



Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of Communication Sciences

**THE HINDUTVA DOCTRINE AND BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY  
IN 2019 ELECTIONS IN INDIA: CRITICAL DISCOURSE  
ANALYSIS**

Ali ZAIN

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2020



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## **DEDICATION**

**To Abeer Fatima who left us in this world to live in the heaven!**

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To the brotherhood of Pakistan and Turkey!

Ali ZAIN

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## ABSTRACT

ZAIN, Ali. *The Hindutva Doctrine and Bharatiya Janata Party in 2019 Elections in India: Critical Discourse Analysis*, Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2020.

This study is an attempt to understand how the doctrine of Hindutva which considers Hindu-chauvinism as the spirit of Indian nationalism has played a central role in the development of populist discourse of Bharatiya Janata Party during the 2019 general elections in India. The BJP has close ideological association with ultra-right-wing Hindu organization the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh which laid foundation of modern-era Hindutva movement, and incidents of persecution and intolerance towards minorities have also increased under rule of Prime Minister Narendra Modi since 2014. Especially the Muslims of India have been tagged as the foreigners by the BJP. This study uses the three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis presented by Norman Fairclough to qualitatively assess the textual and visual discursive texts shared by the Bharatiya Janata Party and its key leaders on Twitter during 2019 election campaign. Additionally, the election speeches of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi have also been analyzed through development of themes and sub-themes on the basis of the essentials of populism and Hindutva doctrine simultaneously. The mythological and historical basis of Hindutva doctrine, and theoretical debate on populism have also been taken into consideration to find answers to the research questions and it was found that the Hindutva ideology played a central role in the electoral campaign of the BJP and helped it in the construction of the people and the antagonizing others, the identification of a charismatic leader, the portrayal of politically reluctant agenda and the definition of a foreign enemy. It was also found that the BJP excessively used historical and mythological references, symbolism, ritualistic notions and promised Hindutva-focused political and constitutional reforms to assert that it was the contemporary political face of the Hindutva doctrine and that it was totally committed to the cause of Hindutva. This study hence demonstrates how the political and public discourse of the world's largest democracy is being shaped by using ultra right-wing populist discourse as an effective tool of political communication to pave the way for reduced political liberties, undemocratic practices and Hindu chauvinism.

### **Keywords:**

Bharatiya Janata Party, Narendra Modi, Hindutva, Right-wing Populism, Political Communication, Indian Nationalism

## ÖZET

ZAIN, Ali. *Hindutva Doktrini ve Hindistan'da 2019 Seçimlerinde Bharatiya Janata Partisi: Eleştirel Söylem Analizi*, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2020.

Bu çalışma, Hindu-şovenizmini Hint milliyetçiliğinin ruhu olarak gören Hindutva doktrininin, Hindistan 2019 genel seçimleri sırasında Bharatiya Janata Partisi'nin popülist söyleminin gelişiminde nasıl merkezi bir rol oynadığını anlama çabasıdır. BJP, modern dönem Hindutva hareketinin temelini oluşturan aşırı sağcı Hindu örgütü Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh ile yakın ideolojik bir ilişki içindedir. 2014'ten bu yana Başbakan Narendra Modi'nin yönetimi altında azınlıklara karşı zulüm ve hoşgörüsüzlük olayları da artmıştır. Özellikle Hindistan'da yaşayan Müslümanlar BJP tarafından yabancı olarak etiketlenmektedir. Bu çalışma 2019 seçimleri sırasında Bharatiya Janata Partisi'nin ve önemli liderlerinin Twitter'da paylaştığı metinsel ve görsel metinleri niteliksel olarak değerlendirmek için Norman Fairclough tarafından geliştirilen üç boyutlu eleştirel söylem analizi modelini kullanmaktadır. Buna ek olarak, Hindistan Başbakanı Narendra Modi'nin seçim konuşmaları da popülizmin ve Hindutva doktrininin temelleri etrafında temalar ve alt temalar geliştirilerek analiz edilmiştir. Araştırma sorularına cevap aranırken Hindutva doktrininin mitolojik ve tarihsel temeli ile popülizm üzerine kuramsal tartışma göz önünde bulundurulmuştur. Hindutva ideolojisinin BJP'nin seçim kampanyasında merkezi bir rol oynadığı, halkın Hindu olarak inşasına ve aynı zamanda diğerlerinin düşman olarak tanımlanmasına, karizmatik liderin tanımlanmasına ve yabancı düşman tanımının yaratılmasına yardımcı olduğu bu çalışmada ortaya çıkmıştır. Ayrıca BJP'nin tarihsel ve mitolojik referansları, sembolizmi ve ritüelistik kavramları çok yoğun kullandığı, Hindutva doktrininin çağdaş yüzü olduğunu iddia edebilmek için Hindutva temelli siyasi ve anayasal reformlar vaat ettiği görülmüştür. Dolayısıyla bu çalışma, dünyanın en büyük demokrasisinin siyasi ve kamusal söyleminin, azaltılmış siyasi özgürlükler, demokratik olmayan uygulamalar ve Hindu şovenizminin önünü açma amacıyla, etkili bir siyasi iletişim aracı olarak ultra sağ popülizm söyleminin kullanılarak, nasıl şekillendirildiğini gözler önüne sermektedir.

### **Anahtar Sözcükler:**

Bharatiya Janata Partisi, Narendra Modi, Hindutva, Sağ Popülizm, Siyasal İletişim, Hint Milliyetçiliği

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AAP	Aam Aadmi Party
ABVP	Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad
AIMC	All India Muslim League
API	Application Program Interface
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BJS	Bharatiya Jana Sangh
BMS	Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh
CAA	Citizenship Amendment Act
CAB	Citizenship Amendment Bill
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
ECI	Election Commission of India
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
ICJ	International Court of Justice
INC	Indian National Congress
J&K	Jammu and Kashmir
JNU	Jawaharlal Nehru University
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NRC	National Register of Citizenship
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
SP	Samajwadi Party
TMC	Trinamool Congress
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UPA	United Progressive Alliance
VHP	Vishva Hindu Parishad

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## INTRODUCTION

After India's general elections held in April and May in 2019, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) mainly dominated by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) rose to power for a second consecutive tenure. This was the first time when the BJP gained such a huge electoral dominance in the lower house of the Indian parliament – also known as the *Lok Sabha* – and this development also sent the waves of serious concerns in some people around the world due to the BJP's close ideological closeness with the ultra-right Hinduist group: the RSS or the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. The RSS laid the foundation of the modern-era Hindutva movement under the slogan of “one nation, one caste and one culture.” After the BJP established the government in 2014 with the former RSS activist Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister of India, the number of incidents of persecution and intolerance towards minorities particularly the Muslims has increased. Through a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) for a qualitative assessment of the discursive texts shared by the BJP and its key leaders to develop qualitative themes at micro, meso and macro levels, this thesis aims to determine to what extent the Hindutva doctrine was used by the BJP to construct its right-wing populist discourse.

### 1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The phenomenon of populism is often associated with the democratic setups across the world, and the case of India presents a unique example where religion and populism are sophisticatedly amalgamated with democratic politics. The political context, which is considered to be the determining factor to study populism (Mouzelis, 1985; Taguieff, 1995), has a multifaceted presence of populist elements that are used to build a discourse based on the Hindutva doctrine. Although the mild presence of such a discourse can be easily traced back to some 200 years in colonized India, this populist discourse has surged with an immense momentum in the electoral politics of India during the last two decades. The populist features of politics ranging from banal emotional involvement to opportunistic policies and political rhetoric are aimed at merely seeking for more electoral votes (Mudde, 2004). The political context of India suggests that Hindutva doctrine plays a central role as populist political thought to construct the people, define the others, promise reforms, point out the ailment of the existing system, and identify the foreign enemy (Mouzelis, 1985; Taguieff, 1995; Taggart, 2000; Mudde, 2004). This phenomenal production of the Hindutva doctrine as a populist political discourse has been exhibited in the electoral political strategy of the BJP in the leadership of Narendra Modi who plays the role of a charismatic leader: another element of populist movements (Mouzelis, 1985; Mudde, 2004). The BJP promised a

“Modi-fied” India and engaged in excessive communication with the voters through social media networks, especially Twitter, as well as traditional media during the general election of 2014 (Pal, 2015). The BJP and Narendra Modi also put into practice the political populism to ensure that “the charismatic leader” stays in direct communication with “the people” (Pal, 2015).

In addition to the efficient communication strategies, benefitting from his past association and his party’s close ideological standing with the right-wing Hindutva movement and the RSS, the BJP tried to woo the majority Hindu population to ensure its electoral victory in 2014 election. The Hindutva movement and the RSS strive to transform India as a Hindu nationalist state by implementing its almost two-centuries-old motto of “one nation, one culture and one language” (McKean, 1996; Hansen, 1999; Udayakumar, 2005; Frykenberg, 2008).

During the 2014 election campaign, the BJP politicians regularly portrayed symbols of Hinduism in its electoral messages, made religious references in their speeches in public gatherings, visited leading Hindu religious figures including Baba Ramdev and Swami Adityanath, and also shared the photos of these visits on their social media profiles (Pande, 2014). Narendra Modi also became a reason to the BJP’s revival through its electoral victory in 2014. Indeed as certain analysts have argued, the massive popularity of Narendra Modi was one of the reasons behind this victory (Diwakar, 2014). Modi’s powerful association with the RSS and his active participation in the Hindutva movement placed him in a favorable position against the INC which was struggling with image problems after being tagged as a dynastic political party (Bobbio, 2012). Scholars have also argued that Modi’s past association with the Hindutva movement and imagery as the “Development Man or *Vikas Purush*” led to the 2014 victory (Kaul, 2017). The 2014 election manifesto of the BJP openly carried the pictures of S.P. Mookerjee and Deendayal Upadhaya to reclaim its strong ideological connection with the RSS as well as the BJS. The party also reiterated to utilize “all possibilities...to facilitate the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya” and to introduce “necessary legal framework...to protect and promote cow and its progeny” (BJP Election Manifesto, 2014). Interestingly, the manifesto ended with the slogan of “Vande Mataram” (BJP Election Manifesto, 2014) to refer to the BJP’s ideological and historical connection with the earliest proponent of the Hindutva movement: Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. The Vande Mataram slogan is based on an anti-Muslim anthem of Chatterjee which became widely adopted by the Hindu nationalist groups.

This resurged support of the Hindutva doctrine by a political leader with the popularity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP which held majority in the parliament caused increased religious discussions on social media platforms as well as the traditional media on the issues like



the protection of the cows - the animal which is believed to be the most sacred creature in the Hindu religion - and the BJP eventually moved to present a new law to grant the Indian citizenship to the Hindus and other religious immigrants, with the exception Muslims, in the Indian parliament to realize the electoral promise of making India a safe home for the Hindus suppressed in the other parts of the world (Medha, 2016): a major pillar of the Hindutva movement based on the argument that India should be revived as the mythological Mahabharat and every Hindu should have a right to live in this country (McKean, 1996; Hansen, 1999). Similarly, the BJP and its leading political and ideological leaders adopted the same right-wing populist discourse of the Hindutva movement to attract the Hindu majority votes in the 2019 general elections as well. The electoral manifesto and public discourse of the BJP released ahead of the 2019 general elections also carried the promises which can potentially transform India into a Hindu national state inspired by the Hindutva movement. The 2019 electoral manifesto of the BJP enlists all of the policies to reform India in the light of the guidelines provided by the Hindu revivalists or the Hindutva movement to prove itself the ultimate political face of the Hindutva doctrine and benefit from its populist nature to secure its electoral victory.

The BJP announced to end the autonomous status of the disputed Kashmir region as it was demanded by the RSS and the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) immediately after the independence. It promised the “enactment of the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB)” to give Indian citizenship to the religious minorities especially Hindus from all neighboring countries except the Muslims and Jews, and also announced to “complete the National Register of Citizens (NRC)” under which all of the citizens will have to present proof of their Indian citizenship through legal documents (BJP Election Manifesto, 2019) which would potentially affect only the non-registered Muslim citizens who can possibly be expelled from India or placed in concentration camps as the people of all other beliefs will be eligible to get citizenship under the CAB or the CAA. For the preservation and protection of Hinduism as religion as well as culture, the BJP announced to “facilitate the expeditious construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya... conserve and promote all culturally, religiously and spiritually significant heritage sites...[make] effort on promotion of *Sanskrit*” (BJP Election Manifesto, 2019). It also announced to ensure a “Uniform Civil Code” (BJP Election Manifesto, 2019) across India to put an end to the legal framework which allows Muslims to follow the Islamic shariah laws as their personal civil code. Such a reform exclusively aims to end religious and social liberties provided to Indian Muslims by the Indian government since the early years of independence.

No.	Religion	% of Population	Regions of Presence
1	Hinduism	79.80%	Across the country
2	Islam	14.23 %	Lakshadweep, Jammu & Kashmir, West Bengal, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala and Bihar
3	Christianity	2.30 %	Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Goa, Meghalaya, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh and Kerala
4	Sikhism	1.72 %	Punjab and Haryana
5	Buddhism	0.70 %	Maharashtra, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh
6	Jainism	0.37 %	Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajsthan and Gujrat
7	Others	1.0 %	

**Table 1: Composition of Indian Population (Census Commissioner, 2011)**

This thesis is an attempt to discuss the historical development of the Hindutva movement as a populist political thought and explain how the BJP electoral campaign for the general election of 2019 in India used the ideological thoughts of Hindutva along with the features of populism to popularize its political discourse. The study also tries to provide an analysis on how the BJP is intertwined with the Hindutva movement to develop a debate about the possible transformation of India as a Hindu nation-state in the coming years due to its Hindutva-focused political discourse. While this study takes the concept of populism and the historical journey of the Hindutva movement into consideration, it is not an attempt to conclusively settle the debate on both of these vast areas of research. This thesis is rather a study of the specific manifestation of political populism through the Hindutva movement in the Indian electoral politics to pave the way for an expansion of the theoretical landscape.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study thoroughly relies on the scholarly debates on populism and Hindutva movement to go into a discussion of the production of the Hindutva doctrine during the 2019 election campaign of the BJP. For this purpose, a review of the vast scholarly literature available on the areas of this subject has been included to build the theoretical foundation of the study. The main chapters of the thesis also provide an extensive review of the theoretical, historical and mythological literature to establish relevance of the topic of the study and seek answers of the key research questions posed in the following sections.

Primarily, populism has two essentials: the strength of the people and a tendency to define the others or the antagonistic elements (Ionescu and Gellner, 1969). Similarly, political populism also maintains the presence of an antagonistic and deep-rooted division between the people and the established others or the elite. Therefore, the populist group portrays itself as directly connected with the people in order to represent their interests (Canovan, 1981). The populists further claim that the established system has excluded the people from themselves and hence they cannot represent the people's interests (Canovan, 2002).

The literature suggests that populist movements emerge in the electoral democracies whenever there is some tension present between the pragmatic and the redemptive political styles (Canovan, 1999). The redemptive style suggests "the government of the people, by the people and for the people" (Canovan, 1999) while the pragmatic view suggests democracy as "a system of processing conflicts without killing one another" (Przeworski, 1991). Thus, democratic systems themselves carry the very ingredients for the rise of populism in a society. The populists highlight the problems with the existing system while blaming "the others" for this situation, and appeal "the people" to follow them to introduce reforms (Canovan, 1999). It is also important to note that while the system itself makes ground for the construction of populist identities, the populists or the charismatic leaders portray themselves as the only representatives of the people through their discourse (Westlind, 1996). In other words: "populism signifies the effort to destroy established institutions of interest intermediation and elite control and to put in their place some kind of direct voice of the people, embodied in the leader of the populist party" (Kitschelt and McGann, 1995, p.160).

In this effort, the struggle for reforms or establishment of the people's system, the populists excessively rely on the power of communication to convince the people that are participating in the power struggle on their behalf. The scholars have an agreement on the existence of this power

(Thompson, 1995; Castells, 2007). Pierre Bourdieu (1991, p.66) suggests that “symbols are... instruments of knowledge and communication...they make it possible for there to be a consensus on the meaning of the social world, a consensus which contributes fundamentally to the reproduction of the social order”. Furthermore, the power of communication is also established through “the belief in the legitimacy of the words and of those who utter them” (Bourdieu, 1991, p.70). Therefore, in the research work under discussion, the BJP and its leaders are suggested to have benefitted from symbols and references of the Hindutva doctrine through discursive texts to establish the relationship between themselves and the people while simultaneously defining the people also, like “the relation between those who exercise power and those who submit to it” (Bourdieu, 1991, p.166).

The people remain the central essential of the populism, while the application of a public discourse which might be based on a political, religious or mythological doctrine provides basis for the construction of the people, and also the other essentials of the populism outlined by the scholars as “the definition of popular characteristics is established through articulation in discourse, often referring to elements from other established discourses” (Westlind, 1996: 95). The populist discourse can also be defined by “a language whose speakers conceive of ordinary people as a noble assemblage not bound narrowly by class, view their elite opponents as self-serving and undemocratic, and seek to mobilize the former against the latter” (Kazin, 1995). In this study, the Hindutva doctrine provides historical, religious and mythological references and basis for the construction of the essentials of the populist discourse that was produced by the BJP and its leadership during the 2019 election campaign to gain electoral support of Indians.

The literature shows a contested agreement among the scholars that populist leaders and movements engage a certain class of population (Di Tella, 1965) through establishment of a strong and direct communication with the people (Di Tella, 1997) and use of divisive techniques, i.e. us vs. them (Taggart, 2000) and ostracizing others (Mazzoleni & Bracciale, 2018) to mobilize the voters (Kenny, 2017) and ensure their political gains. The Hindutva doctrine can also be viewed as a powerful basis for the production of these essentials of populist discourse on the basis of the available literature and earlier research.

As Cas Mudde (2016) argues, populist movements require “the pure people” and “the corrupt elite or others”. Likewise the father of the modern-day Hindutva movement Vinayak Damodar Savarkar also identifies “the people” in his book called Essentials of Hindutva: someone who recognizes India as their fatherland (*pitrībhūmi*) and treat it like *punyabhūmi* or the holy land (Savarkar, 1924, p. 43-44). Likewise the founder of the RSS K. B. Hedgewar states that the

cultural and religious legacy of Hinduism must become the primary essence of India's national identity once it gains freedom from Britain (Goyal, 1979; Chitkara, 2004; Kanungo, 2002; Andersen and Damle, 1987).

Another Hindutva proponent Bankim Chandra also maintains the view that “only Hinduism could bring about a synthesis of nationalism” in India (Bhattacharya, 1982). In the words of the RSS leader M.S. Golwalkar, the conception of “the people” states that “we [the Hindus] have been in undisputed and undisturbed possession of this land for over 8 or even 10 thousand years before the land was invaded by any foreign race...we Hindus came into this land from nowhere, but are indigenous children of the soil always, from times immemorial and are natural masters of the country” (Golwalkar, 1939). With the definition of “the people”, “the others” of the Hindutva doctrine also get defined to be as the ones who migrated to India from any foreign land and those who do not follow the cultural and religious symbols and rituals of Hinduism: the Muslim settlers of India who belonged to the Central Asian or Middle Eastern countries originally. Savarkar maintains that Muslims and Christians are “foreign elements” in India whose “holy land is far off in Arabia and Palestine [and] their mythology and Prophets and heroes are not the children of this soil” (Savarkar, 1989, p.113). A stark parallel of this discourse can also be identified in Israeli politics where Judaism as a religion shapes much of political and national developments of the country (Baumgart-Ochse, 2009). The construction of “the people” and “the others” is also carried out through social exclusion and inclusion at the same time at political, symbolic and material levels (Filc, 2010). The adoption of ancient Hebrew as the national language of Israel (Tessler, 1990) also points to a similar trait of revivalism as displayed by the Hindutva movement. These parallels confirm that historical, mythological and symbolic references play a critical role in shaping and re-shaping of nation states through popular discourse.

Taggart claims that populism arises in a society where several conditions are met: a sense of crisis and a belief that existing political setup is unable to resolve the crisis (Taggart, 2002, p.69), and the populists build an alternative discourse on this basis to offer a political pathology (Taggart, 2002, p.80). Likewise, the Hindutva movement has continued to highlight that the existing political setup of India was ailing and full of shortcomings. The very core thought of Hindutva, “one nation, one caste and one culture” or the homogeneity of the Indian nation with Hinduism being the supreme embodiment of the political system, is the alternative discourse or political pathology required for India's return to its mythological greatness of the past: just like a perfect populist thought (Smith, 1966; Lahiry, 2005; Kanungo, 2006; Jaffrelot, 2007).

The theorists also assert that populist movements hardly call themselves something political and greatly rely on the slogans such as “a call for better governance” as a reason to mobilize the masses (Taggart, 2002, p.67). During the last two centuries, the Hindutva movement has tried to maintain a reluctantly political image for itself and rather called itself as a movement of reforms and cultural revival of Hinduism. In the early days of the Hindutva’s modern-day struggle, it has called for “one nation, one religion, one culture and one language” in the name of Lord Ram where Hindu icons, symbols, norms and values should dominate as the national elements (Goyal, 1979; Frykenberg, 2008; Andersen and Damle, 1987; Chitkara, 2004). The ideological literature of the RSS also recognizes it as a non-political movement which rather focuses on social and cultural activism (Andersen and Damle, 1987; Bhatt, 2001). According to Christophe Jaffrelot (2013), the BJS was also more focused on spreading its Hindutva ideology at the grass-root level instead of winning elections and actively endorsing itself as a political force. However, this reluctance to directly refer the movement as political struggle rather than a movement of mere social change and cultural revivalism slowly diminished after the establishment of the BJP which does identify itself as a political element but again insists that the Hindutva doctrine provides necessary guidelines to its leaders and workers.

Another essential of populist movements is the conception of a centralized and charismatic leader who maintains a strong and direct linkage with the people (Di Tella, 1965 and 1997). The Hindutva movement also has such valued leadership over the decades (Jaffrelot, 1996). Initially, Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Shraddhananda and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee provided the charismatic but scattered leadership to the populist thought of Hindutva. Subsequently, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar and M. S. Golwalkar became more centralized charismatic leaders in their respective times. Similarly, after the BJS and BJP’s ascendance to the leadership of the Hindutva movement, Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, Lal Krishna Advani and Atal Bihari Vajpayee filled the void of this leadership (Udayakumar, 2005). Eventually, Narendra Modi’s massive popularity led him to the leadership of the whole Hindutva doctrine (Diwakar, 2014; Kaul, 2017). The electoral campaign of the BJP during 2014 and 2019 general elections were also mainly focused on the imagery of Narendra Modi to confirm that he was the latest and undisputed central and charismatic leader of the Hindutva movement now.

The quickly transforming economic condition of India and wave of globalization also played an important role to make way for the rise of Hindu nationalism and populism in India. During the 1980s and 1990s India embraced globalization, neoliberalism and free market trade like many other developing countries. Literature suggests that Hindutva doctrine shares many parallels with these developments (Gopalakrishnan, 2006), and as a result right-wing parties like the BJP were

successful to gain more and more electoral successes in India. Although, the INC had originally started this process of economic transformation by distancing itself from Nehru and Gandhi's economic stance of self-reliance (Nanda, 2011), ultimately it was the BJP which became the beneficiary of this process due to growing economic distress (Iwanek, 2014; Siddiqui, 2017). Nanda (2011) also argues that neoliberal reforms and globalization of economy created ideal condition conditions for popularization of Hindu nationalism because "popular Hinduism is extremely innovative in how it is adapting to India's fast changing economy and society" (Nanda, 2011, p.110), and the BJP consistently places itself completely aligned to such changes. The election manifestoes of the BJP during general elections of 2014 as well as 2019 also promised similar economic reforms in the country while simultaneously portraying them as pro-people and anti-elitist promises which would place India at the center of the global world.

This thesis is an attempt to provide an outlook of populist discourse built on the basis of the Hindutva doctrine, which was given a central role to garner electoral support for the BJP in the 2019 general election of India. Through delineated theoretical and scholarly discussion leading to the empirical analysis of the discursive texts, it also provides an extensive debate on how the new media tools have been facilitating the politics of division, discursion and extremism, and marking return of populism in the developing democratic countries.

### **3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The primary purpose of this study is to determine how the Hindutva doctrine along with its all populist features has become the center of electoral political communication in India, a country considered to be the world's largest democracy. It aims to apply the three-layered model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as proposed by Norman Fairclough (1992) to explore the 2019 election campaign of the BJP based on tweets shared by the selected official Twitter accounts of the party and its central leadership, and the selected speeches of BJP's central leader Narendra Modi. In order to seek the answers of the research questions laid out in the study, the theoretical discussion of populism has been carried out to review the Hindutva movement as a historical and mythological doctrine which has been used by the BJP to build a populist discourse during the 2019 general election. This research also relies on the existing scholarship on the populist discourse and the Hindutva movement to bridge the gaps and contemporize these subjects. what do you mean? The macro, meso and micro levels of the discourse analysis attempt to unearth the answers to the following research questions:

- Did the Hindutva doctrine play a determining feature in the political messages shared by the Bharatiya Janata Party during the 2019 election campaign?
- Did the production of the Hindutva doctrine by the BJP exhibit the features of the populist discourse, i.e. construction of the people, definition of the others, presence of the charismatic leader, identification of the foreign enemy and promise of reforms in the ailing system?
- Did the BJP use the Hindu religious symbols and references to construct the Hindutva-driven populist messages?
- Does the qualitative analysis of the pictures shared by the BJP reveal use of the Hindutva or Hinduist references during the 2019 electoral campaign?
- Did the election speeches of BJP leader Narendra Modi portray the Hindutva- driven populist features such as construction of the people, definition of the others, presence of the charismatic leader, identification of the foreign enemy and promise of reforms in the ailing system?

This study provides a thorough point of view backed by the research that India's BJP put the ideological standing and the Hindutva movement into practice through Narendra Modi's speeches, political communication on Twitter and use of semiotically meaningful pictures to build their populist discourse aimed at garnering more votes in the 2019 general election. It also provides an insight for the researchers and concerned global institutions of human rights and minority protection on how India is being transformed into a Hindutva-driven state from a secular democracy, and triggers a debate on the potential consequences for the South Asian region and the whole world due to these drastic social and political changes in India.

