	48	25	18	21.81
14	MANIPUR	2	2	0	5.25
15	MEGHALAYA	2	2	0	9.13
16	MIZORAM	1	-	-	
17	NAGALAND	1	-	-	
18	ORISSA	21	20	0	13.42
19	PUNJAB	13	6	0	6.48
20	RAJASTHAN	25	25	12	42.36
21	SIKKIM	1	-	-	
22	TAMIL NADU	39	37	0	2.93
23	TRIPURA	2	2	0	6.5
24	UTTAR PRADESH	85	83	52	33.44
25	WEST BENGAL	42	42	0	6.88
26	ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS	1	1	0	24.25
27	CHANDIGARH	1	1	1	39.05
28	DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	1	1	0	42.42
29	DAMAN & DIU	1	1	0	40.45
30	DELHI	7	7	5	49.62
31	PONDICHERRY	1	1	0	4.42
	TOTAL	523	471	161	20.29

Source: STATISTICAL REPORT ON GENERAL ELECTIONS, 1996 TO THE EIGHT LOK SABHA, VOLUME I Election Commission of India

Ram temple during the assembly elections in 1993 at the disputed site failed to neutralize the “earthy populism” of Mulayam Singh and Kanshi Ram.

The BJP’s decision to accept the president’s invitation to form a government was apparently a calculated risk. BJP and its allies’ tally of 194 seats was far from the 272 seats needed to prove its majority. The BJP failed to add even a single seat after it

formed the government. In retrospect, the BJP appeared to have made several wishful assumptions. The party hoped to be able to enter coalition with regional parties such as Asam Gana Parishad (AGP), Tamil Desam Party (NTR). The party also hoped that it might be able to lure some of the estranged MPs from the troubled Congress (I). None of these happened. Another development that took the BJP by surprise was the formation of the United Front and even more the support of Congress (I) to this Front from the outside.

The yearning that the BJP showed to stabilise its government and its desperate search for entering into coalition arrangement with anyone willing to do so exhibited the party's pragmatic rather than dogmatic posture. Vajpayee was on record saying that he would not form the government unless his party had about 220-225 seats.¹⁰³ Any coalition partner in this arrangement would certainly have had quite a moderating impact on the policies of this government. Some in the party foresaw this limiting impact of entering into coalition and cautioned against it. However, the party went along with those who thought the moment propitious for the BJP to stake its claim to power. The failure of the BJP to put together a coalition was not caused by the lack of compromise on its part. Instead, it was owing to the reluctance of anyone else to enter into coalition with the party. The BJP even appeared ready to enter into a deal with Congress (I) for a coalition arrangement. Vajpayee and Advani's calling on Rao on May 17, 1996, led to speculation about a secret deal. The rumour had it that the BJP would ensure the re-election of Congress's Shivraj Patil as speaker in lieu of Congress's support to minority government.¹⁰⁴ The BJP also appeared ready to sidetrack its contentious campaign issues such as the Ram temple in Ayodhya, abolition of Article 370 on the status of Kashmir and the question of a uniform civil code.

The main reason why the BJP failed to secure the support of any regional parties was the lack of credibility on the part of the party to live up to its agreement. With its proven track record of making political expediency the prime consideration in its decisions, the other parties felt they would be spared any time by the BJP. The DMK and TDP (N), for example, suspected dismissal of their state governments. For Mulayam Singh Yadav against whom the BJP conspired in UP in collusion with BSP, a BJP government would be a "nightmare come true".¹⁰⁵ The national parties like Congress (I), the CPI

¹⁰³ India Today, June 15, 1996, p. 40.

¹⁰⁴ India Today, May 31, 1996, p 14.