#### 4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study does not essentially attempt to tag the Hindutva doctrine and the BJP as populist movements, but rather carries an analysis on how the Hindutva doctrine was produced by the BJP as a central force to demonstrate the several features of political populism through various discursive texts. It draws its theoretical foundation from key theories of populism to seek answers to its research questions. The next chapter carries an in-depth debate on the relevant theories of populism, however, a brief discussion on the topic has been included for an overview.

The main subject of the thesis considers populism as a discourse practice as asserted by Paul Taggart (2002) that political populism points out the problems in the existing representative



democracy and calls for a better system. Similarly, the theory of populism presented by Ernesto Laclau (2007) also takes populism into consideration in relationship with general politics and democratic setups. For this purpose, the populist leaders and movements utilize “common discursive reference to the people”, and while they construct the concept of “the people”, at the same time an automated construction of “the others” also takes place simultaneously (Westlind, 1996). Additionally, there is always a strong presence of an antagonistic relationship among the people and the others with an impression that the others who “have defamed the national spirit” (Kazin, 1995, p.12-13). A number of scholars have an outright agreement that the production of this discourse is done discursively and the impression of opposition to the existing system is used for defining the features of populism (Barr, 2009; Laclau, 1977; Canovan, 1981; Westlind, 1996; de la Torre, 2000). Most importantly, the populist discourse presents this as a struggle of ethics and morality between the others and the people instead of a political phenomenon (de la Torre, 2000), meanwhile populist leaders also striving to become the “exclusive representatives of the people” (Westlind, 1996, p.103). While Taggart (2002) also agrees that populism is always reactionary and is led by the political leaders who pitch themselves as alternatives to existing setup, he further asserts that fundamental essentials of populism are greatly contextual and depend on the political circumstances of the place where it surfaces.

The populist movements and leaders strongly rely on the ability of their populist discourse to construct identities and restructure the social order (Cullen, 2017). This symbolic power of discourse is used for “constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of confirming or transforming the vision of the world” (Bourdieu, 1991, p.170).

For this thesis, the analysis of the discursive texts is not limited to mere linguistic interpretations, but also incorporates the social actions which lead to the formation of the very discursive texts (Savage, 2010). Also, “the linguistic and non-linguistic elements are not merely juxtaposed, but constitute a differential and structured system of positions – that is, a discourse” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p.108). The objective and scope of this study is, however, limited to the production of the Hindutva doctrine as a populist discourse practice as per the research objectives of the study.

## **5. CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

This study relies on the theoretical framework presented by Norman Fairclough in his Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth, CDA) as it seems to be the best suitable research technique for the implementation of this research. The CDA is an interdisciplinary technique used to analyze

the “power relations in society and to formulate normative perspectives from which a critique of such relations can be made with an eye on the possibilities for social change” (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p.2). Similarly, other scholars also maintain that discourse analysis gives a chance to obtain objective inferences through a study of the relationship between the things beyond mere text and speech (Laclau, 2007). It is also noted that discourse is both produced and it results in representation of the social systems through a sophisticated system of selection, domination and exclusion in a society (Young, 1981; Hook, 2001). The political discourse adopted by the BJP and its leadership also carries these features defined by the social system and is powerful enough to also reshape it through supremacy, inclusion, antagonization, marginalization and ostracization of certain discursive choices.

The CDA is distinctive from other techniques of discourse analysis as it views discursive practice as a dimension of a certain social practice while also taking other social practices into consideration (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p.18). Contrary to the post-structuralist approaches suggested by Mouffe and Laclau, the CDA considers the discourse as a powerful dialectical practice, which is capable to even reshape those segments of the social system which apparently play no role in shaping the discursive practice (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p.19). The interpretation of discursive texts reveals how the relationship between power and ideologies shapes the discourse (Fairclough, 1992). The study of this dialectical relationship is helpful to explain how the powerful group uses certain rhetoric to “deceive and oppress the dominated” (Howarth, 2000, p.4).

The CDA also enables researchers to explore the interplay of power and dominance in a social system to explain how discourse can lead to their representation (van Dijk, 1993), and when the discourse is of political nature it has even more direct authority in “enactment, reproduction, and legitimization of power and domination” (van Dijk, 2001). The CDA also provides the researchers with a chance to analyze the discursive practice in a subjective way by benefiting from their own interpretation (Fairclough, 1992). The final perspective directly depends on theories of discourse, social issues and social theories that are taken into consideration for a certain study (Fairclough, 2003, p.16). This extraordinary feature of the CDA is helpful in finding the subtle connections between the discourse practice and the events followed by it: this study carries an extensive debate on a number of events that can be linked back to the discursive practices of the BJP during the 2019 election campaign.

Despite the possibility of subjectivity of the researchers involved in the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), it still remains the most appropriate framework for this study as other alternative

methodologies clearly lack certain aspects that are necessary to find the answers of the outlined research questions. This study directly relies on the post-structuralist populism which exhibits clear political antagonism, and apparently the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe (1985) should be appropriate here, however, several inconsistencies highlighted by the scholars make it inappropriate for this study: Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, p.25) assert that Laclau and Mouffe are more interested in specifics of discourses “as abstract phenomena rather than as resources that people draw upon and transform in the practices of everyday life.” Similarly, it has been observed that Laclau and Mouffe’s theory of discourse “overlooks the fact that not all individuals and groups have equal possibilities for rearticulating elements in new ways and so for creating change” (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999). Moreover, their discourse theory ignores “the structural constraints because they focus so much on contingency: everything is in flux and all possibilities are open” (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002, p.30). Contrary to this, Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis focuses on “dialectical relations between discourse and other objects, elements or moments, as well as analysis of the internal relations of discourse” (Fairclough, 2013, p.4). That is why the CDA enables the researchers to undertake a thorough analysis of the whole situation instead of the discursive practices only. Furthermore, unlike the quantitative content analysis, the CDA considers the “text above the level of sentences” (Krippendorff, 2004, p.16). Also, Janks highlights the appropriateness of Fairclough’s CDA model to analyze “verbal, visual or verbal and visual texts”. Jiayu Wang (2014) also asserts that Fairclough’s the CDA model can be used for discursive analysis of the visual contents as it enables linguistic description of the visuals to further the interpretation and explanation to reveal the macro-mechanism of discourses through intertextuality<sup>1</sup> and visual intertextuality<sup>2</sup>. In this study, the entire situation in which a certain political message has been tweeted, delivered in the form of speech or shared as visuals which contextual relationship with tweets’ text has been taken into consideration with a complete possibility of interpretation on the basis of historical, mythological and religious references.

This study relies on Norman Fairclough’s (1992) “three dimensional CDA model” which suggests the interpretation of the selected discourse at three levels:

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<sup>1</sup> Intertextuality points to Julia Kristeva’s assertion that dialogues are based on pre-existing system of signifiers and that any text is in fact a transformed form of another text (Kristeva, 1986). Ronald Barthes theorized that this treatment of mutual relationship or intertextuality cannot be limited to verbal texts alone (Barthes, 1977).

<sup>2</sup> Visual intertextuality underscores the notion of Ronald Barthes that intertextuality must also include visual texts. It asserts that the characteristic of interdiscursivity enables the visual texts to formulate a social relationship with the readers and hence they too hold power to functionalize the implicit ideologies carried by the discourse (Wang, 2014).

- Textual Dimension: at this level the linguistic characteristics and organization of text are taken into consideration i.e. vocabulary, text structure, grammar, coherence and intertextuality (Fairclough, 1992, p.78).
- Discursive Dimension: at this level the “production, distribution and consumption of the text” is analyzed in the light of discourse types as per the social factors (Fairclough, 1992, p.78).
- Societal Dimension: at this level the discursive practices are analyzed in terms of their broader implications and the analysis focuses on how it “shapes the nature of the discursive practice, and the constructive effects of discourse” (Fairclough, 1992, p.4).

For this study, the above given three dimensional discourse analysis model presented by Norman Fairclough has been utilized for the interpretation of the selected texts based on a system of thematic codes which references from the three components of this CDA methodology.

## 6. SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION

The tweets and photos shared by the BJP and its core leadership on Twitter, and speeches made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi have been selected as the discursive text for this study as they are considered to be the most important aspect of the electoral campaigns in the 21st century by the leading scholars of the field (Pal, Chandra and Vydiswaran, 2016; Cullen, 2017; Kerbleski, 2019). They offer an overall glimpse of the nature of direct communication and direction set by the political parties for their supporters or “the people” (Benoit, 2007). The textual samples selected for this thesis have been chosen through purposive sampling based on their assumed significance and relationship to the main subject of the thesis: the production of the Hindutva doctrine during the 2019 election campaign of the BJP. The purposive sampling can “enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and questions which the researcher wishes to study” (Bryman, 2012) and ensure that “the text analyzed was relevant to the question at hand” (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

For the CDA of the texts to find answers of the research questions and development of the debate at macro, meso and micro levels, this thesis includes:

- Tweets and photos shared by the Twitter accounts of the BJP and its leadership during the 2019 election campaign from April 11, 2019 to May 26, 2019 (Appendix-I). The selected accounts represent the central and regional offices of the BJP and its leadership based on the criteria that these accounts were frequently mentioned and retweeted by the

verified official account of the BJP (@bjp4india). These accounts include: BJP LIVE (@bjplive), Bharatiya Janta Party (@bjp4india), Amit Shah Office (@amitshahoffice), Narendra Modi (@narendramodi), Amit Shah (@amitshah), GVL Narasimha Rao (@gvlrao), Arun Jaitley (@arunjaitley), Sushma Swaraj (@sushmaswaraj), Uma Bharti (@umasribharti), Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore (@ra\_thore), Yogi Adityanath (@myogiadityanath), BJP Rajasthan (@bjp4rajasthan), Narayan Lal Panchariya (@npanchariyabjp), Nirmala Sitharaman (@nsitharaman), Dr. Anirban Ganguly (@anirbanganguly), BJP Madhya Pradesh (@bjp4mp), BJP Utter Pradesh (@bjp4up), BJP Taripura (@bjp4tripura), Biplab Kumar Deb (@bjpbiplab), Ram Madhav (@rammadhavbjp), BJP Kashmir (@bjp4jnk), Kiren Rijiju (@kirenrijiju), Rajat Sethi (@rajatsethi86), Vinay Prabhakar Sahasrabuddhe (@vinay1011), BJP Maharashtra (@bjp4maharashtra), Smirithi Irani (@smritiirani), Manoj Tiwari (@manojtiwarimp), Hans Raj Hans (@hansrajhanshrh), narendramodi\_in (@narendramodi\_in), Dr. Mahendra Singh (@bjpdrmahendra), Dr. Anil Jain (@aniljaindr), Vijay Rupani (@vijayrupanibjp), ROHIT CHAHAL (@rohit\_chahal), Kuljeet Singh Chahal (@kuljeetschahal), Rajnath Singh (@rajnathsingh), Devendra Fadnavis (@dev\_fadnavis), BJP Bihar (@bjp4bihar), Manoj Sinha (@manojshinhabjp), Sunny Deol (@iamsunnydeol), BJP Punjab (@bjp4punjab), Prof Rakesh Sinha (@rakeshsinha01), Nityanand Rai (@nityanandraibjp), Ramlal (@ramlal), Rajiv Pratap Rudy (@rajivprataprudy). These accounts have been considered as the representatives of the BJP's overall electoral campaign due to their association with the offices and personalities holding important positions in the BJP and the BJP-led governance formed in 2014-2019. Only the accounts of public personalities were selected for the analysis in order to avoid ethical issues as outlined by the AoIR 2.0 (Markham and Buchanan, 2012).

- The text of the speeches that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered between April 11, 2019 and May 26, 2019.

The actual contents of the collected speeches and tweets were in the English and Hindi languages and the Hindi text was translated into English with the help of native speakers to perform standardized analysis and interpretation. Moreover, the data collected on the basis of the described criteria was immense and the analysis of the whole data could have required a huge amount of time and effort. That is why, the representative sample of the texts have been developed based on the criteria that the BJP and its leaders must have shared most appropriate content related to the subject of the thesis on the days of the religious festivals or rituals associated with Hindu gods/goddesses/lords which took place during the days of election campaign into consideration:

- April 14, 2019: *Rama Navami*<sup>3</sup> and *Baisakhi*<sup>4</sup>
- April 15, 2019: *Vishu*<sup>5</sup>
- April 19, 2019: *Hanuman Jayanti*<sup>6</sup>
- May 7, 2019: *Akshaya Tritiya*<sup>7</sup>
- May 18, 2019: *Buddha Purnima*<sup>8</sup>
- Additionally, the days of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meditation in the cave as an expression of Hindu ritual (May 18, 2019 and May 19, 2019) and day of the announcement of the election result (May 23, 2019) and days of celebration (May 24, May 25 and May 26 of 2019) have also been included in the sample.

For the collection of the tweets from the selected Twitter accounts associated with the BJP and its leaders, the Python programming language has been used first to extract the tweets through, Tweepy API (Twitter Application Program Interface) which extracts data using the parameters such as `consumer_secret`, `consumer_key`, `access_token_secret` and `access_token`, and provides contents such as Usernames, account names, tweet IDs, number of retweets and likes, URLs and multimedia contents shared in the tweet and location. Using this method, the Twitter data was collected on May 3, May 12 and May 26, 2019 to ensure that all of the tweets shared by the selected accounts have been successfully stored in the .tsv format data files.

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<sup>3</sup> Rama Navami is a Hindu religious festival which marks the birth of the Hindu Lord Ram who is accepted as one of the major deities of Hinduism.

<sup>4</sup> Baisakhi is the religious festival of Hinduism and Sikhism which marks the start of the solar year and the formation of the sacred Khalsa cult of Sikhism, respectively.

<sup>5</sup> Vishu is the religious festival of Hinduism which marks the beginning of the New Year. It is celebrated mainly in India's Kerala state.

<sup>6</sup> Hanuman Jayanti is the religious festival to celebrate the birth of Lord Hanuman, the monkey god, who is highly respected in Hinduism.

<sup>7</sup> Akshaya Tritiya is the annual spring festival of Hindus and Jains, which is celebrated during April or May every year to underscore the days of forever prosperity.

<sup>8</sup> Buddha Purnima marks the festival of the birth of Lord Buddha who is highly revered in Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism.

For further cleansing and purposive sampling of the originally collected data, computer-based programs, i.e. Open Office and Microsoft Excel have been used. Similarly, for the discourse analysis of the sample tweets, speeches and photos, and development of themes and qualitative analysis, the computer-based program NVivo 12 Plus has also been used.

## **7. LIMITATIONS OF STUDY**

This study presents a thorough outlook of the electoral campaign of the BJP during the general election of 2019 in terms of the production of the Hindutva doctrine. Despite the use of most appropriate research design, theoretical framework and methodology, this research is still subject to few limitations. The most significant limitation of the study is the possibility of the subjectivity of researchers involved during the discourse analysis of the discursive texts. Although the highest level of objectivity has been ensured during the implementation of the research, some other researchers might still view some section of the study as subjective to some extent. The size of the sample and the criterion of sampling of the texts highlight another possible limitation of the study as the sample was only limited to the days from the electoral campaign which had some religious festivals. Thus, the inclusion of other days into the sample of the texts might lead to some different interpretations and inferences. The third limitation is related to the selection of the Twitter accounts associated with the BJP and its leaders as only the public profiles and the accounts frequently being mentioned by the BJP (BJP4India) profile were included for the collection of the texts. Hence, there remains a possibility that a different set of Twitter accounts could result in a collection of different texts and even affect the final interpretations and thematic analysis of the thesis.

## **8. STRUCTURE OF CHAPTERS**

This study is composed of three chapters that focus on a theoretical debate on populism, historical and mythological review of the Hindutva doctrine, and the discursive analysis of the texts.

The first chapter provides a detailed overview on a variety of scholarly opinions associated with populism and the key elements on the basis of which a movement can be tagged as populist. Populism has been viewed and treated as a political remedy, ideology and political discourse in different regions of the world. The crucial relationship of democracy and populism and populism's close association with right-wing ideologies and religious ideologies has also been

brought into discussion. It also analyzes populism as a tool for political communication including the use of new media technologies and internet-based platforms by the populist forces i.e. Twitter.

The second chapter includes a survey of the Hindutva movement from the British colonial period to the present day when a Hindutva-associate political group, namely the BJP, is running the affairs of the government of India. The chapter carries the debate on how a number of people including V. D. Savarkar, Swami Shradhananda, Bhai Paramanand, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Har Dayal, S. P. Mookerjee, M. S. Golwalkar and K. B. Hedgewar played a role in the development of the Hindutva as a movement as well as a doctrine through the platforms of the Arya Samaj as well as RSS to formulate the Sangh Parivar which includes the BJP and the BJS. The chapter also has a discussion on the teachings and writings of the proponents of the Hindutva doctrine in the light of the theoretical debates on the phenomenon of populism presented in Chapter I. The final part of this chapter also briefly explains the structure of India's electoral politics and democratic system.

The third chapter goes into a detailed presentation and analysis of the sampled texts from the 2019 election campaign of the BJP to build a discussion on how the production of the Hindutva doctrine is quickly transforming the democratic and human rights standards in India. The brief quantitative analysis and the CDA of the excerpts also underscore the answers to the outlined research objective and questions of the thesis.



## CHAPTER 1

### POPULISM AS A POLITICAL DISCOURSE AND PRACTICE

During the first ten years of 21st century, there has been a strong resurgence of populism across the world. The rhetoric of nationalism, anti-immigration, Islamophobia and Islamization largely dominated the political debate during this time and these issues ensured electoral victories for the politicians who have been preaching populist agenda. The electoral campaigns of George W. Bush, Imran Khan, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Jair Bolsonaro, Rodrigo Duterte, Donald Trump, Boris Johnson, Narendra Modi and many other leaders from around the world carried populist rhetoric, style, symbols, slogans and beyond to attract the majority voters. Meanwhile, the populist movements such as Brexit are also causing storms in the political arenas. And yet, the phenomenon of populism remains a conundrum for theorists and scholars of political science and communication.

This chapter goes into a detailed overview on the variation of scholarly opinions associated with populism and the key elements on the basis of which a movement can be tagged as populist. But you are not expected to simply provide an overview. Over time, populism has been viewed as a political remedy, ideology and discourse in different parts of the world. However, it can be inferred that it is the context or political structure of a country which defines the nature of populism it is facing. The crucial relationship of democracy and populism and populism's close association with right-wing secular and religious ideologies has also been brought into discussion. Being two phenomena which directly address the people, populism and democracy are not only interchangeable but also some types of democracy provide the best breeding ground to populism. It also narrates how the religious sentiments of Christians, Muslims, Jews and Hindus have been exploited by the populist leaders and parties to garner electoral support from different segments of the population. These religious sentiments still provide launching-pads to the populist leaders who highly rely on the faults of the existing system and people's concerns about it. The nature of religious, moral and political issues, however, has changed over the time. Yet these elements along with the little color of nationalist sentiments are favorite themes of populists.

The final part of the chapter analyzes populism as an alternative way of political communication to lead the debate to the central subject of the thesis. The use of new media technologies and internet-based platforms has provided the populist forces with new and effective avenues of direct communication with the people. These channels of communication enable political leaders to avoid traditional gatekeeping and watchdog roles of media, and allow them to build their populist

discourse and spread their message to the maximum people instead of being questioned about the negative consequences of their proposed populist policies. The history of populist politics in India also provides a strong basis for discussing the aftermath of populist political practices in the developing countries where democratic institutions happen to be weak and incapable of protecting the rights of minority groups. The vast spectrum of ethnic and religious groups in India remains a serious point of concern and there are chances that India's demography might quickly and completely change under the prolonged rule of populist leader Narendra Modi and the BJP that have a long-standing close association with the right-wing extremist Hindu groups of the country.

Any discussion which involves populism must start with defining this concept. Over the last several decades, this term has been used in wider contexts. Theorists have been unsuccessful to clearly identify populism and ascertain its boundaries, and as a result a number of schools of thought look at populism from very distinctive angles. However, while discussing the scope and application of these apparently different definitions, one can also notice several overlapping views. At times one can even sometimes observe that the same event is explained in terms of different populist perspectives. A comprehensive overview of the different definitions of populism is necessary to not only evaluate how this simple but complex concept has evolved over the time in both theory and practice, but also draw some guidelines to connect this thesis to different populist approaches and identify the essentials of populism such as construction of the people and the others, presence of a charismatic leader, and conception of the populist movements as reformists instead of political groups.

### **1.1. POPULISM: DISCOURSE, IDEOLOGY OR INSTRUMENT**

Despite the presence of a vast literature on this concept, populism still remains vaguely defined. However, the theorists have tried to identify a number of features to explain it. In 1967, a major attempt for this purpose was seen in the form of a conference titled "To define populism" and held in London (Allock, 1967, p.137). Forty renowned scholars gathered in this conference to formulate one single theory that could contain all the elements of populism. The academic community still continues his debate, and the perfect definition of populism is yet to be introduced. Different groups of theorists see it as a political strategy, an ideology, political style or even as a political movement. Cas Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2012) maintain that there have been three dominant approaches to define populism: a movement, political style and a political discourse. Likewise, Gino Germani (1978) sees populism as a political movement. He adds that it is a multi-calls movement led by an unusually charismatic leader (Germani, 1978).

Marco Tarchi (2002, p.126) also calls populism as a social struggle rather than a politically-motivated movement as he discusses this phenomenon in the context of Italy where the erosion of representative democracy resulted in the emergence of a movement that opposed corruption and other political scandals.

This convoluted situation forces us to review the very word of populism which means something related to the people. As Peter Worsley (1969) has rightly pointed out, populism emerges in a setup when there is some kind of conflict between the people and external world. Other researchers also agree with Worsley while further urging focus on the people to understand the concept of populism (Shils, 1956, p.100; Ware, 2002, p.102; Taggart, 2004; Zain, 2019). While taking up the conundrum of populism, Margaret Canovan has tried to address the reasons behind the failure to put forward its universal definition. While populism has also been used to describe the politics of confrontation in which ordinary people are mobilized against an established setup, it is also referred to as a political tactic which appeals to society as a whole (Canovan, 2005, p.77). Hence, populism is also seen as an alternative political approach to attract the people against a well-established setup of power and dominating ideas (Canovan, 1999). If taken to the next level of clarity, populism would mean an ideology which mobilizes the virtuous people against the corrupt elites that denied basic rights to the people (Albertazzi, 2008, p.3). According to Mudde (2004, p.541), the conceptual explanation of populism carries at least two necessary elements: the people and the antagonistic elites. This way, populism actually refers to the type of the relationship between the people and the elite. Other researchers also appear to have an agreement with Mudde in terms of fundamentals of populism. Jack Hayward (1996, p.19) defines populist as the one who attempts an uprising of the non-elites against the elite to achieve an ideal situation in which there is no discrimination among the people on the basis of class, profession or nationality. Despite all these agreements, the theoretical concept of populism remains a widely contested subject because populism is known as an analytical attribution rather than other similar political concepts such as democracy with which the political elements readily identify themselves (Panizza, 2005, p.1).

In order to continue any academic debate on the populism, it is important to analyze the theoretical basis of this concept and its necessary elements as theorists have so far presented a spectrum of populism's definitions which not only change over the time but also convey completely different meanings in the different regions of the world. This review will also provide a logical basis to discuss the interplay between democracy setups and political populism and also the theoretical foundation of its relationship with religion. The following section provides a review of populism as a theoretical concept which is challenged and varied in the form of four thematic groups.

A large number of scholars considered populism as an instrument for political leaders to appeal and mobilize their voters. These scholars either defined populism as a technique to literally mobilize voters or focused on populist styles of politicians to appeal their support. The first group of scholars mainly tried to explain populism in Latin America while the latter addressed European countries. They also partly rely on modernization theory (Houwen, 2013, p.48). As mobilizing the under-represented or un-represented social groups is seen as populism, it can be used to appeal a social class which has just been provided with their political rights by their charismatic leaders who attempt to capitalize on the inaction of older political parties to address the issue of the new class of voters (Germani, 1978, p.88; Kenny, 2017, p.180; Di Tella, 1965, p.47). The political leaders across Latin America and Europe, and also in the United States, have used this tactic to attract newly enrolled voters. However, here arises the most important question of whether the mere use of this technique is enough to declare someone a populist. We need to take the whole populist style into account to answer this question.

Christine Deiwiiks (2009) calls the style of populism as use of simplified answers in everyday rhetoric. This is partly related to the populist conception of democracy which urges the use of a simple language to explain complex problems so that common people can understand them well to form opinions. However, here arises another problem: if problems are phrased as simple, then their suggested results may also be way too simple or even impractical. Mudde (2004, p.542-543) compared this situation to *Stammtisch* or barroom politics. He further adds that populism is the practice of buying support of the voter rather than allowing them to make rational opinions and vote for the most suitable option, because the notions such as rational and irrational, and sound and opportunistic are themselves problematic and subjective. Although there seems to be an intrinsic value, the style of politics does not actually help us define populism but it only describes how the style of politics facilitates populism (Mudde, 2004, p.543-545). Thus, the style of politics is neither sufficient nor can it be deemed as a necessary feature of populism, but it must be considered as the only appropriate result of fundamental construction of the conception of democracy among the people. Mudde (2004, p.543) asserts the usage of other techniques of politicians such as demagoguery or opportunism rather than populism to establish conceptual clarity that political populism is actually a set of alternative instruments, instead of being a political instrument itself.

Another issue with describing populism as a political instrument is that populism becomes a very broad concept and the involvement of so many different actors leaves it a meaningless phenomenon with very little value (Rosanvallon, 2008, p.267). According to Pierre Rosanvallon (2008), many politicians use the same instruments as populists and populism's conceptualization

as a political instrument would lead to a perception that there is no distinct category of populist politicians in the world. Such complexities have forced some researchers to withdraw efforts of developing a universal definition of populism and instead focus on the study of populism at sub-category level (Rosanvallon, 2008; Canovan, 1981). The primary test faced by researchers is that either they narrow it down enough that it excludes some important features or it remains loose enough to include everything. The same problems are also visible in populism's definition as a political instrument.