¹⁰⁵ India Today, May 31, 1996, p 19.

and CPM, Janata Dal had campaigned on an anti-BJP platform and had wooed the Muslim voters on that ground. Hence, their entering into alliance with the BJP was apparently risky. In the little time that it had the BJP did try to leave its mark on policy. Two main decisions that it took were related to Maharashtra, a state that the party rules in alliance with Shiv Sena. The decision to reinstate the Sri Krishna Commission investigating the post-demolition Mumbai riots, was an attempt to moderate its adverse impact on the Muslim community.

In brief, in 1996, the BJP won 161 seats, as against 136 of the Congress, but in terms of valid votes its progress was negligible: it received the support of about 20.7 per cent of the electors, while the Congress (I) retained 29.7 per cent of the valid votes. The BJP also remained a predominantly urban party since 32 per cent of the urban electorate voted for it as against 19 per cent of the rural electorate as a whole. If one considers the upper-caste graduates living in towns and cities, 52 per cent of this category opted for the BJP in 1996.⁹⁰ The social profile of the BJP's electorate is an asset in as much the elite plays an important part in the shaping of the public opinion, but it is also a drawback in a country where 74 per cent of the population lives in villages, where the OBCs represent 52 per cent of the society and where the literacy rate is little over 50 per cent. Most of the new seats it won came from the states where it was already strong, such as Madhya Pradesh. In terms of seats, the real breakthroughs were in Bihar, Maharashtra and Haryana, but they were largely due to alliances with regional parties. In traditional or recent strongholds such as in Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat, respectively, the party declined or experienced stagnation. The usual distortion, between the results in terms of valid votes and the results in terms of seats because of the first-past-the-post electoral system, was especially important this time because of the extreme concentration of the BJP votes in the northern and western states. In fact, the BJP won more seats than the Congress exactly because its votes were more concentrated: it gained seats in only nine states and most of them were in the 'Hindi belt' like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Delhi and Chandigarh, and in Gujarat and Maharashtra in the west. In this vast zone, it polled 36 per cent of the valid votes (as against 23 per cent to the Congress). Similarly, the BJP remained marginal, below 9 per cent of the valid votes, in the east and the south, except in Assam, Orissa and Karnataka where it obtained a large share of valid votes but it did not make a big difference in terms of seats. At the same time the BJP experienced decline in

Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal and overall the party received only 6.8 per cent of the valid votes in the south and the east (as against 8.5 per cent in 1991).

BJP's Strategical Shift from Moderation-Radicalization-Moderation...

As a result of the “dual membership controversy”, most Jana Sanghis left the Janata Party in 1979 and the party largely disintegrated a year later. The ex-Jana Sanghis then formed a new party called Bharatiya Janata Party (Party of the Indian People). Its trajectory contrasted with its predecessor's in the sense that it adopted a moderate agenda first and then became radical before becoming more moderate once again, at least at the national level, following an inverted U-curve which was on a par with its election results. Despite this variation, the factors accounting for the BJP's changing approach to politics are surprisingly similar to those characterizing the Jana Sangh.

The BJP as a moderate party (1980–1989)

After the demise of the Janata Party, the BJP leaders were apprehensive about returning to the niche status to which the Jana Sangh had been confined. Retaining the word “Janata” in its name, the BJP aspired to keep some of the aura of the Janata Party, which had embodied a consensus force of the opposition. BJP president A.B. Vajpayee was keen to abandon most of the Hindutva-based identity of the Jana Sangh and introduced two new concepts which did not echo the Hindu nationalist legacy: “Gandhian socialism” and “positive secularism”. The former referred to the Gandhian development model, with its strong emphasis on the village as the basic unit of the Indian economy. The old social basis of the BJP, composed of shopkeepers, artisans, and professionals was likely to be responsive to the anti-capitalist overtone of this slogan, but not the new middle class emerging from the liberalization measures Indira Gandhi, back in office in 1980, had introduced. “Positive secularism” was an implicit critique of the Congress' “pseudo-secularism”, a phrase coined by the Hindu nationalists to denounce the way the ruling party “pampered” the minorities to get their votes. However, the term was also an explicit endorsement of the secular nature of the state, something the core electorate of the Jana Sangh and the RSS had never reconciled themselves with.