Despite all this, an immense literature emphasizes that there is at least some connection between populism and political instruments. Although Mudde (2004, p.545) argues that such features should not be considered as defining factors, he also asserts that these features should be treated as the facilitators of populism. This argument is strong enough to trigger a debate on the view that populists often rely on certain types of political instruments to appeal to the voters, however, the nature and use of these instruments highly depend on the concept of democracy in a certain society. As populism is often linked to a certain political style and the view that the people are eventual and un- challengeable sovereign fits well with practices and language used by populist leaders. Contrary to the construction of populism as an instrument of political mobilization, it is endorsed by a large number of scholars as an ideology. They define populism with reference to the policy preferences of the political leaders known as populists. Cas Mudde is one of the leading proponents of this school of thought.

Generally, an ideology comprises a set of values which can be used for framing political as well as religious, cultural and socio-economic events. It facilitates the construction of reality in a hierarchical way to show the importance of different issues in a setup. Michael Freeden (1998, p.751) referred to the concepts such as nationalism as thin-ideologies which are not actually an ideology but they do carry several features similar to an ideological thought. They are often just limited to a certain features of life which is given prime importance within the reference of ideology, i.e. a person can be nationalist while also being conservative or Marxist (Stanley, 2008, p.100).

The scholars build a similar case for populism as well. While considering it as an ideology, they note that the world has witnessed socialist, conservative and also neoliberal populists over the time. Mudde (2004, p.543) takes populism to be an ideology, which divides the society into two groups which are homogenous in themselves and yet totally antagonistic to each other: "the pure people and the corrupt elite". As per this ideology, the politics of a society should be the representation of the overall will of the people. He further adds that populism is based on two

opposing identities contrary to both concepts of elitism and pluralism, as it sees the people as one unit and treats them as pure (Mudde, 2004, p.543-544). The people are attached to an imaginary heartland and they are a subset of the population based on mythological beliefs. Furthermore, the people are always supposed to be right and their utter consciousness refers to common social understanding and provides a basis for appropriate politics (Mudde, 2004, p.547). This makes populism a thin-ideology rather than a mere tool of political mobilization of voters.

Apparently agreeing to the definition of populism by Cos Mudde, Christine Deiwiks (2009) also identifies two core ingredients of populist ideology: the people and the anti- group. However, her point of view does not say anything about the nature of the interplay among the people and the anti-group, while Mudde stresses on an antagonistic connection between the two groups. Also, Deiwiks (2009) claims that the identified anti-group may not necessarily be based on the established elite as mentioned by Mudde, and that anti-group can be identified in society depending on the nature of populist ideology.

However, the question still remains: are these two features enough to complete the definition and scope of populism as an ideology? Maybe the populist leaders have some more common features. Mudde (2004, p.547) also acknowledges this argument when he proposes that populists consider the will of the people to be the basis of politics. This suggests that the concept of democracy as known in a society must also be taken into consideration. At another point, Mudde (2004, p.562) calls plebiscite; which is also known as a tool to know the wishes of the people; as a populist amendment to the representative democratic system.

Another criticism targeted at populism's definition as an ideology is the fact that populism in itself cannot serve to construct the reality. This even puts the idea that populism is actually a thin-ideology into question, as Mudde (2004, p.544) also asserts, populism is not an all-encompassing concept and that it can be compared to elitism and pluralism. Without considering the concept of representative democracy, populism may also become a vague point of reference of the people instead of an ideology because populism must denote the sovereignty of the people which is the source of power in a representative democratic setting (Visscher, 2017).

Paul Taggart (2002, p.66-70), who considers populism as a discourse which offers pathology of representative democracy, defines populism as a call for better governance in reaction to a crisis, and that it lacks any core values depending totally on circumstances and it is very reluctantly called something political. Here the words "a call for better governance" may seem to be a real test to the representative or electoral democracy, the populists hardly ask for a more direct

democracy but they only seek “a greater linkage of the masses to elites” (Taggart, 2002). Another important feature of populism, when it is studied as a pathology, is the strong connection of populists with a heartland, i.e. the people. While other scholars do not provide any clear explanation for the people (Canovan, 1981; Betz, 1993; Mudde, 2004), Taggart (2002) defines the people as the ones who inhabit the imaginary heartland. He also thinks that fundamental characteristics of populism are greatly contextual and depend on the political circumstances of the place where it surfaces. It also addresses the most basic feature of Taggart’s populism that it is always reactionary, and it is led by the political leaders who pitch themselves as alternatives to existing setup – which makes them reluctantly political.

Taggart has tried to put forward a definition of populism which carries almost all of its various features. This causes the return of the original problem: it is all-encompassing and vague. The features described by Taggart cannot be used in empirical research as conceptualizing all of them in a measurable way is almost impossible. However, most importantly, Taggart claims that the phenomenon of populism arises in a society when several conditions are met: a sense of crisis and a belief that existing political setup is unable to resolve the crisis (Taggart, 2002, p.69).

Taggart argues that populism is a result of the representative electoral democracy when it is believed to have been facing certain restrictions. When the people are made aware of the reality, they lose faith in the existing system and attempt to restore the right path of politics (Taggart, 2002, p.67-68). This is how Taggart (2002, p.80) tries to prove his point that populism is a political pathology as it tries to offer a solution to the problems existing in the democratic system. However, the claim of providing a real solution is highly contestable and this definition of populism can only be used to explain the reason behind successful appeal of populists. Hence, this school has a potential to play a significant role to identify the nature of discourse developed by populists oriented toward the people in a society and provide solutions to prevent success of populism in a society.

Likewise, some other scholars also see populism as an alternative discourse instead of a thin-ideology or a political instrument. However, they consider populism in relationship with general politics and not the democratic setups only (Laclau, 2007, p.167). Like Mudde and Taggart, Ernesto Laclau also identifies political populism as a result of an antagonistic interplay between the people and the established system or the elite. However, this makes everything once again completely vague (Houwen, 2013, p.53). However, this notion can be used to understand how the very antagonistic relationship between contrasting segments in a social setup can be used as an

opportunity by the populists, and that it also “ensures the legitimate and peaceful struggle for power” in a democratic setup (Mouffe, 2005).

This broad conceptual review of populism from different theoretical standpoints is quite helpful to at least identify a number of features which have been taken into consideration by the leading scholars. Based on these three approaches, it can be observed that populism carries at least some aspects of the following:

- Presence of the people
- Presence of an anti-group or the elite
- Problems with the existing setup
- A charismatic leader
- Reluctantly political
- A public discourse

The literature suggests that all these features are put into practice by the charismatic populist leaders by engagement of a certain class of population (Di Tella, 1965) through the establishment of a strong leader-people connection (Di Tella, 1997), the use of divisive techniques such as us vs. them (Taggart, 2000), and ostracizing others (Mazzoleni & Bracciale, 2018) to mobilize their voters (Kenny, 2017). However, the importance of studying populism in its context, which is generally democracy, remains the most important element of any study which involves populism as this context plays a critical role in identification as well as propagation of populism.

Due to populism’s excessive dependence on the people and a discourse required to address their issues in a certain context, the political system of democracy provides it a perfect nurturing space. Generally, the electoral political systems associated with democratic states enable the political contestants and their ideological leaders to build their discourse among the people and offer solutions to the existing problems, and a populist group can easily exploit this environment. Although this question remains valid at its place that whether populism necessarily required a democratic setup to surge in a political environment, the primary scope of this thesis is limited to the study of populism in a democracy. Moreover, a discussion on the theoretical relationship of political populism and democratic setups can highlight the reasons behind this mysterious surge of different forms of populism in several democratic countries during the last few decades.



## 1.2. POPULISM AND DEMOCRACY

Democracy and populism are two completely intertwined concepts of political theory. Gianfranco Pasquino (2008, p.15) states that both these phenomena have their solid roots and attach paramount significance to the people. Koen Abts and Stefan Rummens (2007) also attempt to explain this relationship through two-strand logic which claims that democracy is constantly pulled by double strands found within itself where a strand is populism and the other one ranges from constitutionalism (Canovan, 1999 and 2004; Papadopoulos, 2002; Habermas, 1998; Meny and Surel, 2002) to liberalism (Abts and Rummens, 2007), pragmatism (Canovan, 1999) and simple representationism (Bobbio, 1987; Taggart, 2002 and 2004; Hayward 1996). Koen Abts and Stefan Rummens (2007) claim that these strands are unmatching and often create tensions between each other; both corrective and destabilizing; in the system, and sometimes possibly giving rise to populists.

Interestingly, the theoretical conceptualization of democracy is also as contested as the framework of populism. Francisco Panizza (2005, p.1) asserts that some questions are really important to be addressed to understand the multifaceted interplay between populism and democratic setups and also the reasons which result in the establishment of populism: who are the people and who represents the people? And, how do we identify a populist leader? Similarly, the scholars have mentioned populism as an element of democracy as well as a problem of the latter.

Arguing that every democratic movement is not populist in nature, Abts and Rummens (2007, p.412) see it as problematic to consider populism as an embodiment of democracy, and to address the deficiencies of two-strand logic model, they have proposed a three- strand logic model which includes populism, democracy and liberalism distinctively. Most importantly, they also borrow Claude Lefort's notion that sovereignty is an empty space (Abts and Rummens, 2007, p.413). This can be explained through a basic comparison of monarchy and today's electoral democracy where the monarch is representation of sovereignty in the former, while the latter fills this space for a specific time duration with certain leadership elected by the people. Democracy enables filling of this space temporarily (Abts and Rummens, 2007). At the same time, the liberal and populist logics function to ensure the protection of individuals and the rule of majority (Abts and Rummens, 2007). However, while presenting populism in this way, Abts and Rummens (2007, p.408) again present populism as a very thin-ideology which is given rise by democracy. This is an argument even contested by themselves as they maintain that populism is unable to offer a comprehensive vision of a society and also that an ideology must address the structure of control and power in a society (Abts and Rummens, 2007).

To differentiate between democracy and populism to lead the debate towards how the first gives rise to the latter and how they affect each other, it is important to reconsider some important and distinctive characteristics of democracy. The representative democracy embodies its primary strength in the presence of a set of rules or the constitution (Riker, 1982; Urbinati, 1998; Canovan, 1999, 2002 and 2004). This means that the people are also bound to some sort of law (Lacey, 2019), and that the people's sovereignty is after all not limitless and controlled by several constitutional institutions. Meanwhile, populism should be a representation of an overall will of the people (Mudde, 2004). Similarly, the scholars also have an agreement on the claim that representation of the people is also transferable in the democracy, which puts it in contrast to the conception of populism (Bobbio, 1987; Meny and Surel, 2002; Taggart, 2004). Elections are generally an effective method to transfer sovereignty from the people to the government (Abts and Rummens, 2007). Furthermore, the sovereignty is not only transferable but also divisible among several institutions for a successful functioning of the democratic setup (Abts and Rummens, 2007; Lefort, 1988). In all of it, it is also ensured that the people remain a plural concept in order to ensure the secured rights of everyone (Chambers and Carver, 2008; Lefort, 1988; Dahl, 2000), contrary to the conception of the people in populism.

The scholarly views of differentiating democracy and populism as concepts hold critical significance, however, their mutual relationship also cannot be denied. It is quite important to look at the different concepts of democracy which possibly function in a closest way with populism or carry necessary ingredients to give rise to populism. This can lead to a restructured view of populism and democracy as distinct concepts and also their dependence on each other.

### **1.2.1. Populist Democracy**

Although populist democracy also carries the features similar to those of representative and constitutional democracies, it offers an alternative point of view on the people and their sovereignty. While other conceptualizations of democracy outrightly contradict the conception of populism by bounding the people to several laws and institutions (Abts and Rummens, 2007; Meny and Surel, 2002; Canovan, 1999; Papadopoulos, 2002), the populist political parties which embody the primary concept of populist democracy claim that the will of the people must be the driving force in policy formation and functioning of the government institutions. So, the populist democracy asserts that sovereignty of the people cannot be represented by someone else and is inseparable from the people (Rousseau, 1923, p.83). According to Nadia Urbinati (2006, p.63), the electoral system based on the delegates is the best explanation of the populist notion of

sovereignty. These delegates function as brokers to guarantee that the will of the people is completely expressed in the government's policies.

Another important distinctive feature of democratic conception of the people's sovereignty is the divisibility as populism emphasizes that only the will of the people exists and it should guide the society (Canovan, 2002, p.34). The people are supposed to be treated as a single indivisible entity. The discussion to identify the overall will of the people is totally allowed by the populist leaders, however, once the will has been known there is no place for difference of opinion (Taggart, 2000; Canovan, 2002; Urbinati, 1998). Within the framework of populist democracy, populists try to attain this through direct election of democratic leaders who promise to implement a certain agenda to express will of the people. Thus, a populist leader is often believed to voice the general will of the people and can possibly lead to the dictatorial tendencies of populism. As populism considers people as a homogenous group (Canovan, 1999 and 2005; Taggart, 2000), only those segments of society who are believed to belong to the people can have political rights (Meny and Surel, 2002; Canovan, 1981, 1999 and 2002; Laclau, 1977 and 2007; Mudde, 2004; Stavrakakis, 2004; Taggart, 2000). Hence there is a possibility of rejection of legitimate rights of one or more anti-groups.

Finally, it is significant to study the features of populism and democratic setup, and populist democracy as a whole and their features cannot be taken into account individually to comprehend the versatile conceptual connection between populism and democracy. As any such effort will either lead to broad generalization or the extraordinary narrowing down of these already contested concepts.

### **1.2.2. Patronage Democracy**

The system of democracy in some of the developing countries is run through programmatic parties or patronage parties, and the leaders appeal to their voters through institutionalized methods or depend on their intermediate connections to mobilize their voters respectively (Kenny, 2017, p.30). Paul Kenny (2015) calls a setup which has significant dependence on the patronage parties as patronage democracies and believes that such democratic setups have high potential to give rise to populism. He relies on the theory of principal agent (Kenny, 2017, p.47) and theory of social network (Kenny, 2017, p.48) to provide a theoretical basis for his claim that patronage linkage or the brokers normally function as intermediaries between the voters and the national leadership, and perform the crucial role of mobilizing the voters. Hence they form a chain of leader- broker-voter linkage in patronage democracies (Kenny, 2017, p.4).

However, the increased autonomous power of these intermediators or the brokers results in a weakened relationship between the existing leadership and the voters, which eventually creates space for populists who maintain a direct connection with the people (Di Tella, 1997) and tend to mobilize their voters themselves (Kenny, 2017, p.9). Here, Kenny (2017, p.178-180) argues that decentralization in patronage democracies leads to populism and this trend is even more visible in nation-states which have weak institutional arrangements. This decentralization deteriorates the institutionalized linkage between traditional parties and voters and paves way for populists. Kenny (2017, p.180), however, asserts consideration of populism as a methodology of political activism and mobilization or a political instrument instead of thin-ideology or pathological discourse. Populism is a “charismatic mobilization of a mass movement in pursuit of political power” which suggests that the “authority within a populist movement or organization is arbitrary and concentrated in the person of the leadership” (Kenny, 2019).

Paul Kenny’s argument about the existence of patronage as a significant factor and emergence of populist forces as result of its deterioration in East Asian democracies is actually the subject of his several publications during the last decade. Initially, he presented a theory on the origins and persistence of patronage in the countries where elite groups get more opportunities of state-building and hence they establish their formal patronage at sub-national level. The existence of patronage is more radical in the countries which were formerly part of the British colonies (Kenny, 2015) such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and other countries. Later, he claimed the presence of a causal relationship between this patronage linkage and “established government and opposition political parties and their supporters together and populist success” (Kenny, 2016). He takes the debate a step ahead by discussing the weakening structure of patronage and how it is paving the way for success of populists in the same countries (Kenny, 2017). And eventually, he leads the debate to the concluding point that the nature of the connection with the voters is the most crucial in Southeast Asian countries and that populist-linkage is the key challenger to the patronage-dependent political parties and patronage democracies (Kenny, 2019). Based on Kenny’s (2017) observations, it can be asserted that continuation of this kind of autonomous power associated with the brokers and the populists can also potentially make way for their authoritarian rule, jeopardizing the whole democratic setups in countries which highly rely on these patronage linkages.

While it is certain that democracy and populism have a strong relationship, it must also be taken into consideration that their nature and features vary from country to country. It mainly gets defined by the composition of a country’s population, its economic conditions and the structure of the political system. If a country has a history of political turmoil associated with nationalism,

social movements, xenophobia and similar topics, their political structure remains highly fragile and provides a good base for the populist movements. Contrary to this, an ideal liberal democracy which takes roots from equality and freedom show very limited chances of populist resurgence. During the first two decades of 21st century, the world has witnessed many populist parties rising to power with their illiberal agenda and establishing governments around their rhetoric.

### 1.3. RIGHT-WING POPULISM

It is argued that right-wing can be defined in the light of two basic parameters: a foundational ideology and historical placement (Davies, 1999; Hainsworth, 2000; Ignazi, 2003; Betz and Meret, 2009). As for the first, the far-right groups tend to adopt idealism to conceptualize the nation on the basis of culture, ethnicity and race (Betz, 2003). Meanwhile, the historic placement of right-wing implies the political movement of far-right groups after World War II and are usually tagged as fascists (Davies and Jackson, 2008). Also, the right-wing groups share a number of commonly shared features despite the fact that they are considerably different from each other on the basis of their operation, ideology and rhetoric (Hafez, 2014). This versatile spectrum of right-wing has also been acknowledged by some leading theorists (Ignazi, 2003; Hainsworth, 2000). Mudde also notes that “the vast majority of these parties are best described as populist radical right, combining an ideological core of nativism, authoritarianism and populism” (2014, p.99). Roger Griffin (2008) notes that the concept of populism should also be acknowledged as neo-populism or right-wing populism by the scholars who study the political groups which attempt to restructure the post-liberal society by appealing anti-government sentiments and popular xenophobic demands without referring to a fascist agenda. Similar populist right-wing features can be noticed across European socio-political movements to appeal to the common people for mobilization (Ignazi, 2003; Griffin, 2008; Hafez, 2014).

In order to differentiate the left-wing populists from right-wing populists, Herbert Kitschelt and Anthony McGann (1995) noted that the first type of populism-linked groups priorities economic issues while the latter ones represent social and cultural issues. Adding to this, Luke March (2007) noted that left-wing populists see the antagonistic division between the people and the elite as “haves and have-nots” and align themselves with leftist agenda instead of cultural issues while the right-wing tend to not share a specific set of beliefs when it comes to economic issues. The right-wing populist groups hardly focus on economic policies and instead put more focus on protectionism and social benefits only for the nationals (Lange, 2007; Koster et al., 2012). Ivarsflaten (2007) also found that anti-immigration was another stance commonly found across

all right-wing populist parties. In other words, right-wing populism also necessarily focuses on right-wing agenda to define the populist elements such as the people and the elite.

Nationalism is another important feature of right-wing populist parties (Mudde, 2000, p.171) as they openly call themselves as the only real national forces and even include the elements of nation in their names (Zuquete, 2008, p.329). Sometimes, the nationalist elements are replaced by something similar however greater than nationalism such as cultural identity in order to fit in the new context such as Europe (Zuquete, 2008, p.330). Eatwell (2004, p.9) also argues that nationalism no longer has one center of control and has reached the notions of Europe and the West. In this apparently post-nationalist discourse of populism, it not only puts more focus on the traditions and the borders of Europe or the West but also complements their existing nationalist stance: providing a chance to compete at a broader platform (Zuquete, 2008, p.331).

While discussing different features of today's right-wing populism, Daniele Caramani and Luca Manucci (2019) urge that a re-conception of fascism is required in order to explain that radicalism, exclusionism and non-pluralism are exactly those elements which comprised fascism during the 20th century. Roger Eatwell (2017) also appears to be in agreement with this claim by asserting that many features of right-wing populism were also embodied by fascism. Fascism was also treated by the proponents as an ideology, which carried a variety of discourses according to the different contexts. While Mussolini outrightly used populist language, his fascism looked for fostering a new man, to build a holistic nation to facilitate construction of third-way authoritarian state (Eatwell, 2017, p.8). Now that populists might not openly preach authoritarianism, the democratic setups taken over by the populist regimes have witnessed a stark rise of illiberal practices and restrictions. As Eatwell (2017, p.13) also argues that populism and fascism appeared to be unrelated ideologies, however, their rhetoric, style and discourse is borrowed from each other, and populism can quickly lead to a leader-oriented authoritarianism which was the third pillar of fascism. Like populism, the ideological ingredients of fascism are also transformable. While Mussolini saw nationalism as a core element of fascism in the beginning, during the last years of his political rise he presented a completely transformed idea of nationalism and a new man which was completely devoid of common man's involvement and only focused on specific powerful groups for the conception of a new man and holistic nation (Eatwell, 2017).

Although this thesis also addresses populism as a right-wing phenomenon, the main concept of a nation more depends on religious grounds for its conception because the primary subject of the thesis is Hindutva and it is defined in the light of the populist features of Hinduism and Hindu nationalism. The detailed debate on this topic has been included in the next chapter after an early

concept-building on populism's relationship with religion and a brief references to the populist usage of different religions including Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Hinduism.

#### 1.4. RELIGION AND POPULISM

The ties between religion and populism is as disputed as the definition of the latter as a theoretical phenomenon. However, contrary to the matter of populism, religion's study with a context of populism has not received enough attention by the scholars (Mudde, 2015, p. 446). Moreover, when studied in its relationship with religion, populism might carry the elements of an ideology. As the primary concept of populism presents two opposite sections of society: the people and the elite (Woods, 2014, p.3-5), the addition of religion to populism would further introduce the spectrum of good and evil (Hutter, 2006) to describe this duality of populism (Hermet, 2007, p.81; Hawkins, 2010, p.5; de la Torre, 2015, p.9). In this way, religious populism can be seen as a subtype of populism (de la Torre and Arnson, 2013, p.375; Kaltwasser, 2015, p.216) in which a specific religion defines its conceptual center (Apahideanu, 2014, p.77).

Apparently, it seems an easily understandable aspect of politics that some elements take advantage of religion to define the friend and the enemy (Brubaker, 2017; Gorski, 2017). However, it also professes another social reality which involves politicization of religion which points to use of a religion to legitimize the rule of a certain group (Linz, 2004, p.111-112). Jose Pedro Zuquete argues that "the way that this kind of religious populism manifests itself is not exclusive to any religious tradition, and crosses doctrinal differences and denominational divides" (2017, p.112). All of the same may also appear in the form of a similar concept called "sacralization of politics" (Zuquete, 2017), which also constitutes a "metamorphosis of the sacred in modern times" (Sironneau, 1982, p.576). Here populist politics becomes more about morals and even religion. Such elements have been visible in a number of populist movements (de la Torre, 2000, p.15; Taggart, 2002, p.78; Canovan, 2002, p.29).

However, many scholars emphasize that religious populism must be separately framed in terms of identity and belief: the populists focus on the identity aspect while the churches are concerned about beliefs and their practice (Gorski, 2017; Marzouki, McDonnell and Roy, 2016). This distinguishing association is very significant as populists only use religion as a tool to construct the identities of friends and enemies and eventually mobilize their supporters (Arato and Cohen, 2017, p.291). This is how populists attempt to "sanctify the nation, the people, or the leader, and to conscript it into the service of the political friend/enemy logic is, from the religious point of view, blasphemy" (Arato and Cohen, 2017, p.290). Andrew Arato and Jean Cohen (2017, p.291)

further add that populists also turn to religion as they require more signifiers to construct the people, something more than just anti-elite; hence, religion provides them the necessary ground to mobilize the good people. The populists often do so by pairing up their ideas with widely accepted ideologies such as religion as it carries all the necessary elements to make high moral claims (Arato and Cohen, 2017, p.288-292).

Similarly, the literature also provides ample references to the salvationist nature of politics (Panizza, 2013, p.114) or redemptive crusade (de la Torre and Arnson, 2013, p.353). Daniele Albertazzi (2008, p.5) argues that populists preach the impending doom and also offer salvation to the people. The use of religious language is also a prominent feature of religious populism, and such political appeals are presented through religious metaphors, images and arguments (de la Torre, 2015, p.10). This way, the use of a religious language enables the populists to adopt a distinctive way of politics against the established political behavior (Zuquete, 2017). According to Panizza (2013, p.91), it can be seen with reference to “markers of identity”. The use of religious features by the populists also brings in the in-depth scholarship of symbols in the field of politics. As de la Torre and Arnson also note: “if populism offers more than economic rewards, we need to know more about the symbolic dimensions of populist interactions” (2013, p.374). It would also involve the study of the cultural aspects of a religion and their use in the populist politics. Margaret Canovan (1999, p.11; 2005, p.89–90) asserts that populism relies on quite irrational and emotional components of democracy, and it has a great chance to flourish amid the tension between redemptive and routine politics.

Religion thus provides all the necessary features required by populists to construct the people, moralize them and demonize the antagonistic group or the enemy, and presence of religious identities in a civil society enables them to thematize it according to their political needs (Arato and Cohen, 2017). However, it is also significant to note that the development of populism is always conditioned by a number of political, social and cultural aspects inherent in its specific context (Zuquete, 2017). These contexts eventually define the nature of populism and its impact of political culture and mobilization across different geographies (Pasquino, 2008, p.21; Roberts, 2015). In the following part, this chapter carries an overview of populist nature of Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Hinduism to lead the debate towards main subject of the thesis.