The moderate discourse of the BJP was intended to facilitate electoral alliances and, once again, it might have been tactical or genuine. What matters is what kind of

concrete decisions were made to demonstrate that moderation had taken or at least was taking place. In 1984, the BJP formed a National Democratic Alliance (NDA) with the party of Charan Singh, but Singh withdrew from the NDA just before the December 1984 elections. The BJP leaders therefore made an ad hoc and limited electoral pact with what was left of the Janata Party.

The RSS was explicitly displeased with the BJP's strategy, suggesting that the "politicians" were emancipating from the social movement. RSS cadres were not asked to support the BJP during the 1984 elections. The new RSS strategy was different. It consisted of promoting a militant use of religious symbols in order to create a Hindu vote bank through which the Hindu demographic majority would be turned into a political majority. RSS supreme leader Deoras, who had succeeded Golwalkar in 1973, argued in 1979:

Hindus must now awaken themselves to such an extent that even from the elections point of view the politicians will have to respect the Hindu sentiments and change their policy accordingly. [. . .] If others put up demands, they are accepted, but even genuine demands by Hindus are ignored. This is because Muslims and other minorities usually vote en bloc while Hindus are divided. Once Hindus get united, the government would [need to] start caring for them also.¹⁰⁶

The RSS relied on the VHP to achieve this end. In 1984, the RSS and the VHP launched a new mobilization campaign focusing on a powerful Hindu symbol: Lord Ram. They demanded that the temple that once allegedly stood above the supposed birthplace of the god Ram in Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh should be rebuilt. The Hindu temple was said to have been replaced by a mosque in the sixteenth century. This issue was well chosen, given the popularity of Lord Ram among Hindus, particularly in the north of India. The VHP immediately rallied several religious figures whose prestige further amplified its capacity for mobilization. Together they demanded that the current Babri Mosque be replaced with a "rebuilt" Ram temple.¹⁰⁷

At the beginning, the BJP tried to abstain from this agitation, fearing it would not be in a position to make allies if it returned to extremist politics. Eventually, however, the party gave up its moderate stance, bowing to the pressure coming from the RSS or

¹⁰⁶ Hindu Vishva 14, nos. 7–8, 92, March 1979.

¹⁰⁷ Van der Veer, Peter. "God Must Be Liberated! A Hindu Liberation Movement in Ayodhya." *Modern Asian Studies* 21, no. 2 (1987): 283–301.

simply out of convenience as the politicians saw that there might be “votes” to be garnered in taking a “Hindu stand” on the issue.

First, the RSS requested the BJP to return to the doctrinal purity of Hindutva politics and warned the party that its network of volunteers would not canvass for its candidates if the party remained adamantly moderate. Second, the electoral context was conducive to Hindu nationalist radicalization. On the one hand, no significant opposition party had accepted to partner with the BJP in spite of its moderation and therefore the party was looking for votes. On the other hand, the ruling Congress had not maintained the impeccable secularism of the 1950s–1970s. Rajiv Gandhi communalized Indian politics. In 1985, he tried to woo the Muslim opinion leaders by reasserting the role of sharia as the personal law of their community, and four years later he played the Hindu card by invoking the name of Ram in Faizabad – the headquarters of the district where Ayodhya is located – from where he launched his election campaign. The erosion of secularism as one of the key normative rules of the Indian polity legitimized the use of religious language by the Hindu nationalists. Third, in the 1980s, Hindus felt vulnerable. On the one hand, minorities developed militant strategies: Sikh separatists attacked Hindus, Islamists were accused of converting Dalits and by the end of the decade Kashmir had become the new battleground for jihadists. On the other hand, the Congress government laid itself open to the critique of “pseudo-secularism” by cultivating the Muslim “vote bank”, which prepared the ground for a Hindu backlash.

The radical phase of the BJP (1989–1998)

During the 1989 election campaign, RSS activists, VHP religious figures, and BJP candidates canvassed thousands of towns and villages to consecrate bricks stamped with Ram’s name and destined to be used to “rebuild” the Ram temple. The bricks were carried in processions imitating those organized for religious celebrations in which idols are carried along a precise itinerary.¹⁰⁸ In several places these processions resulted in riots when militants entered the Muslim neighborhoods chanting slogans such as “there are only two places for Muslims, Pakistan and the cemetery” [Pakistan aur Kabristan].

This pre-electoral sectarian violence was a clear component of the new strategy of the BJP, which wanted to polarize the electorate along religious lines and thus deepen the

¹⁰⁸ Dainik Bhaskar, November 11, 1989, p. 3.

Hindu group identity so that its members would end up finally “voting Hindu”. Recourse to so-called religious processions proved crucial for mobilizing people. The Ayodhya temple campaign contributed to bringing the score of the BJP from two seats (out of 543) in 1984 up to 85 seats in 1989 in the Lok Sabha.

Immediately after the 1989 elections, the BJP became part of a coalition which comprised many different parties, including the Janata Dal of the new Prime Minister, V.P. Singh. As in 1967, Hindu nationalists combined an ethno-religious radical electoral campaign with a post-electoral coalition with parties that did not share its ideology. And, like in 1967, they proved the moderation thesis wrong because coalition politics did not lead them to dilute their ideology: indeed, they continued to mobilize support on the very divisive Ayodhya issue. In the midst of a new wave of riots, the BJP withdrew its support for Singh’s government in 1990 and the latter collapsed as a consequence. When mid-term elections were held the following year, the BJP jumped from 85 to 120 seats in the Lok Sabha, indicating that radicalism had paid off. This radical phase of the BJP culminated in the demolition of the Babri Mosque by Hindu nationalists on 6 December 1992.

The radicalization of the BJP in the late 1980s–early 1990s stemmed from the interplay between three variables. First, the RSS, whose leader had decided to promote a Hindu vote bank through the instrumentalisation of the Ayodhya issue, remote-controlled the party, whereas the VHP provided the party with religious leaders who bestowed additional – sacred – legitimacy to the movement. Second, the BJP could cash in on a deep sense of Hindu vulnerability. Third, the political context allowed the party to pursue its radical agenda. On the one hand, its coalition partners of 1989 had not seriously objected to its political use of the Ayodhya issue during the election campaign and the government of V.P. Singh waited until the last minute to deal with the issue. On the other hand, the Congress, after it returned to power in 1991, did not prevent Hindu nationalists from attacking the Babri Mosque and the organization that had been responsible for its demolition was never indicted. The RSS and the VHP were banned intermittently, but only for a few months and only on paper. The BJP eventually returned to the path of moderation in 1996, not because of the attitude of other parties, but because it realized that it had to woo potential allies to form a ruling coalition after it had become the largest Indian party with 160 seats in the 1996 elections. This oscillation between a moderate and radical strategy clearly indicates a tension within the party, and specifically between the orientation towards building a moderate catch-

all party (or coalition), and the party's dependence on the RSS social movement, anchoring it to a strategy focused on the emphasis on the Hindu identity. The latter has apparently prevented the party, so far, from achieving a stable moderation, which finds evidence in the persistence of an identity-based strategy and a confrontational repertoire of mobilization at the state level if not the federal one.

Explanations for the Rise of BJP in late 1980s-1990s

The BJP has witnessed a phenomenal rise during the decade of 1990s. It succeeded in obtaining 85 Lok Sabha seats in the Ninth Lok Sabha elections of 1989, 120 seats in the tenth Lok Sabha elections of 1991 and 160 seats in the Eleventh Lok Sabha elections. The BJP formed the coalition government at the Centre—in 1996 for thirteen days.