#### **1.4.1. Christian Populism**

The US-based People’s Party from the 1890s can be noted to be the first example of religious populist party or movement in the literature (Zuquete, 2017, p.4). It mainly consisted of populist



waves led by farmers and workers of Southern and Western states, with protestant evangelicalism at the center of the whole movement. It aimed to reignite the broken connection of Americans' God-given values, rights and freedoms which were said to be under attack by the elite that referred to the political establishment in general including the traditional clergy. The leaders of this religious populism argued that the incumbent system was established on unjust principles, immorality and oppression. This way, these populists attempted to build a strong economic and political narrative which pitched the forces of God and democracy against tyranny and satanic forces (Creech, 2006). A large number of public speakers and writers also aligned themselves with this movement to "call down the judgment of God—and the Almighty's designs for the American nation—against worldly transgressors who made their fortunes unjustly and used their power to keep the plain people enslaved" (Williams and Alexander, 1994, p.7). They mainly focused on the people who could understand the religious language, as Rhys Williams and Susan Alexander (1994, p.8) have quoted former American Civil War hero James Weaver as saying: "[M]ay we not reverently believe that the struggle of the oppressed people of our day, to reinvest themselves of their lands, their money and their highways, is from heaven also?"

During the first decades of the 21st century, the United States witnessed the return of Christianity at the center of its politics when George Bush became the president. He has been dubbed as the most religious American head of state in the US history (Fineman, 2003; Mansfield, 2003). Bush employed the rhetoric and the political discourse which portrayed him in complete alignment with the Christian right (Ashbee, 2006) to appeal to the voters. Responding to his call, the leading Christian right organizations helped him to win the Republican presidential nomination (Johnston, 2018) as well as his election to the White House. The Republican Party has been largely dominated by the evangelical Protestants since the 1980s and Bush's close association with conservative individuals and the Christian right organizations made his electoral struggle an outright success (Ashbee, 2006, p.49). He himself was considered as an evangelical Christian (Whitehead, Perry and Baker, 2018, p.21), and he appeared to talk about Jesus Christ in a more personal and open way (Ashbee, 2006, p.45). During his campaign of the 2002 election, when asked to share the name of his personally most liked philosopher, he responded: "Christ, because he changed my heart" (Ashbee, 2006, p.46). He also used the popular displeasure of the Christian right about gay marriages during 2004 reelection campaign, and stressed on the religious sanctity of marriage by calling it a union of the man and the woman (Greven, 2016, p.4; Ashbee, 2006, p.52). Edward Ashbee (2006, p.47) notes that under the rule of George W. Bush, the White House policies towards liberal issues such as gay rights, sex education, abortion and even the nomination of federal judges were determined in the light of the Christian faith. He called the "war on terror" as crusades.

While Bush mainly benefitted from his conservative background and his personal standing on the Christian faith, Donald Trump more systematically applied the “us versus them” and conception of “them” by openly excluding the Muslims and Islam. Although Trump never openly adopted the discourse of the Christian right, he applied the binary divisive methodology by saying that “I think Islam hates us” during his 2016 presidential election campaign (Schleifer, 2016). Trump’s much-criticized announcement to ban entry of Muslims from the selected countries to the US largely dominated his electoral campaign (Khan et al, 2019, p.5). At one instance, he went on to say that: “I would certainly look at the idea of closing mosques within the United States” (Hauslohner and Johnson, 2017) to further deepen the exclusion of the Muslims. Donald Trump’s electoral strategies and rhetoric openly adopted the policy of polarization which underpinned Muslims as “others” through a number of negative references (Khan et al, 2019, p.14).

The populist discourses that highly relied on Christian religious sentiments have also been witnessed in Europe. During the 1990s and 2000s, Greece the patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church articulated a similar populist discourse among the public. They linked their movement to the defense of Greek identity against evil forces. Following the populist characters, the leaders of Greek movement also caused an us vs. them situation where the forces of God which represented the Church were antagonized against modern, atheist and repressive governments (Stavrakakis, 2005, p.241-243). In the post-Cold War era, Poland also faced a similar Christian populism led by the Roman Catholic priest Tadeusz Rydzyk who used his media network to mobilize the elderly audience living in rural areas (Porter-Szucs, 2011, p.271). This movement also tried to trigger an exclusion of the others which according to the populist leaders represented the enemies of God and humanity.

Discussing the post-1990 Christian populism in Europe, N. Marzouki, D. McDonnell and O. Roy (2016) note that populists now tend to consider themselves as an element of identity instead of faith, however, they would still consider the Church as a way to become close with Christian voters. Additionally, the modern populists also tend to use Christianity as a tool to exclude others from the people. Based on these features of exclusion and identity construction, the researchers claim that it has “the dual purposes of building nostalgia for a golden national past and rendering Islam an intrinsically foreign culture”, further adding that Christian populists are “Christian largely to the extent that they reject Islam” (Marzouki, McDonnell and Roy, 2016). The Christian populism of similar nature has been witnessed in Italy, Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Poland, Hungary, the United Kingdom, Russia and Scandinavian countries where Christian language, concerns and imagery have been used by the populist parties to build the case of the Christian

people against multiculturalism, liberalism, immigration and Muslims (Marzouki, McDonnell and Roy, 2016).

Over the last century, the populist movements have relied on politicization of Christian religion as marker of identity; including the populists emphasizing on the Christian identity of Europe; and a way to distinguish the antagonistic groups and policies to construct the others which are considered as a danger to the original beliefs and cultural setup of the people (Marzouki et al., 2016). It is also important to note that the elements of Christian populism are also often applied by other religious segments particularly the Muslim populists to construct their respective conception of the others.

#### **1.4.2. Islamist Populism**

Contrary to the Christian populism, other religious populists have more relied on the notion of populism which addresses the struggle of the oppressed people. However, on several similar grounds, they also attempt to justify their actions as a necessity to implement a divine agenda. The case of Muslim populism also carried similar features of politicization of traditional religion (Payne, 2008, p.31). In modern history, the first major uprising of Muslim populism was witnessed in the result of politicization of Shia Islam following the 1979 Iranian Revolution when a religious cleric Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini interpreted the uprising against the Shah of Iran as an act against the traditional elites (Halliday, 1982; Alamdari, 1999, p.32). This religious interpretation of the revolutionary events of Iran were further coupled with the sense of messianism and Shiite-Islamic teachings about the return of the Hidden Imam. These elements were also visible in Iran during the rule of Mahmood Ahmadinejad (2005-2013) who was acclaimed as a man of the people. On several occasions, he also vowed to revive the ideal of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, while responding to the elite groups (Dorraj, 2014:134-40).

The rise of Jihadist elements at the center of political Islam can also viewed as a segment of contemporary Islamist populism as it stands on the concept of the Muslim Ummah; or in other words: the people; in the opposition of modern secular states and Western global culture (Yates, 2007). These features of the others are also often referred to as the acts of ignorance, with an appeal that it is “the duty of the faithful to rise up and wage ...and restore the holy geography of believers” (Yates, 2007, p.129-130). These religious sentiments have been used by Islamist populist movements over the time, ranging from a little usage to complete dependence on these notions to build a certain public discourse against the others. However, it must also not be forgotten that Islamist uprising is the only political element of Islam, but it has “a reserve of

values, symbols and ideas from which it is possible to derive a contemporary politics and social code” (Halliday, 1982).

Laclau (2005) argues that populists benefit from several signifiers to build their discourse. These slogans, signs and symbols are very often concrete, physical and spatial, and carry strong emotional power which help the populist arguments (Yla-Anttila, 2016), and hence help the populists to construct a collective identity of the people, establish strong communication with the people and skillfully create a controversy (Block and Negrine, 2017). Among Muslim populist movements, the organizations considered as the extreme right also use such symbols and signifiers to seek support from the people to expand their political as well as military power. Hamas and Hezbollah are two leading examples of extreme right Islamist movements who enjoy both political and military status in the Middle East, and have benefitted from key Islamic signifiers to popularize their agenda. While Hezbollah literally means the Party of God (Koc and Palabiyik, 2016), Hamas has included a number of such signifiers in its central charter. It introduces itself as a movement which is “loyal to God” (Charter of Hamas, Article 6), claims that it “consists of Muslims who are devoted to God” (Charter of Hamas, Article 3) and summarizes itself as “Allah is its goal, the Prophet its model, the Quran its Constitution, Jihad its path” (Charter of Hamas, Article 8). After implicitly constructing the people, Hamas has also provided a conception of the others: “the forces of Imperialism in both the Capitalist West and the Communist East support the enemy with all their might, in material and human terms, taking turns between themselves. When Islam appears, all the forces of Unbelief unite to confront it, because the Community of Unbelief is one.” (Charter of Hamas, Article 22). Moreover, Alhalayqa (2018) noted that Hamas effectively employs a variety of new media tools to engage the people to develop a discourse in its favor against the others. It has even used #AskHamas on Twitter to directly address the world and answer the questions in English language to expand its outreach among the people. The political flags of both Hamas and Hezbollah also carry key Islamic verses to highlight their intended association with the people. Turkey’s Hudapar Party is another example of Islamist extreme right group which has employed similar signs of populism. The name of the party literally means “the party of God” (Koc and Palabiyik, 2016), and it openly uses slogans signifying Islamic teachings and electoral rhetoric which highlights Islamic discourse such as introduction of Islamic reforms to reverse the secularization of Turkey, regularization of Islamic seminaries and abolishment of interest. Just like other Islamist extreme right groups, Hüda-Par also has its communication channels to contact the people: Rehber TV and Dogryhaber newspaper.

Vedi Hadiz (2016, p.48) has taken note of something different in the Muslim populist movements which he calls “new Islamic populism” (Hadiz, 2016, p.48) or as described by Takashi Shiraishi (1990): progressive Islam. The new Muslim populism is more focused on electoral success and has been witnessed in countries like Indonesia, Turkey and Egypt. It aims “at a winning electoral formula by merging moral concerns...with a neoliberal good governance agenda that embraces the market and globalization” (Hadiz, 2016, p.110). In his book, Hadiz (2016) defines Islamic populism as a populist design to attract a large number of voters whose loyalty is mainly based on political identities defined on the basis of religion and nationalism. Thus, he claims that the mass organizations which rely on nationalism and religion have become the driving forces of contemporary Islamic populism and the broader idea of Muslim Ummah is now also being used at the nation and state level. Most importantly, Hadiz (2016, p.21 and p.160) argues that economic conditions and victimization of an unjust political group is more effective to drive the people towards joining these new Islamic populist groups instead of mere religious sentiments, unlike the older or traditional Muslim populism.

### **1.4.3. Jewish Populism**

Although there is not much literature available to specifically address Jewish populism, still some relevant examples have been noted by the scholars to prove the case of this type of religious populism. Being at the center of a major territorial conflict provides a unique opportunity to Judaism to benefit from the theoretical conceptions of religious populism. As Mudde (2004) argues, religion has a crucial role in construction of identities in social and cultural context, the presence of a dispute like Israel-Palestine conflict serves as a threat to collective identity of Jews (Kelman, 2004, p.62), hence it serves a primary feature to construct the people and define the others. The presence of other phenomena such as Zionism, anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism also serve secondary elements to provide ground for Jewish populism (Caro, 2015), where Jews are seen as a single entity just like the concept of the Muslim Ummah in the traditional Islamist populism.

However, Jewish populism has another aspect where the populist elements struggle to build certain conceptions within Judaism and the political setup of Israel. The ultra- orthodox Jewish political parties of Israel, i.e. Shas which literally means the protectors of the Torah can be called the preparators of Jewish populism (File, 2010). Shas advocates to run Israel in the light of Jewish religious principles, and also calls itself as an anti-elite political party and appeals to the oppressed groups within Israel for mobilization. The political party also seeks exclusion of several

immigrants from Africa, Palestine and Russia from its idea of Israeli state, defining the others of their populist agenda (Weiss and Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2016).

Israel's ruling Likud Party and its Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have also evolved themselves as right-wing populists in a number of ways. While he himself stands accused of major financial corruption in Israel, his political party has often adopted anti-judiciary and anti-media rhetoric to politicize the corruption investigation and gain sympathy of a victim among the people (Busse, 2017). During the last decade, an increased mention of security threats from Palestinians has also been noticed by the leaders of the Likud Party (Busse, 2017; Leslie, 2017). Netanyahu has repeatedly invoked the memory of the Holocaust to describe the nature of security threats Israel has even today while openly portraying himself as "the messianic figure to protect the Jewish from the new Holocaust" (Leslie, 2017). Finally, in order to describe the others for his party, while addressing the World Zionist Congress in 2015, Netanyahu even spared Adolf Hitler of the Holocaust crime and told the audience that "it was the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin Al-Husseini, who first suggested to Hitler that he should kill the Jews... Hitler didn't want to exterminate the Jews at the time... Hearing this, the Mufti protested, saying, "If you expel them, they'll all come here... Burn them"" (Leslie, 2017, p.81)

#### **1.4.4. Hindu Populism**

The main subject of the thesis deals with the different aspects of the Hindu populism or what has also been called the Hindutva. In order to complete the review of the current debate on how different religions are used by the populist politicians to develop their relevant discourses to mobilize their supporters, an introductory discussion on Hindu populism has also been included here.

Although, contemporary debate on Hindu populism or Hindutva is limited to the BJP, the origin of this populist movement can be connected back to the nineteenth century when the Hindu reformist groups such as *Brahmo Samaj* and *Arya Samaj* expressed their concerns regarding growing influence of Islam and Christianity in the Indian subcontinent (Vaishnav, 2019). While these movements constructed the others by calling Muslims and Christians as a grave threat to Hinduism, they also tried to reform the traditional Hinduism according to modern standards by addressing the caste system, mistreatment of women and idolatry to safeguard the conception of people from external threats (Vaishnav, 2019, p.9). In 1920, Hindu nationalism witnessed a major surge as a result of Savarkar's publications who, for the first instant in the modern history of India, called Hindutva a political movement seeking a strong connection between India's cultural,

religious and territorial boundaries (Vaishnav, 2019). Savarkar gave a slogan of Hindu, Hindi and Hindustan to the people based on religion, language and territory and put forward a European-style nationalism (Hansen, 1999, p.78). Here, he also urged a strong loyalty to the common Hindu religious identity, shared culture and transformation of Hindus into a nation to structure the concept of Hindu nationalism very similar to Zionism (Andersen and Damle, 2018, p.237). In 1925, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (henceforth, RSS) was established by K. B. Hedgewar which would become the face of Hindu nationalism or Hindutva movement the following decades (Vaishnav, 2019, p.11).

Following the independence of India in 1947, the Hindu nationalist parties such as the RSS, the BJS and eventually the BJP formed a strong network of small local organizations including Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad and Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh which functioned according to the same Hindu nationalist ideology across the country (Vaishnav, 2019, p.10). Furthermore, through depiction of the INC as a family-oriented political party, exploitation of issues like *Babri Mosque* or *Ram Mandir* and Hindu right's presence in both the state institutions and the non-state sectors helped the proponents of Hindutva ideology to shape India's political discourse in their favor (Vaishnav, 2019, p.12-15). Here, the INC has been consistently portrayed as the elite, *Babri Mosque* issue as the center of unity among Hindu nationalists and presence of strong footstep across India as an element to construct the people. And finally, the eventual addition of populist feature known as the emergence of an undisputed charismatic leader in the shape of Narendra Modi has resulted in the complete control of India by the Hindu nationalist party BJP.

While there is a general understanding that populist movements have excessively relied on nationalist and religious sentiments to garner electoral votes across the world, the populists do engage in a sophisticated process of communication to effectively popularize religion and populism. This sort of political communication is based on systematic, interactive and direct modes to successfully push for the populist agenda among voters. The researchers have an agreement that populism is transferred as the primary content in these forms of communication in the form of minor nuances, concise conceptions and resonating theories (Vreese et al, 2018). In this section, populism has been discussed as a methodology of political communication in order to assess whether changing modes of communication and development of new media technologies have directly affected the practices of populists or why certain media of communication are preferred over others by populist leaders.

### 1.5. POPULISM AS POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

If we look at the key components of populism, i.e. the people, the elite group and the discourse, we can quickly ascertain that conception of all these elements is highly dependent on the process of communication. By operationalizing populism to be a practice of communication, it becomes possible to study its nature and intensity in a certain society, and careful study of this concept can certainly lead us to the basics of populism applied by the leader and the corresponding behavior on the side of the audience. The very style of communication between the leaders and the voters can also be helpful to ascertain if they are populists or not, and also their type of populism (Aalberg et al., 2017; Jagers and Walgrave, 2007). The populist communication is “full of references related to the conceptions of the people and sensitization on anti-elitism, and ostracization of certain segments from the people” (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007). Actually, the process of communication undertakes a crucial role in the definition of these elements and serves as a political connection between political leaders and population. Pippa Norris (2004) recognizes political communication to be “an interactive process concerning the transmission of information among politicians, the news media and the public”, however in populist political communication, the populist content takes the central stage and becomes a binding force among all these elements of political communication. Benjamin Moffitt also points to the consideration of populism to be a political phenomenon in which communication plays the central role: communication and media “must be put at the center of our analysis” (2016, p.94).

In this section, this thesis attempts to highlight why populism should be rendered as a phenomenon of political communication and how a treatment of populism as a type of political communication enables researchers to get a better understanding of populist expressions and their capacity. Because the ecology of communication is always getting transformed and populists are dependent on the process of communication to reach the people, construct the concepts such as the people and the elite, gain political benefits (van Aelst et al., 2017). In the presence of converged news sources, altered formats of information, challenged difference between interpersonal and mass communication, realigned media preferences of citizens, algorithmic social media platforms and self-selected information seeking, the process of communication has even gained more importance for political actors (de Vreese et al., 2018; Stroud, 2008; Shah et al., 2017; Borghesius et al., 2016). Moreover, the elements such as misinformation, conspiracy theories and relativism also provide several political opportunities for populist leaders. The empirical examples from Holland (Hameleers, Bos and de Vreese, 2016), Switzerland (Ernst, Engesser and Esser, 2017), Hungary, and Italy (Moffitt 2016) also demonstrate similar trends of recent populist communication.



When we explore populism as a phenomenon of political communication, the primary focus of interplay between the populists, the media and the citizens becomes more focused on style, content, and the crafting of content and its potential impact (Aalberg et al, 2017). Moreover, in the current “hybrid media system which have new and traditional media platforms intertwined with each other, the political actors do not depend on a single source of communication” (Chadwick, 2017); rather, they adopt multiple ways of communication to achieve their goals. Depending on “the nature and characteristics of a specific communication platform, the frequency of populist communication also changes” (Cranmer, 2011; Bos & Brants, 2014). Mirjam Cranmer (2011), and Linda Bos and Kees Brants (2014) conclude that political talk shows provide excellent opportunities of populist communication based on their formats. Likewise Stefan Stieglitz and Linh Dang-Xuan (2013) note that social media networks are considered as the backbone of political communication by the contemporary political parties. Facebook and Twitter are considered as top platforms to reach and influence the public at large scales (Fisher, Marshall and McCallum, 2018). This trend also points to the notion that social media platforms offer more chances of direct communication with the public (Lilleker and Koc- Michalska, 2013), which also happens to be a salient feature of political communication adopted by populists as they seek to get rid of any wall between themselves and the public (Sinha, 2017).

Theoretically, although the scholars contest populism as a tool of political mobilization (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007), or a thin-ideology (Mudde, 2000), or a discourse (Taggart, 2002), they do not declare any of these as an exclusive nature of populism and rather assert that these are just different aspects of this political phenomenon (Engesser, Fazwi and Larsson, 2017). In other words, populism has conceptual relationships with all these different political ideas (Hawkins, 2009; Kaltwasser, 2015). As Hawkins (2009) further argues, these fundamental political thoughts are exhibited through a certain discourse of populism, and populist political communication brings together “a dynamic mix of substance and style” as it “combines and integrates form and content” (Wodak, 2015:3). Sorensen (2018) also argues that: “approaching populism from a communications perspective... inevitably involves considerations of style as well as ideology”. Hence, the populist political communication enables the populists to divide the public into two distinctive groups which are assumed to be homogeneous from within but antagonistic as compared to each other; the good people and the corrupt elite group (Abts and Rummens, 2007; Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2008; Mudde, 2004); through exaltation of the people, criticism of the elites and a discourse to restore the so-called sovereignty of the people (Meny and Surel, 2002).

According to Hanspeter Kriesi (2018, p.12), the specific style of political communication also reveals the populist nature of communication as they carry certain lingual features such as emotionalization, emergency rhetoric, absolutist and colloquial. The populist communication also resorts to the use of negativism by portraying the society as a dark place due to the actions of the dangerous others or the elites (Block and Negrine, 2017; Engesser et al., 2017), and promoting the rhetoric of crisis by calling the various developments as huge crises through exaggeration, emergency and scandal. Furthermore, the highly emotional populist messages try to show the social setup in black and white (Canovan, 1999; Fawzi et al., 2017; Block and Negrine, 2017; Hameleers, Bos, and de Vreese, 2016), where anyone not standing by the discourse of the populist leaders is demonized through political campaigns. The scholars also note that populist communication highly relies on the sentiments of patriotism to promote a utopian vision for the homeland (Taggart, 2000; Block and Negrine, 2017), and the populist leaders even share their highly personal details in order to prove them as an accessible and simple person or portray themselves as the persons who belong to the general public (Jaffrelot, 2013).

This is how the homogenized blend of ideology, political mobilization and discourse benefits from the communication process to execute political messages which comprise a range of styles and perspectives to construct the elements of populism. Both the traditional and the new media platforms, play crucial roles to complete this process of communication. Although the scholars argue that new media technologies have proven to be a better option for an effective populist political communication, as internet-based forums “restructure political power in a populist direction” (Bimber, 1998, p.137) to facilitate an unstoppable communication process between the political leaders and the common citizens (Bimber, 1998), populist politicians consider this direct communication with the public to be highly important (Taggart, 2002, p. 67; Canovan, 2002, p. 34; Kriesi, 2018). They see themselves as the real representatives of the people and demand “direct, unmediated access to the people’s grievances” (Kriesi, 2018) and new media technologies provide this necessary communication linkage by enabling them to “bypass philosophical disputes and institutional niceties” (Canovan, 2002). Furthermore, due to the widespread fake news on the internet, the possibility of accessing only selective information for the users or “filter people” (Pariser, 2011) and ability to avoid scrutiny of mainstream investigative journalism that would rather question the political leadership about their policies and impact (Chadwick, 2017), populist leaders are more inclined towards the use of new media platforms for spreading their discourse among the people. However, the presence of these phenomena associated with social media and the internet has further enhanced the significance of the very process of communication. Meanwhile, some scholars also argue that the traditional and the new media tools actually complement each other (Chadwick, 2017). That is why populists may show an extra

inclination towards new media platforms to avoid journalist gatekeeping (Rooduijn, 2014). However, they adopt the hybrid media systems comprising new media tools as well as traditional media platforms to build their populist narratives (Chadwick, 2017).

This thesis is an attempt to study populism with reference to its use in political communication by the right-wing political party, the BJP, with the production of the Hindutva ideology during the 2019 election campaign. However, before discussing the Hindutva ideology and its historic background in detail in the next chapter, the overview of India's mainstream political populism has been brought under discussion in the final section of this chapter. Although populism became a much debated political concept in the context of Indian political sphere during the last few years, the practice of populist style and language has dominated Indian politics for many decades. Few scholars have even argued that populist strategies were even visible during the independence movement of India against British colonizers.

## **1.6. POPULISM IN INDIA**

India's introduction to populist elements goes all the way back to the days of the British colonization, when the political leaders of the united India adopted a populist way of politics to get freedom from the foreign occupiers. The leaders of both the INC and All India Muslim League (AIML) highly relied on nationalist sentiments of the versatile population of the country to construct the conception of the people and the other in the shape of locals and foreign invaders respectively. During the 1910s and 1920s, both parties joined their efforts to construct these conceptions, when Mahatma Gandhi played the role of a charismatic leader and the driver of political populism (Subramanian, 2007, p.82; Husain, 2016, p.74). Gandhi's counterpart in the AIML, Muhammad Ali Jinnah not only initially played a role for conception of the people on the basis of Indian nationalism but also successfully redefined the people and the others on the basis of being Muslim and non-Muslim. According to Mir Husain (2016, p.74), Gandhi was a successful populist politician who even transformed the elitist INC Party into a revolutionary freedom movement.

During the independence movement of India, although religious populism was mainly visible only among the leaders of the AIML, Hindu nationalists were also at work. However, it was only limited to the public mobilization under the Hindutva ideology and had not taken any major political course till following the independence of India and separation of Pakistan. The Hindu right-wing nationalist groups, i.e. the RSS, Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj kept increasing their influence across independent India while focusing on the construction of the people and the others

on the basis of Hinduism (Vaishnav, 2019). However, it took them a few more decades after the independence to engage in the political version of populism.

India's first visible and self-evident experience with populist politics was witnessed during the government of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who was the daughter of first Indian Prime Minister and independence leader Jawaharlal Nehru. Gandhi initially benefited from the popular imagery of her father who had led India's independence movement and later strengthened the country's democratic setup during his decade-long rule (Guha, 2007). However, she turned to left-wing populism later on (Subramanian, 2007). She used the strategy of anti-elitism by sidelining the establishment of the INC and attempted to pitch herself as the sole true advocate of the Indian people. She mobilized huge political support through mass rallies and anti-elitist rhetoric (Guha, 2007). Gandhi established a new INC to demolish its traditional status quo imagery, and to strengthen her grip on the party. She introduced a centralized political system in India by directly appointing political officials at the national and the regional levels, contrary to Nehru-era's practice of involving local political elites for such appointments (Kohli and Basu, 2003). As a result, she successfully dominated Indian politics during the 1970s and 1980s "as much as Mahatma Gandhi or her father ever had" (Kohli and Basu, 2003, p.273). It was Indira Gandhi's strong and direct connection with the people that resulted in erosion of India's autonomous judiciary and bureaucracy, and eventual suspension of democracy altogether in 1975 (Kenny, 2017, p.101).

At the time of independence in 1947, the princes of the royal states which became part of India were allowed to retain their status and massive allowances from the government. In 1970, there were a total 278 princes who continued to hold their positions in respective states when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi decided to revoke their allowance through a parliamentary legislation (Kenny, 2017, p.109). Her move got through Indian parliament's lower house, however, it was rejected by just one vote in the upper house. Despite this, she ensured that the President of India derecognizes the princes (Frank, 2001, p.323). Another move that aimed at the centralization of power during those years was the nationalization of banks, which along with the abolishment of princes was challenged by the elite groups in the Indian Supreme Court. The court ruled against Gandhi, and she declared it as a "conflict between the established and entrenched bosses and the progressive forces" (Frankel, 2005, p.431), while she was the one trying to "ensure a better life to the majority of our people and satisfy their aspiration for a just social order" (Guha, 2007). Through all these incidents, the people largely saw Indira Gandhi on their side, and fighting against the elite groups. Uma Vasudev (1974, p.521) put the populist politics of Indira Gandhi as in the following: "Power through popularity. A charisma to charm the people. The role was clear.

A leftist road to communion with the masses.” Similarly, she mentioned in her speeches as well: “We started losing in State after State and I saw no way in which I would bridge the gap except by going once more directly to the people” (Gandhi, 1975, p.88).

However, Gandhi’s populism did not incline towards anti-pluralism, but her political strategies did give rise to the politics based on ethnicities, caste and religion in the years after her death (Hansen, 1999). During the late 1980s, when the INC continued Indira Gandhi’s anti-elitist populism, the BJP offered an alternative version of populist movement which directly challenged India’s secular and pluralist institutions by calling the politics of the INC as westernized and dynastic (Chakrabarti and Bandyopadhyay, 2019, p.3). The BJP also relied on anti-Muslim rhetoric and Hindu sentiments about Hinduist revivalism in India to woo Hindus which make up the majority of the Indian population. During the 1990s, the BJP came into power, however, it was mainly through coalition government and that is why their institutional power was largely contained.

It was the early 2010s, when the BJP found its charismatic leader Narendra Modi, who focused on the corruption scandals that surfaced during the rule of INC and challenged its dynastic style of politics. While Modi pitched himself as the man of the people and anti-elitist based on his poor family background, the BJP’s media team portrayed the INC as a representative of corrupt and hereditary political establishment of India (Chakravarty and Roy, 2015). Christophe Jaffrelot and Jean-Thomas Martelli (2017) found that “brother, sister, and team were Modi’s most used words in his Independence Day speeches since he took over the office of the Prime Minister: just to convey the people that he is part of a common man’s family”. To establish a leader-voter direct linkage just like Indira Gandhi, benefitting from the technological innovations of the 21st century, Modi joined all of the available social media networks in 2009 to remove the constraints of traditional media between himself and the people (Sinha, 2017). And, as Di Tella (1965) also acknowledged, mass media serves as a huge facilitator of the populist movement. The BJP drove the mass media platform through strong presence on social media forums which would live broadcast every speech of Narendra Modi during the 2014 election campaign through a dedicated web-based YuvaiTV. The short-trimmed videos of those speeches were also tweeted and shared on other networks as a live event (Jaffrelot, 2015).

Inclining towards anti-pluralism, Modi created “others” within the population of India by siding with Hindu majority: leaving lesser public space for Muslims who are considered inferior to “the people” (Mazzoleni and Bracciale, 2018). He has been regularly using Hindu religious gestures and symbols in his speeches and tweets to side with the majority of the people, redrawing the

whole conception of the people (Pande, 2014). Modi's rule has even resulted in the incidents of intolerance toward Muslims in the form of mob-lynching, debates on protection of cows which is considered as a religious symbol of Hinduism (Medha, 2016), and introduction of a new law to grant citizenship to Hindus and the followers of other religions, except Muslims. Along with the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the manifesto of the BJP for the 2019 elections also included a number of other promises which were clearly anti-Muslim and only focused on the Hindu majority to gain their electoral support, i.e. the construction of the Ram Mandir at the location of *Babri Mosque* destroyed by a Hindu mob in 1992, and introduction of National Register of Citizenship (NRC) which would ask every citizen of India to prove their nationality through documents; and upon failure to do so, only the Muslims would be left as illegal citizens because the CAA will allow any non-Muslim to immediately seek a new Indian citizenship.

The next chapter carries detailed explanation with reference to the Hindutva ideology, its connection with the BJP's populist movement and the details about the populist features of BJP's political strategies and manifestoes. In the concluding part, this thesis includes a detailed discussion on populist features of BJP's populist movement i.e. anti-elitism, anti-pluralism, anti-Muslim and Hindu nationalism to understand that how India's internal affairs and global imagery have been redefined in the light of Narendra Modi's electoral victories and BJP's continuous rule in India.

## **1.7. GENERAL EVALUATION OF CHAPTER**

The in-depth debate on the theoretical frameworks of populism and its versatile nature leads us to the inference that populism is not itself a shrouded concept but all of the features associated with this political phenomenon are also contested and have been presented in a different way by different schools of thought. It has been found to function as an alternative political instrument, a thin ideology and political discourse in different parts of the world. At times, these apparently distinctive characters are overlapping with each other, e.g. populism functions as a tool of discourse to spread nationalist and religious ideologies. However, the presence of populism and its nature in a political system is largely determined by the style, language and tools of communication adopted by the political leaders.

Initially, populism seems to be merely determining the targeted groups of a political movement and its leader by defining "the people" to provide an alternative political solution. However, the detailed study of other features reveals that populism completely redefines the political and social structure of society. It bifurcates the different segments of society while structuring the conception

of “the others” by excluding a few groups from the social and political setup. Usually, the minoritized groups and immigrants become targets as a result of these populist campaigns. This is how it damages the very essence of democracy which aims to protect the rights of the public and not the majority or dominant groups only. Similarly, when the populist discourse is built on one “charismatic leader”, it directly poses a grave danger to the basic structure of democracy. A long-term political dependence on a single person can easily lead to undemocratic, authoritarian and illiberal practices. Many democracies in Latin America, Europe and Asia have succumbed to such practices during the last decades. The amalgamation of religion, nationalism and other right-wing sentiments also provide the required fuel for these populist movements in the form of rhetoric, symbols, slogans, linguistics and ideological associations. Contemporary political issues such as anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, disenfranchisement of selected political groups and curtailed freedoms are a direct result of uncontrolled and widespread success of populist elements. These issues have transformed themselves into social menaces in today’s world.

In the case of India, too, Indira Gandhi’s left-wing populism had self-evidently resulted in personality-centric policies, diminished constitutional rights and disruption of the overall political scenario of the country. Similarly, the right-wing BJP has excessively benefitted from the Hindutva doctrine, built its populist narrative around Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s charismatic personality, introduced legislation excluding the ‘others’, i.e. Muslims, and demonization of other political parties in order to expand its populist agenda. The BJP successfully employed the traditional media as well as the new media tools to run the 2019 election campaign by adopting populism as a tool of political communication, and production of Hindutva ideologies by means of Hindu religious symbols, rituals and rhetoric. The Modi government also withdrew the special status of the disputed Kashmir region, imposed movement and communication restrictions, and fiercely responded to the countrywide protests in response to Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). All these developments suggest that India’s populist regime is inclining towards authoritarianism at a great speed.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **HINDUTVA AS A POPULIST POLITICAL MOVEMENT**

This chapter explores the journey of the Hindutva movement from the days of the British colonization to the current time when the BJP has been running the political government in India. From a humble beginning as a Hindu revivalist group, the Hindutva movement has demonstrated itself as a social and cultural reformer and eventually a political winner seeking implementation of its “one nation, one culture and one language” motto through progressive democratic institutions of India. The chapter notes how a number of people including V. D. Savarkar, Swami Shradhananda, Bhai Paramanand, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Har Dayal, S. P. Mookerjee, M.S. Golwalkar and K. B. Hedgewar played their role in development of the Hindutva as a movement as well as a doctrine through the platforms of the Arya Samaj and the RSS to formulate the Sangh Parivar which eventually gave rise to the political parties such as the BJS and the BJP.

The chapter also includes a discussion on the teachings and writings of the proponents of the Hindutva doctrine in the light of the earlier conceptual debates on populism. It carries the detailed accounts and incidents from the lives of Hindutva’s spiritual leaders to discuss how the essentials of populism as outlined in the previous chapter have been determined by the Hindutva movement in India during the last two centuries. The subtle transformation of this social and cultural revivalist movement of Hinduism into a versatile political phenomenon which carries all the essentials of right-wing populism has also been deliberated to identify the ideological roots of the BJP, its close leadership and electoral manifestos. The final part of this chapter also briefly explains the structure and constitutional functioning of India’s political democratic system.

#### **2.1. WHAT IS HINDUTVA?**

Hindutva is a multilateral and multifaceted phenomenon which has evolved as a political thought in India during the recent centuries. Today, it has become a replica of Hindu nationalism which poses direct challenge to the very idea of India’s foundation, pluralistic social arena and political intellectualism. Moreover, given the spectrum of pro-Hindutva groups, the exact meanings, agenda and scope of this concept also varies greatly. It has been confused with plain Hinduism and Indian nationalism, and sometimes compared with extremist ideas of purging India of all non-Hindu elements to revive the country in the light of mythological Bharat. During the early 20th century, Hindutva was coined as a term by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar while India was under the



British colonial rule (Mohapatra, 2016). According to Jyotirmaya Sharma (2003), Hindutva is the type Indianness where the word Hindu plays the core role for the definition of identity and provides a logical sense to the movement for its continuity. Other scholars have explained Hindutva more explicitly: even calling it *Ram Rajiya* (Ram's Realm) which aims to forge Indian sub-continent as "one nation, one religion, one culture and one language" in the name of Lord Ram where Hindu icons, symbols, norms and values should dominate as the national elements (Frykenberg, 2008, p.178).

<b>Hindu Revivalism (19th Century)</b>	<b>Development of Hindutva (20th Century till 1947)</b>	<b>Politicization of Hindutva (Post-1947)</b>
i. Bankim Chandra ii. Bal Gangadhar Tilak iii. S. Shradhdhananda iv. Bhai Paramanand v. M. M. Malaviya vi. Har Dayal	i. K.B. Hedgewar ii. M.S. Golwalkar iii. V.D. Savarkar	i. S.P. Mookerjee ii. Deendayal U. iii. A.B. Vajpayee iv. L.K. Advani v. Amit Shah vi. Narendra Modi

**Table 2: Key Proponents of Hindutva**

The 19th century witnessed a tremendous growth of Hindutva as a political movement and it silently played a key role in transforming regional, national and religious demography of India for many decades before becoming a publicly well-known movement. The political thought of Hindutva was primarily developed by the people such as Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Swami Shradhdhananda, Bhai Paramanand, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Har Dayal, Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, M.S. Golwalkar and Keshav Baliram Hedgewar (Udayakumar, 2005). They suggested the cultural superiority of Hinduism, application of Hindu philosophies in economic and political policies, non-preferential treatment for non-Hindu communities and strict opposition to any attempts to abolish or reform the Hindu caste system (Udayakumar, 2005, p.23). However, it remains a key understanding that the nature and extent of the assertion on these Hindutva elements greatly varied among the proponents or Hindu revivalists. Also, the movements such as Prarthana Samaj, Brahmo Samaj, Theosophical Society, Arya Samaj and Ramakrishna Movement helped in transformation of the discourse of the Hindutva movement into a more indigenous and social movement during the 19th century (Udayakumar, 2005; Frykenberg, 2008). A major surge in this regard was witnessed in 1891 when a new law named the Minimum Age of Consent Bill

proposed to change the age of girl's consultation to marriage from 10 years to 12 years and it received harsh criticism from right-wing Hindu movements and Bal Gangadhar Tilak called it outrageous and against local traditions of India (Udayakumar, 2005). As a reaction, he established the Anti-Cow Slaughter Society to protect cows; which is considered as a sacred animal in Hinduism; against slaughtering and started another movement to remove obstacles for freedom of the practice of Hindu rituals. Tilak also started the *Shivaji* festival at large to commemorate the Lord *Shiva* (Udayakumar, 2005, p.23). Such efforts made the revivalist movements of Hindu nationalism more popular and attracted the common Hindus at large scale.

However, it was only during the 20th century when Hindutva became a significant political ideology. The writings of Bankim Chandra, V. Damodar Savarkar, K. Baliram Hedgewar and M. Sadashiv Golwalkar largely shaped and reshaped the Hindutva discourse and became the flag bearers of this political ideology. Bankim Chandra who happened to be a novelist and a journalist, earned a fame of Hindu revivalist through his fictional writings which portrayed mythological images of Hindu lords and antagonistic characters of Hindus and Muslims. He wrote a poem titled "*Bande Mataram*" which carried anti-Muslim rhetoric and was afterwards adopted as an anthem by the right-wing Hindu nationalists. As a result, he was recognized as "creator of Hindu nationalism" (Chaudhuri, 1951, p.188). In his writings, he outrightly claimed that "only Hinduism could bring about a synthesis of nationalism and love for all humanity" and that "until religious and social morality became the foundation of political struggle, the latter by itself cannot hope to bring about a comprehensive advancement of our country" and freedom from British occupation (Bhattacharya, 1982). To justify his nationalist point of view, he even suggested militant schemes on Hindu mythology and anti-Muslim social rhetoric. His novels such as *Anandamath*, *Sitaram* and *Mrinalini* were full of anti-Muslim sentiments (Sil, 2002, p.128). This sort of radical Hindutva ideology was further processed and propagated among the Hindu commoners by Savarkar.

Damodar Savarkar published "Essentials of Hindutva" in 1924 and laid out a revised and rather political explanation of Hindutva: from basic mythological explanation of the Hindu homeland to state-level obligations. According to him, an Indian is the only person who claims his *pitribhumi*, which literally means fatherland, and calls it as *punyabhumi* or the holy land literally (Savarkar, 1924, p.43-44). So, if someone had migrated to India and his forefathers were not of Indian origin, he would not fulfill the definition of an Indian: explicitly excluding the Muslim settlers of India who arrived from Central Asia and/or the Middle East. Furthermore, the book noted the essentials of Hindutva as a "commitment to the common *rashtra* (nation), *jati* (caste) and *sanskriti* (culture)" (Savarkar, 1924, p.33-37). In the light of these essentials of Hindutva, the Muslims and the Christians of India who obviously do not share all of the three elements with Hindus have

categorically been left out. The religious symbols and cultural icons of Hinduism were to be identified as national symbols while anything associated with religious minorities as the alien symbols (Battaglia, 2017).

Another leading Hindutva ideologist, Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar even included communist elements in this list of others in his book known as “We Or Our Nationhood Defined” (Golwalkar, 1939, p.89). While continuing with primary thoughts of Savarkar, Golwalkar further explained the political thought of Hindutva by directly rejecting secularism as the idea of Indian nationalism and declaring only *Hindu rashtra* or Hindu nationalism embodies the Hindutva (Golwalkar, 1939). Taking an inspiration from Nazi ideology and Adolf Hitler’s idea of puritan nationalism and national cleansing through holocaust, Golwalkar suggested similar actions to establish a purely Hindu homeland in India through his writings (Puniyani, 2006). Such kind of extremist justifications of national and political cleansing, he successfully sowed the seed of religious communalism in India. He noted that “to keep up the purity of the nation and its culture, Germany shocked the world by her purging the country of the Semitic races – the Jews. National pride at its highest has been manifested here” while suggesting that it is “a good lesson for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by” (Golwalkar, 1939, p.87-88). Similarly, while discussing how the Hindutva-driven political environment would treat the others, he asserts:

“the non-Hindu people in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and revere Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but the glorification of Hindu nation, i.e. they must not only give up their attitude of intolerance and ingratitude towards this land and its age-long traditions, but must also cultivate the positive attitude of love and devotion instead; in one word, they must cease to be foreigners or may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, for less any preferential treatment, not even the citizen's rights” (Golwalkar, 1939, p.104-105).

Golwalkar has openly put forward the Hindutva as a political thought which seeks uniform Hindu religion for all of the Indians, and even by suggesting that non-Hindus should reconvert to Hinduism based on the hypothesis that the forefathers of all Indian people were originally Hindus who had at some later time given up Hinduism and adopted foreign religions like Islam and Christianity (McKean, 1996; Hansen, 1999).

Another prominent leader of Hindutva and the founder of the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, National Volunteer Organization), Keshav Baliram Hedgewar also adopted a similar discourse for defining “us” and “others” in the light of the right-wing Hindu ideology. While

Savarkar was mainly limited to writings only, Hedgewar took some practical steps to provide necessary support for the implementation of Hindutva just like Golwalkar. Hedgewar announced the establishment of the RSS on the occasion of Hindu festival of Dussehra which commemorates the mythological victory of Lord *Ram* over demon *Ravana* to ensure that his organization becomes a spokesperson of every Hindu who holds his religious sentiments close to the heart (Battaglia, 2017). For his motives behind the establishment of the RSS, he declared that he sought spiritual and cultural revival of Hinduism and that cultural and religious legacy of Hinduism must become the primary essence of India's national identity once it gains freedom from Britain (Chitkara, 2004; Goyal, 1979; Kanungo, 2002; Andersen and Damle, 1987). While asserting his notion of Hindutva, Hedgewar said:

“the Hindu culture is the life-breath of Hindustan. It is therefore clear that if Hindustan is to be protected, we should first nourish the Hindu culture... It is therefore the duty of every Hindu to do his best to consolidate Hindu society. The Sangh is just carrying out this supreme task” (Kumar and Muralidhar, 1997, p.23-24).

In other words, he was in complete agreement with Bankim Chandra, V.D. Savarkar and M.S. Golwalkar that Hindu identity, nationhood, culture, religion and symbols should be the supreme and core essentials of India and a well-organized political movement was necessary to implement the agenda of Hindutva.

Communalism or Hindu-Muslim riots in India have been another important aspect which served as a fuel to the propagation and justification of the Hindutva movement. Most of such incidents are mainly based on the historic interpretations of past events provided by the both sides, however, this notion of hostility, horror and suspicion among Hindu and Muslim sections have also incorporated new ideological standings and political discourses in the Indian society (Thapar, 1981, p.45 and p.51; Pandey, 1990, p.6). The leaders of Hindutva also benefited from such a situation and painted the mythological characters of Hinduism as their heroes and portrayed Muslims as villains and foreign invaders (Qureshi, 1989, p.142). In the light of Hindu mythology, Golwalkar even equated the holy motherland of India to *Vishnu-patni* and called on his followers to worship it and show the highest level of devotion (Golwalkar, 1966, p.5-6). He also maintained that

“we [the Hindus] have been in undisputed and undisturbed possession of this land for over 8 or even 10 thousand years before the land was invaded by any foreign race... we Hindus came into this land from nowhere, but are indigenous children of the soil always, from times immemorial and are natural masters of the country” (Golwalkar, 1939, p.10, 12 and 13).

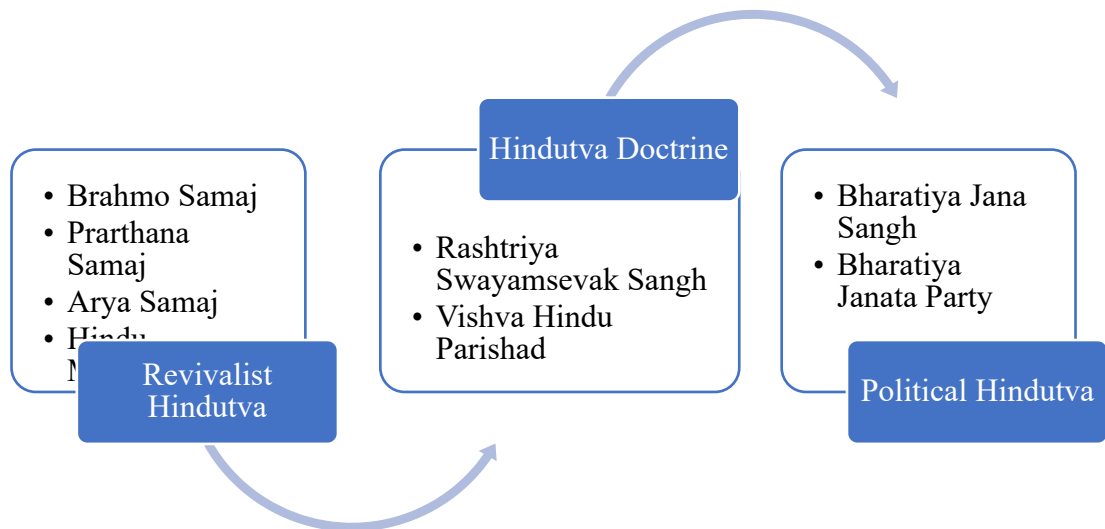
He is effectively making his point that Muslims were foreign invaders and the Hindus were the aboriginal sons of the soil who were required to cleanse their motherland of the foreign elements and express ultimate devotion to the goddess India. The regular celebrations of religious festivals and their popular display in India easily provided the platforms for exhibition of communal hatred and violence towards Muslims. The RSS founder Hedgewar even himself personally engaged in communalism and riots. Even his idea of the creation of the RSS was also partially inspired by the Hindu-Muslim clash which erupted in his hometown Nagpur in 1923 (Battaglia, 2017). After some years, Hedgewar himself led a procession of Hindu devotees while playing a drum outside mosques. This provocation led to riots which killed 22 people and injured another hundreds (Battaglia, 2017). Christophe Jaffrelot (1996) notes that just like its founder, the RSS also played a role in violent events and provided every chance for communal conflict in India.

The presence of these communal and divisive sentiments in India, which showed two major sections of Indian population on two opposing poles, helped the pro-Hindutva movements become more popular and powerful. Even within the Hindus, the presence of a caste system which divided the society into four segments also caused another type of strife in the apparently homogenous group. Through interpretation of Hindu mythology, the use of historic events during the invasions of India, antagonistic standings of Hinduism and Islam and nostalgic conception of Hindu revivalism, the Hindutva ideology quickly became a social, cultural and eventually a political school of thought during the last two centuries. This journey was largely dominated and shaped by the RSS, however, during the colonial period, and after the independence several other movements and political parties made considerable contributions to Hindutva. In the following section, we will quickly review the significant movements and parties which played key roles in dominance of Hindutva-driven discourse in Indian society, leading to the eventual emergence of BJP and its electoral successes.

## **2.2. FACES OF MODERN HINDUTVA**

In this section, this study will discuss the leading movements which shaped Hindutva as a political thought over the time: starting with the early revivalist approach in Hinduism to redefinition of Indian nationalism mixed with Hinduism and finally the transformation of India as a Hindu homeland with homogenous religion, culture, language and national standings. Among these organizations, one should refer to the following: the Arya Samaj movement served as the early launch-pad of Hindutva's political cultivation; the RSS became the ultimate ideological center of Hindutva, the BJS emerged as the representative of the RSS in electoral politics of independent

India, while the BJP proved itself as the ultimate dogma-based political face of the Hindutva. The countrywide strong presence of other sister movements and representative bodies also served as a catalyst during this whole process. This network is also helpful for the Hindutva movement during the days of communal strife. The members of these related organizations actively participated in events like demolition of *Babri Mosque* (1992) and Gujarat riots (2002).



**Figure 1: Development of Hindutva Movement**

### 2.2.1. Arya Samaj Movement

*Arya Samaj*, which literally means the Society of Aryans, was formally founded by Dayananda Saraswati in 1875 and it can be acknowledged as the first fundamentalist movement of Hinduism during the modern age (Rai, 1915). Although it has not been officially related to the Hindutva movement, the Arya Samaj movement served as an early precursor to some of the ideologies such as Hindutva itself during the 20th century. The scholars have used terminologies such as Hindu Revivalism, Hindu Renaissance, neo-Hinduism and Semitized Hinduism while referring to this movement and the consequences of its activities in colonial India (Jones, 1976). According to Vasudha Dalmia (1997), the Arya Samaj movement sought “nationalization of Hinduism traditions”, as the founder of the movement Dayananda Saraswati asserted that Hinduism’s sacred books (the Vedas) as the first revelation to humanity. This convention of archaic nature of

Hinduism and the Vedas being the primordial revelation has over the time developed the conception of Hindu supremacism and the ideological growth of movements like the Arya Samaj.

Dayananda Saraswati was primarily triggered by the birth of the “European Aryan Myth” during the 18th century and subsequent discoveries of close relationship between archaic Latin and Greek languages with Sanskrit and Avestan (Mosse, 1966; Schwab 1984). This led to the formation of a hypothesis that Greeks and Indians had common linguistic origin (Trautmann, 1997). Afterwards, Friedrich Max Muller claimed that the earliest homeland of Aryans was somewhere in Asia rather than Europe (Trautmann, 1997). As a result of these developments, the ideological cultivation of the idea that actually Aryanism should be the basis of both Indian and Hindu nationalism (Thapar, 1981). In other words, the formation of the Arya Samaj movement was inspired by the Orientalist scholarship in the fields of philology, mythology and ethnology of both the European and the Indians. The local conditions of India which was a British colony then might have also played a crucial role in conception of this ideological movement at some level.

Dayananda Saraswati amalgamated the concept of Aryanism with the ideals of patriotism to seek religious and nationalist revival of the Hindus of India (Leopold, 1970). He believed that Aryan people were actually the original inhabitants of the early world who initially lived in Tibet and then afterwards relocated to the mainland in India (called as *Aryavarta* in the texts), and transformed into the best worldly nation. He further asserted that the Aryans also formed a kingdom to rule the world late until the mythological war called the Mahabharata. About the Aryans, he further claimed that they were noble and virtuous who followed the Vedic religion (Thapar, 1981). Dayananda Saraswati’s idea of primordial arising of Aryans was also endorsed by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (Poliakov, 1971, p.186). Similarly, the Vedas also mention that a group of fair-skinned warriors known as the Aryans invaded different regions and ruled (Prentiss, 2003). Also, Adolf Hitler’s regime claimed to pursue the ethnic cleansing to revive a pure Aryan race while justifying the Holocaust in interwar period in Europe. However, he strongly believed that the Aryans were of European origin (Bhatt, 2001). Contrary to this, Dayananda Saraswati believed that Indian Hindus were actually the superior Aryan race and these ideas became the eventual foundation of modern Hindu nationalism or afterwards renamed as the Hindutva: need for independence of India from the British to revive the nation of Hindus or the Aryans (Bhatt, 2001).