It is important to explain the rise of the BJP in the 1990s because in the first Lok Sabha elections of 1952 it obtained only three seats and it was very marginal player in Indian politics. (For detailed see chapter no. 2) It seems paradoxical that the party of Hindutva could not get the support of Hindu voters even when the post-Partition Hindu-Muslim divide was quite deep because of post-Partition tragedy of Hindu-Muslim migrations. It looks quite paradoxical that Hindutva had come to occupy a central position in the Indian public life after four decades of Indian Independence at a time when inter-community relations had improved as compared with the situation of 1947-1950.

The Hindu Sangh Parivaar of RSS, VHP, Bajrang Dal, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), and others brought the issue of Hindu identity in a big way in the 1980s. The Hindu Sangh Parivaar launched mobilization Hindus on the basis of their religious and cultural symbols, and Hindu saints and seers were involved in motivating Hindus for asserting their Hindu identity. In a multi-religious country like India, Hindu identity was constructed by targeting other religious communities like Muslims and Christians. The theme of humiliation of Hindu Rashtra by foreign Muslim invaders was brought in public discourse and symbols of humiliation like Ram Janambhoomi or temple at Mathura or Kashi were projected as standing monuments of historical wrongs done against the Hindus by foreign Muslim invaders.

The Sangh Parivaar had created the image of wounded Mother India (Bharat Mata). It formed a Shri Ram Janambhoomi Mukti Jagran Samiti (the committee for the liberation of Lord Ram's Birthplace) and from 1984 the RSS, BJP, VHP, and Bajrang Dal

launched a large scale mobilization of Hindu saints and seers for propagating the idea of liberation of the Birthplace of Lord Ram. Dharam Sansad, Sadhu Sammelans and many such movements were launched for the liberation of Sri Ram Janambhoomi at Ayodhya. Every trick of the trade was played and Rath Yatras in the mould of Hindu religious tradition were organized to purify the bricks with holy water for the temple at Ayodhya. L.K. Advani in the tradition of old mythical Hindu kings took a Rath Yatra from Somnath to Ayodhya in 1991 and Hindu mobilization became the major political and religious-cultural activity of Hindu Sangh Parivaar from 1984.

Is Hindu mobilization launched by Hindu Sangh Parivaar on Ram Temple an adequate explanation for the rise of BJP in 1990s? Why the appeal of Dr. S.P. Mukherjee of the Jana Sangh or V.D. Savarkar of Hindu Mahasabha or leadership of the Ram Rajya Parishad did not cut any ice with the so-called mythical Hindu voter in the Lok Sabha elections of 1952? Why has the appeal to Hindu religious symbol succeeded only in the 1990s? Hindu Sangh Parivaar had been consistently taking an aggressive anti-Pakistan stand and it had always projected Muslims as the “Others”, and suddenly they could succeed in these efforts in the 1990-because of Ram Janambhoomi movement. Hansen observes:

“The sharpest edge of the entire Ram agitation, which sought to create a collective Hindu subjectivity as it spoke, by exactly in the constant drawing of the external boundaries of the “Hindu community-becoming-nation”.

It cannot be denied that the rise of BJP and other members of its Sangh Parivaar in the 1990s can be explained on the basis of Ram Janambhoomi movement and other related developments among the Hindu community which were exploited by the forces of Hindutva. At the same time, the limitation of this explanation about the rise of BJP and other Hindu organization in the 1990s also deserve to be noted. The BJP state governments of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh were dismissed in December 1992 after the demolition of Babri Mosque and in the elections of 1993, the BJP got 96 seats out of 200 in Rajasthan, 117 seats out of 320 in Madhya Pradesh and only 175 seats out of 425 in Uttar Pradesh. Why in these elections did the Hindu voter refuse to provide an electoral legitimacy to the party of Hindutva in the state assemblies?

Some of these facts have led Peter van de Veer to argue that religious language and idiom is crucial in India because it brings together very effectively “discourse on the

religious community and discourse on the nation” and religious nationalism has played a significant role during India’s anti-colonial struggles.

Many scholars specially Jafferlot have maintained that the BJP had come to power because it had deftly and intelligently used the strategy of coalition-formation with many secular parties during 1970s-1990s and it had been the beneficiary of this strategy of coalition-making with secular leaders and secular parties. A few facts may be mentioned to substantiate the argument that BJP had grown in strength on the basis of its capacity to make alliances with others. First, whenever Indian voters failed to give a clear verdict for a single dominant party either during the Lok Sabha or State Assemblies elections, the BJP and its predecessor the BJS was available either to participate in the coalition governments or it supported a party of its own choice by remaining out of power. The BJS participated in the Morarji Desai-led government in 1977 and later on its successor i.e. BJP supported the V.P. Singh-led government in 1989-90 without sharing power with it. Even when the BJP was supporting the V.P. Singh government by not sharing power with it in a direct manner, the party exercised immense influence over the decisions of the V.P. Singh government. The Lok Sabha elections of 1996 again witnessed that no single party had a majority to form the government at the Centre and the President of India invited Atal Bihari Vajpayee to become the Prime the Prime Minister because the BJP had obtained 160 seats and it formed a bloc of 194 with the support of Shi Sena, Akali Dal, HKP etc. Vajpayee failed to receive a vote of confidence in the Lok Sabha in 1996 but a point was made that BJP can form coalition government at the Centre and in the States of India. This story repeated by the BJP in 1998 and 1999 and BJP-led coalition governments were formed at the Centre. I will discuss it in detail in next chapter.

The Hindu Sangh Parivaar of RSS, VHP, ABVP, Bajrang Dal had actively participated and supported movements and struggles lauded by opposition parties and opposition leaders. Gujarat and Bihar Movements of 1974-75 were openly and enthusiastically supported by the Sangh Parivaar. The RSS strategists have never missed any opportunity to participate in any mass movement whenever an occasion arose from the 1970s to the 1990s.

It has been suggested that the most important asset of the BJP has been its highly committed and motivated RSS cadre. Since the BJP is a cadre-based party, this asset of the BJP has been loaned to many parties and leaders either during the elections or whenever they decided to launch any anti-government struggle. Anderson and Damle

have devoted full attention to the internal organization of the BJP and RSS cadre for understanding the strength of the forces of Hindutva. While many political parties or groups or leaders have refused to enter into any alliance with the BJP, many others have legitimized it by working together with the BJP, BJP has never considered any party or group or leader as “untouchable in politics” and every such association with them has brought political dividends to the party.

Hence any explanation for the rise of BJP on the basis of its strategies of coalition-making has its own limitations because electoral and political strategies are necessary but not sufficient explanations for the rise or decline of parties.

Craig Baxter (1969), Bruce D. Graham (1990), Walter K. Anderson and Damle (1987), Christopher Jafferlot (1996), Peter van der Veer (1996) and T.H. Hansen (1999) have in their scholarly studies offered explanations either by looking into the internal organization and strategies of the BJP and its cadre or they have explained the rise of BJP by linking it with political process and Hindu cultural ethos of India. These scholarly studies provide lot of insights into the internal dynamics of Sangh Parivaar and they have linked their explanations by bringing out the changing dynamics of India politics which has facilitated the rise of BJP.

Hindus of India did not show any preference for the Jana Sangh in the 1950s and 1960s when memories of Partition and post-Partition events were quite fresh within the country. The BJS, Hindu Mahasabha and Ram Rajya Parishad failed to win public space on the basis of their appeals to Hindus. Hindus were not convinced that they needed a Hindu religion-based party to defend their interests in India.