Based on this primary motive to revive the ultimate Hindu homeland, the Arya Samaj movement built a network of intellectuals and ideological adversaries. It emphasized the superiority of the Hindu language, arranged agitations for cow protection and the revival of Hindu symbolism for

both political and religious purposes (Dalmia, 1997). The idea that all of the people originally living in the Indian mainland were actually of the Aryan origin and they had the right to become Hindus again was propagated. It was based on the idea that some Aryans had embraced Christianity and Islam as their religions and they could always re-convert to Hinduism. Such rituals of “purification” were undertaken by the Arya Samaj’s conversion council also known as the *shuddhisabhas* (Bhatt, 2001, p.20). The scholarly literature also confirms that the proselytization activities of the Arya Samaj movement also led to Hindu-Muslim clashes in different regions of Punjab during the late 1990s (Dalmia, 1997; Bhatt, 2001). The publication of some Islamophobic content displayed Islam as a corrupt and sexually perverse religion which benefitted from theft, deception, war and violence for its spread in distinctive sections of the world (Bhatt, 2001).

In short, the nature and scope of the Arya Samaj movement might not be an equivalent of the ultimate Hindutva ideology but it did provide the necessary ideological ground to the revivalist elements among Hindu nationalists. The very concept of the Hindu supremacism afterwards paved the way for the struggle to protect the ethos and spirit of Hinduism and a movement for the formation of a nationalist Hindu state in the light of the teachings of Golwalkar and Savarkar. The Arya Samaj movement can be considered as the ideological heartland and initial trajectory of the movement that followed it during the 20th century for further development and promotion of the Hindutva doctrine.

### **2.2.2. Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh**

The RSS is considered to be the largest and the ultra-right-wing Hindu organization in India and around the world. It was started by K.B. Hedgewar in 1925 in Nagpur city which became the center of Hindu-Muslim communal conflict during the early 1920s (Noorani, 2000). Before the establishment of the RSS, Hedgewar was also a member of the *Hindu Mahasbha* movement that was widely known for its anti-Muslim activities, and he used to actively participate in the protests held on this issue. The Hindu-Muslim clashes of Nagpur have been stated in Hedgewar’s biographical publications in these words: “because of the in-built fear of Muslims among the Hindus, the band troupes sometimes shirked to play before the mosque” and in those worrying circumstances, he “himself would take over the drums and rouse the dormant manliness of Hindus” (Despande and Ramswamy, 1981). On the basis of a similar mindset, he founded the RSS which viewed Muslims as the “threatening others” and vowed to train youth for service to Hinduism and India (Andersen, 1972). Obviously, the service to Hinduism also included the kind



of service Hedgewar himself undertook in late 1920s when he led a procession of Hindu devotees and playing a drum outside mosques, as a result causing a riot which killed 22 people (Battaglia, 2017).

It was originally the teachings of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar which inspired Hedgewar to establish the RSS. Savarkar coined the term of Hindutva and mainstreamed it through his writings, while urging the Hindus to reconstruct the mythical Vedic Golden Age of Hinduism. He proposed the idea to treat the Indians of Muslim and Christian faiths to be treated as subordinates and even suggested them re-convert to Hinduism as they were originally the members of Hindu community just a few generations ago (Savarkar, 1989). At another occasion, he argued:

“Hindus are bound together not only by the ties of the love we to bear for a common fatherland and by common blood... but also by the tie of the common homage we pay to our great civilization –our Hindu culture, language, Sanskrit, which has been the chosen means of expression and preservation of that culture, of all that was best and worth-preserving in the history of our race” (Savarkar, 1989).

He argued that Urdu was a foreign language in India which was a hurdle in the way of India’s unity and that only Hindi could serve as the unifying factor in India (Jaffrelot, 1996, p.97). These ideas also affected the RSS as an organization and movement. Jaffrelot (1996, p.51) recognizes the RSS as “an Indian version of fascism”. Also there is clear evidence that the RSS established close contacts with the global fascist parties and regimes of Europe. In 1930, the RSS leader B.S. Moonje visited Italy and met with fascist leader Mussolini. Golwalkar even relied on the definition of a nation as proposed by infamous German Nazi writer known as J.K. Bluntschili:

“It is a union of masses of men of different occupation and social status, in a hereditary society of common spirit, feeling and race bound together especially by a language...which gives them a sense of unity and distinction from all foreigners” (Golwalkar, 1939, p.19).

As Savarkar maintains, Muslims and Christians are “foreign elements” who have “their holy land far off in Arabia and Palestine [and] their mythology and Prophets and heroes are not the children of this soil” (Savarkar, 1989, p.113). Similarly, he called Muslims as a problem of India just like the Jews in Germany (Casolari, 2000, p.224). Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, who ultimately became second head of the RSS organization after Hedgewar in 1940, also shared the dogma and movement of Hedgewar and Savarkar. He categorically endorsed the treatment of Muslims and Christians as subordinate and foreign elements of India, urged the unification of Indian nation by

a single race, culture and language, and even declared the Hinduism code of Manu better than democracy and the wisest law of mankind (Golwalkar, 1939, p.45-46).

The RSS considers phenomena such as Indian nationalism and Hindu culture to be the equivalent to its thought of Hindu nationalism, and to practically prove that the RSS provides misinterpretation of Indian history. By doing so, the RSS ignores the fundamental process of cultural development where various religious and ethnic groups such as Buddhism, Jainism, Islam and Christianity also played a crucial role to shape and re-shape the contemporary traditions and cultural practices of India and they were shaped and reshaped each other through continuous interactions throughout history. Challenging the quest of the RSS for homogeneity in India, one may question: “whether India developed as a melting pot of cultures or only remained a salad bowl” (Panikkar, 2002).

Despite their repeated conception of an independent India for the revival of mythological Bharat, neither Golwalkar nor Hedgewar ever joined any movement against the British rule, and kept themselves busy with the character building of Hindus only (Andersen and Damle, 1987; Bhatt, 2001). Lal Krishna Advani, who joined the RSS in 1942 and was among the founding members of the BJP afterwards, also expressed similar views by saying that

“I joined [RSS] about the same time [1942] as the ‘quit India’ movement...but my motivation was the conviction that India would never attain independence by the methods the Congress was commanding... the RSS approach used to be that unless we first build, form a nucleus of people willing to sacrifice their life for the country, India would not become independent” (Jaffrelot, 1996, p.72).

The literature of the RSS also comprises convoluted ideological language and identifies itself as a non-political movement which rather focuses on social and cultural activism (Andersen and Damle, 1987; Bhatt, 2001). However, the apolitical role might have evolved into subtle intervention in the political affairs of the ideologically-aligned political groups and parties including the BJP. Indeed the BJP’s prominent leader Kalyan Singh has been quoted to say the following: “I have spent a greater part of my life in this organization [RSS] and I can say the right from the distribution of election tickets in BJP to selecting cabinet ministers, it is only the RSS which calls the shots” (Noorani, 2000, p.12).

In order to gain the current religious, social, cultural and political influence, the RSS undertook decades of struggle, structure development and expansion of its branches to train the youth for the protection of Hindu religion and culture which was primary reason behind Hedgewar’s

decision to establish the RSS. Among these well-trained RSS workers, the *pracharaks* have been considered as the most effective members of the RSS as they dedicate their whole life for the organization. Most of them would give up their professional life despite having acquired higher education. The *pracharaks* also do not marry throughout their life, so that the most important purpose for them remains their service to the RSS. Walter Andersen and Shridhar Damle (1987) argue that this very cadre is the backbone of the “brotherhood in saffron”. Saffron is the color of the RSS flag and is also considered as the sacred and representative color of Hinduism. In this structure of the Saffron Brotherhood, the *shakas* or branches play a central and dominant role for the strength of the organizational network. The *shakas* regularly (usually everyday) display the strength of the RSS in public through rallies, cultural events and fitness-related activities. According to The Times of India (2015), the number of the RSS *shakas* has dramatically increased during the last few decades: in 1975 the number stood at 8,500 which jumped to 20,000 in 1982 and surpassed 51,000 in 2004, and continues to grow under the current BJP-led regime since 2014. The 2019 annual report of the RSS claimed to have 84,877 *shakhas* across India (Panigrahi, 2019). Similarly the total number of the RSS is also estimated to be more than three million. Apart from its volunteers who are direct members, the RSS also maintains a countrywide network of ideologically-aligned organizations which is referred as the *Sangh Parivar* (Bhatt, 2001, p.113). Hundreds of such organizations ranging from student unions, farmer associations to trader representative bodies and political parties (i.e. the BJP) sum up the actual ideological supporters of the RSS to many more millions.

Interestingly, the RSS kept functioning in India during the period of British colonial rule and the start of the independence-era without any constitution or charter. Only the teachings of its leaders provided necessary guidelines to the workers about the agenda and goals of the organization for decades. It was only right after the cold-blooded murder of Mahatma Gandhi by a former RSS group member Nathuram Godse on January 30, 1948 and brief ban on the organization when Indian Home Minister Sardar Bhai Patel asked the RSS leaders to get a written and formal constitution for the RSS to lift the ban (Jaffrelot, 1996). Patel mentioned these developments in correspondence to the RSS leader S.P. Mookerjee:

“As regards the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha the case relating to Gandhiji’s murder is subjudice and I should not like to say anything about the participation of the two organizations, but our reports do confirm that, as a result of the activities of these two bodies, particularly the former, an atmosphere was created in the country in which such a ghastly tragedy became possible” (Noorani, 2015).

Other than a close connection with the murder of India's founding father of the nation, the RSS believed that the division of the united India and the formation of Pakistan was result of the unnecessary softness towards Muslims expressed by leading Congress leaders Gandhi, Nehru and Patel (Hansen, 1999). The RSS also initially objected to India's decision to adopt the tricolor national flag. On July 22, 1947 when the Indian national flag was approved by the Indian Constitutional Assembly, the Organiser, the RSS publication, stated:

“The people who have come to power by the kick of fate may give in our hands the Tricolor but it [will] never be respected and owned by Hindus. The word three is in itself an evil, and a flag having three colors will certainly produce a very bad psychological effect and is injurious to a country” (Islam, 2006).

The RSS chief Golwalkar also expressed similar concerns in his book *Bunch of Thoughts* by saying:

“Our leaders have set up a new flag for the country. Why did they do so? It just is a case of drifting and imitating ... Ours is an ancient and great nation with a glorious past. Then, had we no flag of our own? Had we no national emblem at all these thousands of years? Undoubtedly we had. Then why this utter void, this utter vacuum in our minds” (Golwalkar, 1966).

The RSS also refused to accept the Constitution of India initially as it did not mention “Man's Laws” declared in ancient Hindu script *Manusmriti*. The Organiser reacted through an editorial publication sent out on November 30, 1949:

“But in our constitution, there is no mention of that unique constitutional development in ancient Bharat... To this day his laws as enunciated in the *Manusmriti* excite the admiration of the world and elicit spontaneous obedience and conformity. But to our constitutional pundits that means nothing” (Hadiz, 2016).

In his *Bunch of Thoughts*, Golwalkar once again maintained:

“Our Constitution too is just a cumbersome and heterogeneous piecing together of various articles from various Constitutions of Western countries. It has absolutely nothing, which can be called our own. Is there a single word of reference in its guiding principles as to what our national mission is and what our keynote in life is? No!” (Golwalkar, 1966).

Attacks against minorities and engagement in violent activities are other notorious references of the RSS. Not only such acts of violence are consistent but also confirmed by the different

investigating bodies including the judicial commissions. Justice P. Venugopal, who headed the inquiry commission after the 1982 communal violence in Kanyakumari, stated: “The RSS adopts a militant and aggressive attitude and sets itself up as the champion of what it considers to be the rights of Hindus against minorities” (Engineer, 1995). Similarly, the Judicial Commissions formed to investigate the violent incidents in Sambhal (1980), Tellicherry (1971), Moradabad (1980) and Aligarh (1978) declared that the RSS was continuously inviting and encouraging violence against Muslims (Siddiqui, 2016). A similar involvement of the RSS was also found to be a primary factor behind the attack and finally the destruction of the Babri Mosque in 1992 and also the infamous anti-Muslim riots of 2002 in Gujarat state (Engineer, 1995 and 2002). It is also important to be mentioned here that the workers of the right-wing nationalist Hindu political parties including Shiv Sena, BJS, VHP and even the BJP are also among co-accused in most of these incidents of anti-Muslim violence across India. In the following part, the thesis will exclusively examine how the BJS and the BJP have provided the necessary political face to the Hindutva movement after the independence of India.

### **2.2.3. Bharatiya Jana Sangh**

The ideological and historical roots of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) are closely connected to the Hindu-revivalist movements in colonial India. After the independence of India in 1947 and few early years of ideological struggle, the BJS was announced by the associates of the Sangh Family or Sangh Parivar; a family of ideologically-aligned extreme right-wing Hindu organizations like the RSS, Hindu Mahasabha and Vishva Hindu Parishad; to become the political face of their struggle (Lahiry, 2005; Kanungo, 2006; Jaffrelot, 2013). When the BJS was founded in 1951, the ideological leaders of the Hindu-revivalist movements who played key roles from the 1870s to the 1920s became the key office bearers of this political party (Lahiry, 2005). The BJS adopted the ideology as well as the structure of the RSS as most of the party workers and leaders were directly associated with the RSS including Deendayal Upadhyaya, who continued to serve as the party's general secretary till 1968 (Jaffrelot, 2013). Upadhyaya ensured that the RSS remained the center of power in the circle of the right-wing Hindutva movement. He adopted exactly the same pattern of local units known as *shakha* to strengthen the political presence of the BJS. The BJS also replicated the discourse and extreme Hinduist dogma of the RSS and Sangh Parivar. Christophe Jaffrelot (2013) argues that the BJS soon became a niche party which was more interested in spreading its ideology at the grass-root level instead of winning elections.

Ideologically, just like the RSS, the BJS saw the whole Indian sub-continent, including the provinces which gained independence as a separate country named Pakistan, was just one country and that the idea of partition was fundamentally flawed (Smith, 1966). Furthermore, the party also sought the regeneration of Hindu culture for the revival of Hindu nationalism, and eventually in 1954 it also adopted the stance of the RSS that the Hindi language as the sole national language of Indian state and announced to not support English or Urdu in India (Smith, 1966; Jaffrelot, 2013). The party even opposed other regional languages and the creation of states on the basis of local languages and wanted to abolish them due to their potential danger of further partition (Jaffrelot, 2013).

In its first election manifesto, the BJS excessively used *Sanskrit* words, i.e. *Bharat* instead of India, *Bharat Varsha* for the land of India, *Bharatiya Rashtra* for the Indian nation, and *Bharatiya* for the Indian national which clearly referred to the “one nation, one religion, one culture and one language” motto of the RSS and the Hindutva movement. In order to present itself as a true protector of the Hindus and Hindutva ideology, the party also declared that it wanted to gain power to correct the policies adopted by the INC as they were outrightly detrimental for the Hindus and the Hindutva (Jaffrelot, 2013). The decision of the Congress government to include article 370 in the Indian constitution saw the strongest opposition about the Hindutva leaders as it ensured autonomous status for the disputed Kashmir region. The BJS announced to completely integrate Kashmir into India by abrogating the article 370 in the electoral manifesto as well (Smith, 1966; Lahiry, 2005; Kanungo, 2006; Jaffrelot, 2007 and 2013). Other key policies opposed by the BJS were status-quo on Muslim sharia laws’ usage as the personal laws for Muslim citizens, reforms of Hinduist personal laws as per secular principles, the freedom of cow slaughter and possibility to convert from one religion to another as per the personal choice of the citizens (Lahiry, 2005; Jaffrelot, 2007). The proponents of the Hindutva movement considered all these policies of the INC as a direct threat to their ideology and hence sought to correct them by political means.

However, the BJS failed to score a considerable quantity of seats in the parliament in every election held till the late 1970s. As a result, the BJS leaders started relying on usage of more communal language, agitation of Hindu religious matters and violent protests to seek fulfillment of their demands. In 1966, the BJS decided to exploit cow slaughter as an election issue with the help of other Hindutva organizations like the RSS and the VHP. They tabled a bill in the parliament to ban the cow slaughter, and meanwhile took out hundreds of people to the streets which ended in an assault on the parliament’s building and killing of eight protesters which were later portrayed as the martyrs of the movement (Jaffrelot, 2007 and 2013). The BJS leaders also

built a strong narrative on revision of the Indian history textbooks and argued removal of the mentions such as “Aryan invasions” as they believed that Aryan people were the aboriginal sons of the soil and that other elements were the foreigners in India (Jaffrelot, 2013).

Due to the continuous electoral failures of the BJS, the ideologues of the Hindutva movement moved to abolish the political group and merge it into a larger electoral coalition which could challenge the INC in a more effective way. In 1977, the Janata Party (JP) was formed by all of the anti-Congress factions of right, left and centre parties of India; however, in 1980 the JP also witnessed a split among the diversified political groups. As a result, the BJP was established by the key leaders of the BJS and former office holders of the RSS to advance the movement of Hindutva in India.

#### **2.2.4. Bharatiya Janata Party**

The versatile coalition of the Janata Party initially allowed its members to simultaneously hold the membership of the RSS, however, in order to maintain a more secular and election-oriented image, the party announced to ban dual membership in April 1980. This sparked major division among the leaders of the Janata Party. The former members of the BJS and the RSS then announced the formation of the BJP in 1980 to secure the ideological and political goals of their predecessor organizations and Hindutva movement (Jaffrelot, 2007). Atal B. Vajpayee and L. Krishna Advani were the two founding leaders of the BJP. Vajpayee became India’s Prime Minister afterwards while Advani held key official posts. They were both former members and outright supporters of the RSS and were considered as the powerful mouthpiece of the Hindutva ideology.

Despite the BJP’s strong connection with the RSS and the Sangh Parivar, immediately after its foundation, it aimed to introduce a more liberal and progressive agenda compared to the INC which largely supported the socialist agenda. The BJP committed to introduce a free market which would be independent of bureaucratic control and follow a more streamlined tax system. Moreover, it depicted itself as an anti-corruption political party which sought the establishment of a more transparent and accountable government system (Kim, 2006). The BJP’s more than 50 percent of national and state-level office bearers were directly associated with the RSS since its foundation, however, the party decided to introduce a moderate political agenda to attract a wider population instead of its limited appeal to the extreme right-wing Hindus (Guha, 2007). The BJP tried its best to avoid using any direct reference to the Hindutva movement in its manifestos for years. It was only in 1996 when the BJP publicly declared Hindutva as the guiding ideology of

its members and workers (Ammassari, 2018). Prior to this, the BJP merely relied on subtle messages like “Oneness of all Indians” and “National Integrity” to exhibit the “one nation, one language, one culture and one religion” slogan associated with the RSS, and also adopted the lotus flower which is considered as a sacred flower of Hinduism as its electoral sign. However, the party had openly declared to build a Hindu mandir on the location of the *Babri* mosque in the party’s 1991 electoral manifesto (Kim, 2006). Such efforts highlight that the BJP was struggling to attract a wider population of the voters while simultaneously maintaining its close relationship with the Hindutva movement at times implicitly and sometimes explicitly.

Another reason behind the BJP’s slow but reluctant inclination to eventually claim the Hindutva movement was the internal circumstances of India where separatist movement was on rise in the disputed Kashmir region and a similar wave of violence was recorded in the Punjab region where the Congress government conducted massive anti-militancy operations in 1984. In those years, the Congress was also relying on nationalist sentiments to garner public support for anti-separatist operations and also electoral victories (Kim, 2006). In the general election of 1984, the BJP raced to win only two seats in the Indian Lok Sabha, the lower house of the parliament, and this led to a huge internal realization to reconsider the BJP’s decision to pursue the mere progressive electoral agenda (Malik and Singh, 1992; Guha, 2007). Such conditions provided perfectly fertile ground for the exploitation of nationalist sentiments and revival of the Hindutva movement across India. The same year, the BJP appointed L.K. Advani as its president who transformed the party as a strong political standing for the *Ram Janmabhoomi* or the movement, which sought the construction of Ram temple. This movement had already been supported by the other Hindutva organizations including the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the RSS. It aimed to construct a temple of Lord Ram at the site of the *Babri* Mosque which was constructed on this place after the destruction of the temple by the Mughal Emperor Babur (1527) according to some Hindu leaders who argued that it was the birthplace of Lord Ram (Guha, 2007; Kim, 2006; Jaffrelot, 2007). This movement witnessed a massive surge during 1991 and 1992, resulting in a rally of over 100,000 activists of the BJP, the RSS and the VHP to Ayodhya on 6th December, 1992: the *Babri* Mosque was attacked and destroyed to the ground by the angered workers (Guha, 2007). In response to this stark violent incident, the Hindu-Muslim violent incident erupted in all areas of the country and more than 2,000 people were killed as a result (Jaffrelot, 2007; Guha, 2007). Many leading



BJP leaders like L.K. Advani, A.B. Vajpayee and Narendra Modi<sup>9</sup> were also among those who attacked the mosque in Ayodhya.

This kind of extreme Hindu activism and the BJP's revived association with the VHP and the RSS, however, resulted in increased support for the BJP among the Hindu majority. The BJP formed a right-wing alliance to contest the 1991 *Lok Sabha* election and openly used the network of the *Sangh Parivar* organizations. The right-wing Hindu parties acquired their first ever major electoral victory as a result and grabbed 120 seats out of 545 total seats. Later on, the same kind of Hindutva activism and the strong on-ground network of the *Sangh Parivar* earned the BJP 161 and 182 seats in the general elections of 1996 and 1998 respectively. Finally, in 1998 the BJP's National Democratic Alliance (NDA) won 303 seats and A. Bihari Vajpayee took over the position of India's Prime Minister: the head of a BJP-led coalition government which is largely known for aggressive defense policy and neo-liberal economic reforms (Sen, 2005). However, the government's policies were marred by the notorious Gujarat riots of 2002, which had resulted in killing of more than 2,000 Muslims. Incumbent Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was then the head of state government in Gujarat and he was among those accused of initiation and encouragement of the attacks against Muslims (Jaffrelot, 2013).

Unexpectedly, the same Narendra Modi became a cause for the BJP's revival in the form of an electoral victory in 2014. The analysts have argued that massive fondness of Narendra Modi and a series of scandals of the Congress government was the key reasons behind this victory (Diwakar, 2015). Modi's past affairs with the RSS and active participation in the Hindutva movement placed him in a favorable position against the INC which was struggling with image problems after being tagged as a dynastic political party (Bobbio, 2012). Scholars have also argued that Modi's past association with the Hindutva movement and imagery as the "Development Man or *Vikas Purush*" led to his 2014 victory (Kaul, 2017). The 2014 election manifesto of the BJP once again carried the pictures of S.P. Mookerjee and Deendayal Upadhaya to reclaim its strong ideological

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<sup>9</sup> Narendra Damodardas Modi is the current and 14th Prime Minister of India who first held this office in 2014 and was reelected in 2019. He hails from India's Gujarat state where he held the office of the Chief Minister from 2001 to 2014. He has decades-long close association with the *Sangh Parivar* of the Hindutva movement. He was just eight when he first started attending processions of the RSS. He frequently mentions his memories of childhood as a volunteer of the RSS and a teaboy who shared the burden of his family. Modi was honored with a lifetime membership of the RSS once he formally undertook his political journey from the platform of the BJP. He is said to have participated in the violent events of 1992 which resulted in the destruction of the *Babri* mosque. His rule as the Chief Minister of Gujarat state was also marred by the 2002 Gujarat riots when more than 2,000 Muslims were killed by the Hindu extremists.

connection with the BJS and the RSS. It once again reiterated to look for “all possibilities... to facilitate the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya” and to introduce “necessary legal framework... to protect and promote cow and its progeny” (BJP Election Manifesto, 2014, p.41). Interestingly, the manifesto ended with the slogan of “*Vande Mataram*” (BJP Election Manifesto, 2014, p.42) to refer to the BJP’s ideological and historical connection with the earliest proponent of the Hindutva movement, namely Bankim Chandra Chatterjee.

Additionally, in the 2019 election manifesto, the BJP announced that it was committed to annulling Article 370 of the Constitution of India to end the autonomous status of the disputed Kashmir region as it had demanded the BJS immediately after the independence. It announced the “enactment of the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB)” to issue Indian citizenship to the religious minority group from all neighboring countries except the Muslims and also “complete the National Register of Citizens (NRC)” under which all of the citizens will have to present proof of their Indian citizenship through legal documents (BJP Election Manifesto, 2019, p.11 and 12). Once again under the NRC, only Muslim non-registered citizens will be affected and possibly repatriated or placed in concentration camps as the people of all other beliefs will be eligible to get citizenship under the CAB or the CAA. For the revival and preservation of Hinduist religion and culture, the BJP announced to “facilitate the expeditious construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya... conserve and promote all culturally, religiously and spiritually significant heritage sites... [make] effort on promotion of Sanskrit” (BJP Election Manifesto, 2019, p.36). It also announced to ensure a “Uniform Civil Code” (BJP Election Manifesto, 2019, p.37) across India to put an end to the legal framework which allows Muslims to follow the Islamic shari’ah laws as their personal civil code. In short, the 2019 election manifesto of the BJP enlists all of the policies to reform India in the light of guidelines provided by the Hindu revivalists or the Hindutva movement as discussed earlier in this chapter, to prove itself the ultimate political face of the Hindutva doctrine. The next section of the chapter discusses several key features of the Hindutva movement to develop a debate on its populist nature in order to reconnect to the main subject of the thesis.

### **2.3. HINDUTVA AS A POPULIST IDEA**

In the previous chapter, this study discussed a variety of concepts related to populism and highlighted a few features that are commonly shared by the different schools of thoughts which treat populism as an alternative political instrument, thin-ideology and a pathological discourse. These elements included “the people”, “the others” or “the elite”, “ailing existing system”, “a

charismatic leader” and “a reluctantly political” but well-built “public discourse”. The leading scholars have a partial agreement that populist leaders and movements benefit from all or some of these features by engagement of a certain class of population (Di Tella, 1965) through an establishment of a strong direct communication with the people (Di Tella, 1997) and the use of divisive techniques i.e. us vs. them (Taggart, 2000) and ostracizing others (Mazzoleni & Bracciale, 2018) to mobilize the voters (Kenny, 2017) and ensure their political gains. This thesis also assumes that the Hindutva movement or doctrine exhibits almost all of these populist features over the last few centuries, and this section extensively provides an insight to the populist aspect of the Hindutva ideology.

### 2.3.1. Defining “The People” and “The Others”

As Cas Mudde (2016) argues, populist movements require two internally-homogeneous but externally-antagonizing groups which represent “the pure people” and “the corrupt elite or others”. The father of the modern-day Hindutva movement, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar also clearly identified “the people” of this ideological struggle in his book “Essentials of Hindutva” laying down definition of an Indian: someone who recognizes India as their fatherland (*pitribhumi*) and treat it like *punyabhumi* or the holy land (Savarkar, 1924, p.43-44). Similarly, he adds that Hindutva is a movement of commitment to a common *rashtra* (the nation), *jati* (the caste) and *sanskriti* (the culture) (Savarkar, 1924, p.33-37). Further adding to this, the founding father of the RSS, namely K. B. Hedgewar said the cultural and religious legacy of Hinduism must become the primary essence of India’s national identity once it gains freedom from Britain (Chitkara, 2004; Goyal, 1979; Kanungo, 2002; Andersen and Damle, 1987). Hedgewar’s conception of “the people” was even clearer than that of Savarkar:

“the Hindu culture is the life-breath of Hindustan. It is therefore clear that if Hindustan is to be protected, we should first nourish the Hindu culture... It is therefore the duty of every Hindu to do his best to consolidate Hindu society” (Kumar and Muralidhar, 1997, p.23-24).

Another proponent of Hindutva, Bankim Chandra also maintained that “only Hinduism could bring about a synthesis of nationalism” in India (Bhattacharya, 1982). In the words of the RSS ideological leader Golwalkar, the conception of “the people” states that

“we [the Hindus] have been in undisputed and undisturbed possession of this land for over 8 or even 10 thousand years before the land was invaded by any foreign race... we Hindus

came into this land from nowhere, but are indigenous children of the soil always, from times immemorial and are natural masters of the country” (Golwalkar, 1939).

In other words, in order to provide the populism-based definition of “the people” in the light of the Hindutva doctrine, Bankim Chandra, Golwalkar, Savarkar and Hedgewar have an outright agreement that Hindu identity, nationhood, culture, religion and symbols are the essential elements carried by “the people”. And with the definition of “the people”, “the others” of the Hindutva doctrine also get defined to be as the ones who migrated to India from any foreign land and those who do not explicitly follow the cultural and religious symbols and rituals of the Hinduism: the Muslim settlers of India who belonged to the Central Asian or Middle Eastern countries originally and the people who quit Hinduism to convert to some other religion (Muslims and Christians of India). Savarkar clearly maintains that Muslims and Christians are “foreign elements” in India who have “their holy land is far off in Arabia and Palestine [and] their mythology and Prophets and heroes are not the children of this soil” (Savarkar, 1989, p.113).

The presence of “antagonism” between “the people” and “the others”, as asserted by Cas Mudde (2016), is also quite visible in the Hindutva literature as the leaders of Hindutva often referred to the mythological characters of Hinduism as their heroes and portrayed Muslims as villains and foreign invaders in their teachings (Qureshi, 1989, p.142). For example, Bankim Chandra wrote a number of fictional writings based on mythological images of Hindu lords and antagonistic characters of Hindus and Muslims, authored anti-Muslim *Bande Mataram* poem (Chaudhuri, 1951) and even suggested militant schemes based on Hindu mythology to fire the anti-Muslim social rhetoric (Sil, 2002). Similarly, Savarkar termed Christianity and Islam as alien elements of India (Savarkar, 1924) and Golwalkar further added communist elements also to this list (Golwalkar, 1939).

Interestingly, the Hindutva leaders also explicitly explained the kind of treatment “the others” should expect while living in India. For example, while appreciating the horrific events of the Holocaust, Golwalkar declared it to be: “a good lesson for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by” (Golwalkar, 1939). He also rejected secularism as an idea of Indian nationalism and declared that only *Hindu rashtra* or Hindu nationalism embodies Hindutva (Golwalkar, 1939). He further suggests “the others” that

“the non-Hindu people in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and revere the Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but the glorification of Hindu nation i.e. they must not only give up their attitude of intolerance and ingratitude towards this land and its age-long traditions, but must also cultivate the positive attitude of

love and devotion instead; in one word, they must cease to be foreigners or may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, for less any preferential treatment, not even the citizen's rights" (Golwalkar, 1939, p.104-105).

Most importantly, these definitions of "the people", "the others" and the presence of "antagonism" among them also remains relevant to the political case of India under the rule of the latest and contemporary political face of the Hindutva, the BJP, as it has declared the Hindutva as the guiding ideology for its members and workers since 1996 (Ammassari, 2018). Its electoral manifestos carry the mentions, references and pictures of the proponents of Hindutva doctrine described as the light bearers for the BJP's politics.

### **2.3.2. The Ailing System and Its Solutions**

The proponents of the Hindutva movement, even from the very initial days of their struggle, asserted that the existing political and social structure of India was problematic and it needed a pathological solution which embodied their very movement. Taggart claimed that populism arises in a society where several conditions are met: a sense of crisis and a belief that existing political setup is unable to resolve the crisis what kind of crisis it is; and the populists build an alternative discourse on this basis to offer a political pathology (Taggart, 2002, p. 69, 80). This sudden surge of populism must be seen in relation to general political setups and not merely the democratic setups (Laclau, 2007, p.167). In the case of the Hindutva movement, the political setup and the nature of the existing political problems of the system have changed over the time. During the colonial rule, the Hindutva movement sought a pure revival of the mythological Bharat and its social, cultural and political norms as Bankim Chandra maintained: "until religious and social morality became the foundation of political struggle, the latter by itself cannot hope to bring about a comprehensive advancement of our country" and freedom from British occupation (Bhattacharya, 1982). Other key founders of the modern-day Hindutva also argued that Indian political and economic system under the British rule was ailing and the revival of Hinduism as superior power in Indian sub-continent and the application of Hindu philosophies in economic and political policies, non-preferential treatment for non-Hindu communities and strict opposition to any attempts to abolish or reform the Hindu caste system could restore the balance in the system (Udayakumar, 2005, p.23).

The 1891 marriage age bill which proposed to change the age of girl's consent to marriage from 10 to 12 years was seen as outrageous and against local traditions of India by Bal Gangadhar Tilak

India (Udayakumar, 2005). As a reaction, he started the Anti-Cow Slaughter Society to protect cows, a movement to remove obstacles for freedom of practice of Hindu rituals, and eventually the *Shivaji* festival at a large to commemorate Lord *Shiva* (Udayakumar, 2005, p.23) in order to build an alternative discourse that the solution of the existing problems lied in the revival of the Hindu nationalism in a certain manner: the Hindutva movement. This alternative or pathological discourse was furthered by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar who explained the proposal of Hindutva-based independent India in his publication known as “Essentials of Hindutva” made available to public in 1924. He even included the idea of cultural and religious cleansing in India to attain the essentials of Hindutva (Savarkar, 1924). Similarly, in “We Or Our Nationhood Defined”, Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar rejecting secularism as the idea of Indian nationalism and Holocaust-related events in Germany were “a good lesson for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by” (Golwalkar, 1939) to seek the ultimate purity of one nation, one caste and one culture. Another solution was that:

“the non-Hindu people in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and revere Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but the glorification of Hindu nation... or may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, for less any preferential treatment, not even the citizen's rights” (Golwalkar, 1939, p.104-105).

Similarly, the father of the RSS, Keshav B. Hedgewar also resolved that: “the Hindu culture is the life-breath of Hindustan. It is therefore clear that if Hindustan is to be protected, we should first nourish the Hindu culture” (Kumar and Muralidhar, 1997, p.23-24).

However, after the independence of India, the proponents of the Hindutva doctrine re- defined the problems associated with the political system of the independent India. They argued that the partition of India was the result of unnecessary softness towards Muslims (Hansen, 1999), India must not adopt the tricolor national flag (Islam, 2006), and that the Indian constitution is incomplete without ancient Hindu script *Manusmriti* (Hadiz, 2006). Later on, the Hindutva movement also started seeing the constitutional article 370 of India related to Kashmir as a danger to the territorial integrity of India (Smith, 1966; Lahiry, 2005; Kanungo, 2006; Jaffrelot, 2007 and 2013), opposed the continuation of the status quo on Muslim shari'a laws as individualized laws for Muslims as compared to the reforms of Hindu personal laws as per secular principles, objected to freedom of cow slaughter and the possibility to convert from one religion to another as per the personal choice of the citizens (Lahiry, 2005; Jaffrelot, 2007). The Hindutva movement considered all these new policies as a new addition to the existing problems of India's political

system and sought to correct them by political means. With the re-birth of the Hindutva movement in the BJP in the 1980s, it also included the anti-corruption and anti-dynastic politics to its pathological discourse by depicting that the political system dominated by the INC was a display of corruption and dynastic politics (Kim, 2006). Throughout the last decades, the electoral manifestoes of the BJP have promised to introduce a market independent of bureaucratic control, more streamlined tax system and anti-corruption measures for the establishment of more transparent and accountable government system (Kim, 2006). The BJP even reshaped or rephrased the “one nation, one language, one culture and one religion” slogan of the Hindutva movement as “Oneness of all Indians” (Guha, 2007; Ammassari, 2018).

Finally, after the BJP’s outright declaration of Hindutva as its guiding ideology, the electoral manifestos of the party during the last two decades have returned to the original “one nation, one language, one culture and one religion” slogan of Hindutva. The BJP announced to look for “all possibilities... to facilitate the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya” and to introduce “necessary legal framework... to protect and promote cow and its progeny” (BJP Election Manifesto, 2014, p.41). It showed that it is “committed to annulling Article 370 of the Constitution of India” and also promised “enactment of the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB)” to make India an eventual Hindu homeland and also “complete the National Register of Citizens (NRC)” under which all of the citizens will have to present proof of their Indian citizenship through legal documents (BJP Election Manifesto, 2019:11 and 12). This can only target the non-registered Muslim citizens as the people of all other beliefs will be eligible to get citizenship under the CAB or the CAA. For the preservation of Hindu religion rituals and culture sites, the BJP announced to

“facilitate the expeditious construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya...conserve and promote all culturally, religiously and spiritually significant heritage sites...[make] effort on promotion of Sanskrit” (BJP Election Manifesto, 2019, p.36).

It also announced to ensure a “Uniform Civil Code” (BJP Election Manifesto, 2019, p.37) across the India to put an end to the legal framework which allows Muslims to follow the Islamic shariah laws as their personal civil code, or in other words ensure the implementation of “cultural oneness” in India.

In sum, this is how the Hindutva movement has continued to highlight that the existing political setup of India was ailing and full of shortcomings. The very core thought of the Hindutva, “one nation, one caste and one culture” or the homogeneousness of Indian nation with Hinduism as the

supreme embodiment of the political system, is the alternative discourse or political pathology required for India's return to the mythological greatness of the past.

### **2.3.3. Charismatic Leadership and “Reluctantly Political”**

Throughout the recent centuries, the Hindutva movement has tried to maintain a reluctantly political image for itself and rather called itself as a movement of reforms and cultural revival of Hinduism. The theorists also assert that populist movements hardly call themselves something political and greatly rely on the slogans such as “a call for better governance” as a reason to mobilize the masses (Taggart, 2002, p.67). Since the early days of Hindutva's modern-day struggle, it has called for “one nation, one religion, one culture and one language” in the name of Lord Ram where Hindu icons, symbols, norms and values should dominate as the national elements (Frykenberg, 2008, p.178). The struggle for such a purpose should be very political, but the proponents of Hindutva repeatedly denied any political motives of their movement and rather called it revivalism right starting from the time of Arya Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Theosophical Society, Brahma Samaj and Ramakrishna Movement (Udayakumar, 2005; Frykenberg, 2008).

Similarly, upon the establishment of the RSS in 1925, K. B. Hedgewar declared that he sought spiritual and cultural revival of Hinduism through the RSS (Chitkara, 2004; Andersen and Damle, 1987; Goyal, 1979; Kanungo, 2002). The RSS even kept itself at a distance from the political process of India's independence; instead, it only remained busy only with the character building of Hindus (Andersen and Damle, 1987; Bhatt, 2001). The ideological literature of the RSS also recognizes it as a non-political movement which rather focuses on social and cultural activism (Andersen and Damle, 1987; Bhatt, 2001). According to Christophe Jaffrelot (2013), the BJS was also more focused on spreading its Hindutva ideology at the grass-roots level instead of winning elections and actively presenting itself as a political force. However, this reluctance of politics slowly diminished after the establishment of the BJP which does identify itself as a political element but again insists that the Hindutva doctrine provides necessary guidelines to its leaders and workers.

Another important essential of populist movements is the emergence of a dominant and charismatic leader who can hold a strong and direct connection with the people (Di Tella, 1965 and 1997). Likewise, the Hindutva movement also had such valued leadership over the decades. The most important Hindutva-linked organization, the RSS kept functioning in India during the colonial period and start of independence era without any constitution or charter, and only the teachings of these charismatic leaders were considered as the guidelines for workers about the



agenda and goals of the organization for decades (Jaffrelot, 1996). However, in the under-debate case of the Hindutva movement, the presence of the charismatic leader can be considered as a necessary void that has been filled by a number of leaders over the recent centuries. During the 19th century, this leadership was pretty scattered and it lacked centralization, but as this movement entered into the 20th century, its leadership became charismatic as well as centralized.

Initially, Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Shraddhananda and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee provided the charismatic but scattered leadership to the populist thought of Hindutva,. Later on, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Keshav Baliram Hedgewar and M.S. Golwalkar became more centralized charismatic leaders in their respective times. Similarly, after BJS and BJP's ascendance to the leadership of the Hindutva movement, Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, Atal B. Vajpayee and Lal K. Advani filled the void of this leadership (Udayakumar, 2005). Eventually, Narendra Modi's massive popularity and imagery as the "Development Man or *Vikas Purush*" led him to the leadership of the whole Hindutva doctrine (Diwakar, 2014; Kaul, 2017). The electoral campaign of the BJP during the 2014 and 2019 general elections were mainly focused on the imagery of Narendra Modi to confirm that he was the latest and undisputed central and charismatic leader of the Hindutva movement.

Summarily, the social and political groups associated with the Hindutva movement have outrightly spoken through their writings and speeches to define "the people", "the others" in a perfectly antagonistic manner, to identify the ailment of the existing political and social structure of India while suggesting that their doctrine should be deemed as the most appropriate solution, presenting themselves as political forces in a subtle and reluctant way, and always focusing their ideological struggle around one charismatic leader at a certain time: making the Hindutva movement a perfect case of ultra-right-wing political populism in the world. The shifting faces and consistent core ideological standing of the struggle from the late 19th century onward makes the case of populism for the Hindutva doctrine even more interesting and worth scholarly attention. Especially, when the current Hindutva-associate BJP has now entered into a second consecutive term to rule the world's largest representative parliamentary democracy. The nature of electoral promises made by the BJP and their implementation will definitely change the internal demographics of India as well as its international outlook, and also have some serious implications for the whole South Asian region and the world.

## 2.4. INDIA'S POLITICAL SYSTEM

Before taking up the core research questions of the thesis in the next chapter, this section aims to provide a cursory look at the political functioning of the Indian parliamentary democracy. India's system of governance follows the British parliamentary federal system in which the country comprises 36 ruling entities including 28 sub-dominion states and 8 union territorial regions which have a written and declared executive and legislation powers in the light of the constitution of India (Malik, 1998). The Indian President functions as the ceremonial head of the state while the Prime Minister of India heads the government. The constitution of India also provides clear guidelines about the powers of the central government to establish a balance of authority among the central and local state governments (Malik, 1998). Prime Minister of India runs the central government through his cabinet ministers. Chief Ministers oversee the affairs of their respective union territory or state through elected ministers. The Prime Minister is the elected member of parliament's *Lok Sabha* house (lower house) while the Chief Ministers are elected members of their respective *Vidhan Sabha* (regional assemblies), and also hold the support of the simple majority of the members of the respective legislation assemblies.

The Indian Parliament comprises two bodies known as the Lok Sabha (the People's House), also identified as the Lower House of the parliament, and the *Rajya Sabha* (the States' Council), the Upper House of the parliament. The Lok Sabha comprises as many as 543 members directly elected through polling process adopted by the people of India representing their respective constituencies for legislation. The *Lok Sabha* elections, also known as the general election, is conducted every five years (Laxmikanth, 2012). Comprising a total of 245 members, the Rajya Sabha has 233 members elected through indirect elections held by the state legislative assemblies and 12 members elected by the Indian President's office. Any proposed legislation should be endorsed by both houses of the Indian parliament to become a law, unless otherwise specified in the constitution of India (Malik, 1998).

For conducting the election of the parliament as well as the state legislative assemblies, the legislative guidelines of India empowers the Election Commission of India to make necessary arrangements and oversee the administrative affairs for a certain duration (Malik, 1998). The first ever general election of parliamentarians was held in 1951- 52 in phase-wise manner while the latest 17th general election of the country has been organized in April and May months of 2019.

### 2.4.1. The 2019 Indian General Elections

The Indian Election Body (ECI) announced the schedule of the 17th general election on March 10 and invoked its code of conduct to hold the election in seven phases starting from April 11, 2019 (Appendix-II). The seven phases of the election polling were completed on “11th April, 18th April, 23rd April, 29th April, 6th May, 12th May and 19th May of the year 2019”, respectively. The results of the polls were jointly announced on May 23, 2019 (The Economic Times, 2019). A total of five electoral alliances were announced by the national-level and local political groups prior to the election: National Democratic Alliance (also referred as the NDA) of the BJP, United Progressive Alliance (also called as UPA) of the INC, Federal Front led by the All India Trinamool Congress (AITC), *Mahagathbandhan* or Grand Alliance and the Left Front of Communist parties. A total of 650 political parties contested the general election with the BJP and the INC being the largest parties which had fielded 437 and 421 candidates, respectively (Election Commission of India, 2019).

No.	Political Party	Vote Share
1	Bharatiya Janata Party	37.36%
2	Indian National Congress	19.49%
3	All India Trinamool Congress	4.07%
4	Bahujan Samaj Party	3.63%
5	Samajwadi Party	2.55%
6	Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party	2.53%
7	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam	2.26%
8	Shiv Sena	2.10%
9	Telugu Desam Party	2.04%
10	Communist Party of India (M)	1.75%

**Table 3: Vote Share of Leading Political Parties in 2019 Elections**

According to the Indian election authority, around 900 million people were eligible to cast votes in their respective constituencies for general elections in 2019. While 67.11 percent of the electorate participated in the elections, the highest ever voter turnout of India (Times of India, 2019). As per the final results announced by the ECI, the NDA won 353 seats, the UPA clinched 92 and the remaining alliances and political parties gained 98 seats of the Lok Sabha, paving the way for the inception of BJP-led rule of the NDA alliance in May 2019 (Election Commission of India, 2019).

## **2.5. GENERAL EVALUATION OF CHAPTER**

The phenomenon of Hindutva is as complex as the concept of populism: it draws versatile explanations from different schools of thought ranging from plain cultural and social conception to the complex political perspective. It has been shaping and reshaping Indian politics since the times of British colonization and over the last decade emerged as the most powerful political doctrine in the form of the BJP's accession to power in India. It was once described as "one nation, one culture and one language" slogan by the early proponents of the Hindutva movement, however, today it is seen as a divisive and anti-pluralist political agenda which has alarmed the political observers around the world. The extent of Hindutva agenda's implementation in India will not only affect the very country which is home to Muslims comprising around 25 percent of the country's population. The Hindutva doctrine has emerged as a truly populist struggle: consistently defining "the people" and "the others" in an antagonistic manner. The presence of such a political framework becomes even more contentious when "the others" are outrightly referred to the minorities of India which are mainly the Muslims who have been the target of violent incidents triggered or facilitated by the elements associated with the Hindutva movement.

The reappearance of the same days of suspicion and fear proves that all the concerns regarding the protection of minorities and democratic system are indeed relevant. This political conundrum might also end all of the optimism associated with the progressive democratic institutions of India leading it to the communal past where the Hindutva movement would have a stronger upper hand.

## CHAPTER 3

### HINDUTVA DOCTRINE IN THE 2019 ELECTION CAMPAIGN

This thesis undertakes a qualitative analysis of the 2019 electioneering campaign of the BJP to assess the way Hindutva doctrine was manufactured to appease the Hindu majority of India to garner electoral support. For this purpose, the three-dimensional model of the CDA put forward by Norman Fairclough (1992) was employed as a methodology for the empirical research. The CDA enables researchers to analyze the texts at three levels: textual, discursive and societal. This chapter carries the detailed analysis and interpretation of the sampled texts based on the speeches of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, political messages shared by the BJP and its leaders on Twitter along with the available visual content, i.e. photos. It completes the debate on the main subject of the thesis: theorization of populism, conception of Hindutva doctrine and finally the critical discourse analysis of the production of Hindutva doctrine during the 2019 general election.

However, before leading towards the main analysis and interpretation section, this chapter explains how the social media platforms especially Twitter has played a role of backbone in the resurgence of the BJP following a major electoral loss in the 2009 elections. It carries a detailed debate on the early adoption of the new media tools by the BJP in comparison to the competitor traditional political parties of India. This strength gave the BJP a chance to stay more closely, directly and continuously connected with the voters, and provided an extra advantage against its opponents. This debate provides the logical bridge of this chapter to the previous chapters and puts the sampled texts and their analysis in an appropriate contextual frame leading to a discussion on changing political scenario of India due to the BJP's victory in the 2019 general polls.

The "Analysis and Interpretation" section offers an in-depth deliberation on the interpretation of the texts based on seven main themes. This section presents details on the way the BJP reconnected itself with the Hindutva doctrine through a political performance based on historical references, symbolism and outright expression of the Hindutva-bond. In addition to the conceptions of the populist features such as the people, the antagonizing others, charismatic leader and foreign enemy, it also entails the BJP's political messages as an attempt to portray itself as a movement of reform to provide pathology to the ailing political system of India through an antidote of Hindutva doctrine.

The final section of the chapter presents a discussion based on the measure taken by the BJP government immediately after coming to power in 2019 and the series of events that surrounded

these developments. It raises question on India's future as a democratic nation while taking up the increasing practices of illiberal, divisive and undemocratic political decisions of the BJP. In short, along with provision of answers of the outlined research questions within the declared objectives of the study, this chapter also provides an argument-based inference that the BJP and the Hindutva doctrine's motto to transform India as "one nation, one caste, one culture and one religion" is nothing more than Hindu chauvinism and the level of fascism would only increase in future if the political system does not return to the democratic course.

### **3.1. SOCIAL MEDIA AND BJP'S POLITICS**

The scholars have identified social media as a latest fountain of power to the politicians and the related actors (Frame and Brachotte, 2015; Chadwick, Dennis and Smith, 2016; Karlsen and Enjolras, 2016; Mercier, 2017; Zain and Soomro, 2016; Zain, 2019; Taras and Davis, 2019). Particularly Twitter has been acknowledged as the top influential social media platform when it comes to election campaigns as it has overcome the hurdles faced by the procedural cycle of political communication among the politicians and their supporters and facilitating the direction communication (Chadwick, Dennis and Smith, 2016; Frame and Brachotte, 2015). The messages disseminated through social media also bypass the gatekeeping characteristic of the traditional platforms of mass media and provide the sender of the information with an extended sense of freedom (Maurer, 2019). As a result, the liberation from traditional barriers has enabled the political parties to target large and diverse audiences to galvanize their political movements outside the conventional canvassing during the elections. The appropriate use hashtags and keywords enable the political parties and leaders to build their "political tribe" (Maurer, 2019). The passive Twitter users can also be engaged to play an outrightly significant role in the dissemination of political messages while they use the platform to gather information to facilitate their own process of political deliberation (Taras and Davis, 2019). Moreover, the topic of discussion, the tone of message and the direction of debate is also set by the sender of the message on Twitter unlike the TV show host or anchorperson of the traditional mass media (Maurer, 2019). Furthermore the use of photos, external links and personal linguistic code enables the communicator to make the process of communication more intimate (Enli and Skogerbo, 2013), and also enables political figures to issue rebuttals to accusations and attacks launched by others through the process of personal communication (Maurer, 2019). Thus, the social media platform particularly Twitter enable political communication between political groups or leaders and the public in a very direct and intimate manner in the form of messages which carry a range of appeals.

This thesis aims to explore the texts produced and utilized by the BJP and its central political campaigners on the theoretical basis of populism where the Hindutva doctrine serves as the main discourse of the BJP's electoral campaign in 2019. Twitter served as a source of communication of these texts to ensure the political branding of the BJP. The populist extent of the Hindutva movement and the electoral and political discourse of the BJP make Twitter a perfect platform for political persuasion and mobilization as it fully matches with the populist style of politics and is powerful enough to shape and reshape the public discourse (Ott, 2017). Twitter's very essence is the directness of communication process between the leader and the people based on a "people-centric discourse" (Maurer, 2019) just like the populism which relies on the "dominant ideology" and in the name of "the people" (Laclau, 1977; Mudde, 2004; Stanley, 2008).

The theoretical relationship between online communication and populism was established even during the early days of the internet (Bimber, 1998). This form of communication was recognized as powerful enough to shape and re-shape the structure of political public sphere towards a populist course (Bimber, 1998). Because populist leaders directly rely on the closeness of their connection with the people for their success (Taggart, 2002; Canovan, 2002; Kriesi, 2018), and the intimate communication offered by the social media enables these "self-perceived" mouthpieces of the people to directly communicate in an unmediated way (Kriesi, 2018) to get away with the philosophical and institutional barriers (Canovan, 2002, p.34). Bartlett (2014, p.94) also endorses these claims with the addition that the completely whimsical nature of populist political messages also functions well in this channel of information exchange.