How could Hindus of 1980s and the 1990s respond positively and enthusiastically to the appeals of Hindu religious-based party and organizations? Why did Hindus embrace politics of Hindutva in the last decade of the Twentieth Century when they had earlier rejected it in the 1950s and 1960s? The so-called Hindu India was not at all threatened by any outside country in the 1980s and 1990s but even in the absence of any threat to the security of India, the Hindu party could create an acceptability for itself by playing on the so-called feelings of insecurity among the Hindus of India. The idea of Hindu identity suddenly became attractive to the Hindus in the 1990s and the party of Hindus succeeded in positioning itself as a great defender and promoter of Hindu identity. The rise of BJP and expansion of Hindu Sangh Parivaar of organizations in the 1990s can be explained by identifying the causes which have made Hindus assert their ‘identity’ in a Hindu majority country. A community may construct

its own identity if it feels threatened by any other community. How have Hindus come to believe that their identity is under threat from other communities? Hansen is the only Western scholar who has attempted an explanation on the rise of BJP in 1990s by referring to the new aspirations and anxieties of ‘the large middle class and dominant communities’ who have been exposed to new ‘global cultural and economic flows’ at the end of Twentieth Century. Hansen observes that “...it was the desire for recognition with an increasingly global horizon, and the simultaneous anxieties of being encroached upon by the Muslims, the plebeians, and the poor that over the last decade have prompted millions of Hindus to respond to the call for Hindutva at the polls and in the streets, and to embrace Hindu nationalist promises of order, discipline, and collective strength’.

A few salient features of politics and economics of 1990s may be briefly mentioned to show that this was a decade of special crisis for India. First, V.P. Singh was involved in a factional conflicts with some leaders of his own party and to divert public attention, he announced the acceptance of the Mandal Commission recommendations on reservations in public services in August, 1990. If on the one hand, the V.P. Singh governments’ action on Mandal Commission led to serious caste versus caste conflicts in North India, on the other the BJP and every members of the Sangh Privaar jumped into public activity to protect united Hindus identity by launching mobilization for Ram Janambhoomi. The ideologues of Hindu Sangh Parivaar launched a counter offensive against the divisive caste politics of V.P. Singh and other supporters of Mandal Commission by mobilizing the Hindu Samaj on a common platform of liberation of Ram Janambhoomi with a programme for the construction of Ram Temple at Ayodhya. Politics of identity is always based on the concept of the “other” and for the Sangh fraternity the “others” was Muslim and Christian and also Hindu caste system. The Hindu organizations were involved in the manipulation of Hindu identity for maintaining the inner unity of Hindus by focusing on their “Other” i.e. Muslims and Christians. Mandal versus Mandir, or Reservations versus Ram occupied public space in the beginning of the 1990s.

Particularism and fractionalization of society became a distinctive feature of the politics of the 1990s. Political mobilization on the basis of caste or religion or region in the 1990s disintegrated and fragmented party system and caste-based parties on the basis of sectional representation emerged on the scene in politics. The construction of all-India Hindu identity which transcended fragmented caste identities assumed great

significance for the BJP, and the Sangh Parivaar rallied Hindus on the slogan of Hindu unity against Muslims and Christians.

Hindu religion-based politics with a goal to establish a powerful Hindu identity replaced an all-India secular democratic politics in the 1990s because secular parties could not create a powerful united movement of the exploited classes which could be perceived by the peoples as an alternative to the social goals offered by the believers of Hindu Rashtra. The decade of 1990s had witnessed the deepening of social and economic disparities in India and neither globalization nor Hindu or caste identity can offer any solution to the basic problems of the marginalized strata of society. The Hindu Sangh Parivaar had acted as a dream merchant by providing a religion-based slogans for mass mobilization during the elections. The dream of great and powerful Hindu India had been effectively and successfully sold by the Hindu nationalist party to the upcoming rural and urban middle and upper middle classes who on the one hand have global aspirations and on the other they aggressively identify themselves with Hindu rituals, temples, and other religious symbols. Hindu nationalist party had given a common social goal to different strata of Hindu society and it had succeeded in rallying Hindu groups for the protection and promotion of Hinduism in India.