Since the increased exploitation of social media networks during the first ten years of the 21st century, a number of election campaigns and political movements benefitted from these platforms to communicate with the audience and garner support for their cause. The US presidential election of 2008 when Barack Obama campaigned through social media tools to galvanize his "Change We Need" slogan (Cogburn and Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011). Similarly, an immense utility and practice of social media was also witnessed during the campaigns for the Scottish elections that took place in 2010 (Baxter and Marcella, 2012). Moreover, the use of social media networks in election campaigns was further surged when a number of research proved these platforms as a way of most effective communication with the public. Sanne Kruikemeier (2014) analyzed the 2010 Dutch national elections and found that the candidates that received more votes were the ones who used Twitter during the time of election campaign and interacted with the public through these tools more often. Hemphill et al (2013) also confirm that elected members of the US Congress also frequently use Twitter to publicize their official political stances. Jessica Cullen (2017) also found a similar use of Twitter and related social media platforms during the

nomination and the main presidential election phase of the 2016 campaign particularly President Donald Trump. Other studies also confirm the exhaustive exploitation of social media platforms for political communication in local elections in Turkey (Oguzoglu and Oztay, 2016). A versatile use of Twitter and Facebook was also witnessed during the 2018 presidential elections with an excessive use of multimedia by all of the contestants (Kuyucu, 2018). Jacobs, Sandberg and Spierings (2020) analyze the use of Twitter and Facebook by the parliamentarians of Sweden, Austria and Netherlands and infer that the social media platforms were serving as “double barreled gun” for the populist politicians – where Facebook and Twitter work in coordination and yet target different issues and audience.

Similar to these examples from around the world, the BJP and the frontrunner Narendra Modi also constitute a successful election campaign based on social media. Since the BJP started aggressive political campaigning in the 2010s while the figures about social media users in India has suggested a surge to tens of millions as compared to a few million people in the past. This continuously rising number of social media users provided the much-needed ingredient for the BJP and Narendra Modi to run an electoral campaign based on these networks.

Sinha (2017) notes that Narendra Modi and his close associates in the BJP had joined almost all of the social media networks by 2009. They started a well-organized direct communication with the public through these platforms in 2012, when Modi announced to participate in the electoral race for the role of India’s Prime Minister for a very first instance. The early campaign of the BJP was mainly shaped by the 2013 “Citizens for Accountable Governance (CAG)” and the involvement of the highly-skilled IT professionals completely transformed the election campaign by using social media to collect electoral data and manage the reputation of the BJP (Shukla, 2014; Mahurkar and Pradhan, 2014). As a result, such a high-level professional sophistication dramatically changed the nature of content creation and consumption for the political campaigns in India (Howard and Hussain, 2011; Jaffrelot, 2015). Meanwhile within the BJP, Narendra Modi gained more individualized political recognition through social media and explicitly constructed a privatized discourse around his personality leading to his nomination as the BJP candidate for the office of Prime Minister (Sambandan, 2014). As discussed in the previous chapters, Modi also benefited from his past association with the RSS and performance and growth while he was heading the state government of Gujarat. All these features further empowered by the magic of social media support led to the construction of a public perception of anti-corruption and development for the BJP as well as Narendra Modi.



Shelly Ghai Bajaj (2017) studied the campaign of the BJP during 2014 general elections with a focus to analyze that how it incorporated Twitter into its central strategy of political communication and found that the BJP had successfully combined together the conventional election campaign, i.e. political rallies and door-to-door canvassing with Twitter to reach out the masses. Likewise Devin Lu, Arpan Shah and Anunay Kulshrestha (2017) also confirm similar findings based on an analysis of 10.6 million political tweets shared during the 2014 election campaign through a number of parameters including support strength, retweets, sentiments and augmented contagion analysis. They find that the BJP's NDA alliance outperformed all other political parties and election alliances on the basis of its social media strategy especially the exploitation of Twitter to convey political messages and appeal to the masses (Lu, Shah and Kulshrestha, 2017). Another empirical study confirms that the BJP's aggressive use of new media forums during campaign of the 2014 election also enabled it to control the debate on mainstream media and continuously get more on-air time as compared to the rival political parties, i.e. the INC and the AAP (*Aam Aadmi Party*) or their leaderships (Rukmini, 2016). The use of a dedicated web TV, i.e. YuvaiTV to broadcast every speech of Narendra Modi live on the internet and the immediate distribution of trimmed video clips on social media also made the election campaign look like a live streamed event being sent out to the public on platform of Twitter (Jaffrelot, 2015).

Although it includes analysis of selected election speeches of the BJP frontrunner Narendra Modi, the main scope of this thesis is also limited to the analysis of discursive texts shared by the BJP and its key leadership through Twitter. As Gregory Huber and Kevin Arceneaux (2007) argue, the leadership-centered campaigns as tool of distribution of the persuasive information rather than a learning process, and by relying on the referenced recent research it can be claimed that Twitter provides this mechanism of vast distribution of discursive texts produced by the political parties and its leading politicians i.e. the BJP, Narendra Modi and other important leaders. The structure of political communication on Twitter is also very similar to that of the conventional grassroots network of political parties and it enables the political leaders of the parties to construct similarly-aligned discourses.

### **3.2. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

To find the answers of the outlined empirical questions and fulfill the declared objectives of this thesis, a CDA of the sampled contents from the 2019 electioneering campaign of the BJP was conducted in the light of the three-dimensional model of Norman Fairclough (1992). The model suggests to qualitatively analyze the content at textual, discursive and societal level to get the

findings about the nature of discourse. In addition to the analysis of the text-format data, Fairclough's CDA model can also be used for discursive analysis of the visual contents as it enables linguistic description of the visuals – the characteristics of visual and contextual intertextuality - to further the interpretation and explanation to reveal the macro- mechanism of discourses (Wang, 2014). This section delineates the analysis and interpretation of the sample content as outlined by this study in a systematic manner to draw the inferences and develop a scholarly debate. Here the table provides summary of the analyzed content:

<b>Duration included in analysis</b>	April 11- May 26, 2019
<b>Total number of Twitter accounts analyzed</b>	45
<b>Total number of tweets shared by analyzed accounts from</b>	33,425
<b>Total number of tweets included in sample for analysis and interpretation</b>	5,648
<b>Total number of speeches of Narendra Modi included in sample for analysis and interpretation</b>	3

**Table 4: Summary of Analyzed Content**

The table given below provides the names of the accounts and the number of the tweets of each account in order to show the official accounts of the BJP and its leaders were interwoven to engage in political communication during 2019 election campaign:

<b>No.</b>	<b>Account Name (Username)</b>	<b>No. of Tweets</b>
1	BJP LIVE (@bjplive)	4,837
2	Bhartiya Janta Party (@bjp4india)	4,604
3	BJP Utter Pradesh (@bjp4up)	2,532
4	narendramodi_in (@narendramodi_in)	2,234
5	BJP Rajasthan (@bjp4rajasthan)	1,879

6	BJP Bihar (@bjp4bihar)	1,759
7	BJP Maharashtra (@bjp4maharashtra)	1,120
8	BJP Madhya Pradesh (@bjp4mp)	1,033
9	Kuljeet Singh Chahal (@kuljeetschahal)	1,012
10	Dr. Anirban Ganguly (@anirbanganguly)	941
11	Smirithi Irani (@smritiirani)	910
12	Narendra Modi (@narendramodi)	703
13	Manoj Sinha (@manojshinhabjp)	651
14	Devendra Fadnavis (@dev_fadnavis)	621
15	Amit Shah (@amitshah)	593
16	Vinay P. Sahasrabuddhe (@vinay1011)	532
17	Ram Lal (@ramlal)	521
18	BJP Punjab (@bjp4punjab)	476
19	BJP Kashmir (@bjp4jnk)	437
20	Ram Madhav (@rammadhavbjp)	418
21	Vijay Rupani (@vijayrupanibjp)	393
22	Rohit Chahal (@rohit_chahal)	385
23	Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore (@ra_thore)	370
24	Nityanand Rai (@nityanandraibjp)	360
25	Biplab Kumar Deb (@bjpbiplab)	340
26	Nirmala Sitharaman (@nsitharaman)	332

27	Dr. Anil Jain (@aniljaindr)	328
28	Dr. Mahendra Singh (@bjpdrmahendra)	313
29	Hans Raj Hans (@hansrajhanshrh)	299
30	Yogi Adityanath (@myogiadityanath)	296
31	Kiren Rijiju (@kirenrijiju)	277
32	Uma Bharti (@umasribharti)	250
33	Rajiv Pratap Rudy (@rajivprataprudy)	238
34	Manoj Tiwari (@manojtiwarimp)	210
35	Arun Jaitley (@arunjaitley)	202
36	Rajnath Singh (@rajnathsingh)	178
37	Prof. Rakesh Sinha (@rakeshsinha01)	155
38	Rajat Sethi (@rajatsethi86)	138
39	Sushma Swaraj (@sushmaswaraj)	135
40	Jugal K. Sharma (@mpjugalkishore)	127
41	Amit Shah Office (@amitshahoffice)	87
42	GVL Narasimha Rao (@gvlrao)	65
43	Sunny Deol (@iamsunnydeol)	64
44	BJP Taripura (@bjp4tripura)	50
45	N. L. Panchariya (@npanchariyabjp)	20

**Table 5: Twitter Accounts and the Number of Their Tweets**

The summary of most frequently used Twitter hashtags of the BJP also shows an outright dominance of Narendra Modi throughout the campaign timeline. The sample data verifies that

BJP's hashtags on Twitter kept changing during the electioneering; however, Modi remained as a undisputed charismatic leader in the communication flowed from top-to-bottom and bottom-to-top.

No.	Hashtag	No. of Mentions
1	#hardilmeimodi	153
2	#bharatmangemodidobara	143
3	#bharatbolemodifirse	58
4	#phirekbaarmodisarkar	36
5	#jeetegatomodihi	27
8	#modiaagaya	15
7	#modi2begins	15
6	#harvotemodiko	11
9	#modireturns	10
10	#everyvoteformodi	9

**Table 6: Frequency of Hashtags in Sample Data**

The sociogram based on the patterns of information flow among the analyzed Twitter accounts showed that @BJP4India and @bjplive largely dominated and took a leading role in the information distribution in a two-way format. The accounts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Amit Shah also played the leading role in down-ward flow of information in this process. Meanwhile, the local and regional official accounts of the BJP and secondary level leadership also effectively engaged in two-way distribution of political messages to maximize the scope and outreach of the election campaign. The figure below provides a map of the information flow among analyzed Twitter accounts of the BJP and its leadership (Appendix-III carries a large size image of the sociogram).

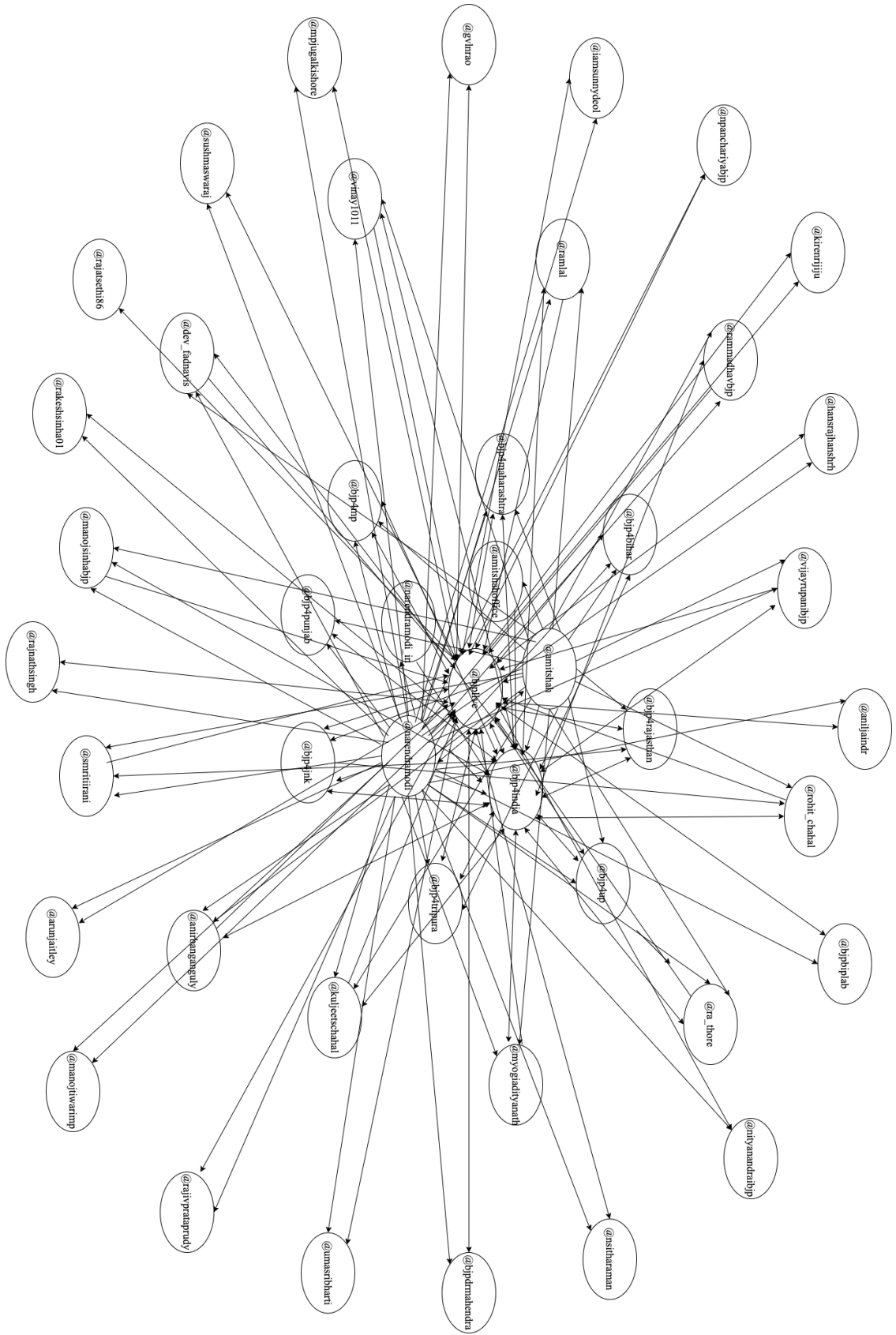


Figure 2: Sociogram of Information Flow Among Selected Twitter Accounts

The table below enlists the brief details of main themes and sub-themes found in the analyzed texts based on the three-dimensional CDA model of Norman Fairclough. Each of the themes and their subsequent sub-themes have been developed while taking the textual, discursive and societal dimensions into consideration simultaneously. Also, all of the themes have been developed on the basis of the essentials of populism and the features of Hindutva doctrine as discussed in chapter 1 and chapter 2 of this thesis respectively. The sub-themes are supposed to describe the textual, discursive and societal dimensions of the discourse built on the basis of each theme.

No.	Themes	Sub-themes
1	(Re)connecting with Hindutva	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Direct mentions of Hindutva</li> <li>▪ Hindutva-based slogans</li> <li>▪ Honoring Hindutva-linked personalities</li> <li>▪ Endorsement of Hindutva movement's demands</li> </ul>
2	Construction of Hindutva-nation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use of Hindu symbols</li> <li>▪ Historical and mythological references</li> <li>▪ Question of identity</li> </ul>
3	Construction of Antagonistic Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Muslims as explicit others</li> <li>▪ Accusations of being pro-Muslim, pro-Kashmiri, pro-Pakistan and anti-Hindu</li> <li>▪ Contextual historical references</li> <li>▪ Elite which betrayed the Hindutva movement</li> </ul>
4	Portrayal of Charismatic Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Historical and mythological references</li> <li>▪ Top electoral slogans</li> <li>▪ Top Twitter hashtags</li> <li>▪ Charismatic characteristic of Narendra Modi</li> <li>▪ Modi as popular leader loved by the Indian</li> </ul>
5	Politically Reluctant Populism of Hindutva	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conservation of Hindu culture</li> <li>▪ Protection of Hinduism as religion</li> <li>▪ Promotion of Hindu culture at global level</li> </ul>

6	Introduction of Hindutva-reforms in India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Citizenship for the non-Muslim Refugees</li> <li>▪ Completion of National Register of Citizens</li> <li>▪ Abrogation of Constitutional Article 370</li> <li>▪ Abrogation of Constitutional Article 35A</li> <li>▪ Introduction of Uniform Civil Code</li> </ul>
7	Identifying Foreign Enemy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pakistan harboring terrorism in India</li> <li>▪ Pakistan behind separatist movement in Jammu and Kashmir</li> <li>▪ Pakistan as top target of India's diplomatic efforts in the world</li> </ul>

**Table 7: Summary of Critical Discourse Analysis**

Before proceeding to the main discussion on analysis and interpretation of the analyzed texts it is a matter of prime importance to describe how the three-dimensional CDA model of Norman Fairclough has been put into practice for this analysis. Each dimension of the CDA model has been interpreted as following:

- Textual Dimension: To assess what a certain text literally means in the Indian context based on grammar and construction.
- Discursive Dimension: To assess how a certain text could potentially be perceived by the audience on the basis of symbolism and references from history, mythology and politics.
- Societal Dimension: To assess what potential social implications could be resulted due to a certain text in the Indian context or how the discourse in Indian society could be affected by a certain text.

The following section carries a detailed description of analysis and interpretation of the texts as outlined for each dimension of the CDA model. This is important to understand that one or more than dimension has been applied to interpret the each text depending on the nature and context of the text, and hence not necessarily all three dimensions have been put into practice separately for interpretation of the texts.



### 3.2.1. (Re)Connecting With Hindutva

The scholars have a consensus that populism based on electoral politics must be understood as a performance (Bourdieu, 1991; Canovan, 1999; Moffitt, 2016) based on a discourse which is built through a versatile set of communication practices which rely on ideological frames (Fairclough, 2003). This ideological discursive practice can be recognized as the “recontextualization of symbolic meanings from the past” (Kissas, 2019), just like this study is treating the 2019 electioneering drive of the BJP as an attempt to recontextualize the Hindutva doctrine into its public discourse. This recontextualization takes place through a political performance based on historical and pre-supposed connections and emotional discursive practices (Kissas, 2019).

The BJP also put the discourse practices into action to reclaim its strong ideological relationship with the Hindutva movement to ensure that the Hindutva doctrine is produced or performed in front of “the people” to garner the electoral victory in the 2019 general elections. The analysis of the selected texts show that the BJP used the election slogans, mentioned the persons, carried pictures of the leaders and consistently repeated the political demands and reforms which have a very strong relationship with the Hindutva movement to claim the legacy of the Hindutva doctrine as a political discourse. Along with this, the number of direct mentions were also noted: “Narendra Modi’s 2019 victory is Hindutva 2.0 (RT @rammadhavbjp)” and “India’s new dynamic era will be up to race, religion, nationalism, Hindutva, On the strength of development , a new future will be created (@myogiadityanath)”. Even the discussion on a vision of the Hindutva doctrine’s rise to the global stage was also found: “Swami Vivekananda had said that America will adopt our culture the day a sleeping Hindu wakes up. That day is getting closer (@rohit\_chahal)”. This refers to pre-supposed assertion of the Hindutva movement on cultural superiority of Hinduism and suggestion for the application of Hindu philosophies in economic and political policies (Udayakumar, 2005).

Here are the connotational explanations of the most popular slogans used by the BJP during the 2019 election campaign which have a possible historical reference with the Hindutva doctrine:

- Bharat Mata ki Jai – the slogan literally means “Hail Motherland India” and it takes its roots from the book titled “Essential of Hindutva” by V.D. Savarkar in which he states that only that person who claims India to be his *pitribhumi* (fatherland) and calls it as *punyabhumi* (the holy land) can call himself an Indian (Savarkar, 1924). Another Hindutva-proponent Golwalkar also equated the holy motherland of India to Vishnu-patni and urged his followers to worship it and show the highest level of devotion (Golwalkar, 1964).

- *Vande Mataram* – also known as *Bande Mataram* slogan which refers to the historic anti-Muslim anthem written by Bankim Chandra who known as the “creator of Hindu nationalism” (Chaudhuri, 1951). He even suggested militant schemes based on Hindu mythology and anti-Muslim social rhetoric in his novels such as *Anandamath*, *Sitaram* and *Mrinalini* (Sil, 2002).

The second most important reference to the Hindutva movement was the practice of hailing the key personalities which helped in shaping the Hindutva doctrine over the time through ideological contributions or political services to the Hindutva movement. He are Hindutva-linked personalities found in the discursive texts:

- Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel – the mention in the texts comes with reference to Narendra Modi and Amit Shah’s stopover at the grave of Sardar Bhai Patel to pay respects after the victory in 2019 general election. Although an advocate of the INC during the early year of India’s independence, Patel was considered a supporter of the right-wing Hindu elements. He is held in high regard by the BJP.
- Shyama Prasad Mukherjee – the founding head of the BJS which was the first political party to represent the Hindutva movement in electoral politics. Mukherjee was originally a member of the right-wing hardliner group known as *Hindu Mahasabha*. Additionally, he was also an outright supporter of the RSS. His pictures were frequently seen on the placards, banners and stage backdrops of the BJP’s political gathering, as well as the election manifesto of the BJP. This signified the historical and ideological connection of the BJP to the BJS and early Hindutva-backed politicians: the removal of constitutional article 370, the abolition of separate civil code for the Muslims and construction of the Ram Mandir at the location of *Babri Mosque*.
- Deendayal Upadhyaya – the founding secretary general of the BJS who was earlier a member of the RSS. He is believed to have been the mastermind of transformation of the Hindutva movement into a political ideology in India. His pictures were also seen on the placards, banners and stage backdrops at political gatherings, and the official election manifesto of the BJP.
- Atal Bihari Vajpayee – the founding leader of the BJP who also held the office of the Prime Minister of India. Earlier, he was a member of the RSS as well. He is considered as the key leader who made the right-wing ideology of the BJS and the BJP a political success in India. His pictures were also used by the BJP along with Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and Deendayal Upadhyaya to explain the chronological and ideological relationship of the BJP and the BJS in the *Sangh Parivar*.

- Lal Krishna Advani – he was also the founding member of the BJP along with Vajpayee. He reignited right-wing politics in India during the 1980s and the 1990s and strengthened the support of extremist groups such as VHP and RSS under the single political banner of the BJP. He also initiated the campaign for the establishment of the Ram Temple at the location of the *Babri* Mosque, and it was the aggression and activism of his campaigns that led to eventual major electoral victory of the BJP.
- Murali Manohar Joshi – a leading BJP leader who was at the frontlines along with Lal Krishna Advani to lead the right-wing movement for establishment of the Ram Temple at the place of the *Babri* Masjid. He also remained part of the RSS at a young age and participated in “Cow Protection Movement”.
- Anil Madhav Dave – another leading BJP leader who served as a member of Modi’s cabinet as well. He was also a member of the RSS and rendered his services as a volunteer to the Hinduist organization for years.

The historic demands of constitutional changes in India on the basis of the Hindutva doctrine was also found in the texts. These demands have also been repeatedly mentioned in the literature cited about the evolution of the Hindutva movement in Chapter 2. The extraordinary emphasis on these demands was an attempt to provide the practical bridge for a connection between the BJP and the Hindutva movement.



**Photo 1: Photos of S.P. Mookerjee, Deendayal U. and A. B. Vajpayee in the background (Tweeted by @BJP4India)**

Here’s a quick review of the excerpts from the 2019 election campaign of the BJP:

- Abolishment of Jammu and Kashmir’s Special Status – “Section 370 and 35A should be abrogated (@BJPLive)” and “In the last five years we have made all the necessary efforts to ensure peace in Jammu and Kashmir through decisive action and a firm policy. We reiterate our view of Article 370 from the time of the Jana Sangh (@BJPLive)”.
- Eradication of Special Muslim Civil Code – “Prime Minister @narendramodi ji who has given justice to women suffering from triple talaq in the history of independent India” and “Be it a demand of uniform civil code, be it Section 370 or 35A...We will sit and decide that we will remove it (@BJP4Punjab)”.
- Making India a Refuge for Hindus – “Modi Ji's government will first give citizenship to refugees through Citizen Amendment Bill (@BJPLive)”.

Other than these very strong historic connotations, the BJP also adopted the criticism of secularism to be the idea of nationalism in India. As Golwalkar explained the political thought of Hindutva by directly rejecting secularism as idea of Indian nationalism and declaring that only *Hindu rashtra* or Hindu nationalism embodies the Hindutva (Golwalkar, 1939), the excerpts from the 2019 election campaign also mentioned: “Such a printout, such a tag had become fashionable... it was completely fake, the name of that tag was secularism and slogans used to be secular have become secular itself (Narendra Modi at public gathering on May 23, 2019)” and “not a single political party has dared to mislead the country by wearing a mask of secularism (Narendra Modi at public gathering on May 23, 2019)”.

After this primary analysis which confirms that the BJP successfully produced directly references and historical connections with the Hindutva doctrine, the following sections of this chapter provide further analysis and interpretation on how the nature of the Hindutva doctrine’s production was populist in its spirit and provide answers to the outlined research queries and objectives of this study.

### **3.2.2. Construction of Hindutva-Nation**

The literature available on the concept of populism puts an extensive emphasis on the conception of a nation or the people in order to specify the intended audience of a populist movement or leader. It is a common theme that is found in all types of populism (Cullen, 2017). However at the practical level, it is really hard to identify the people of a populist movement especially when it comes to electoral politics where the populist leaders try to expand their outreach to the maximum number of people. So, the people could be any group of people sharing a number of

common traits and this identity of the people is constructed where “individuals realize themselves as belonging to this community” (Westlind, 1996). That is why the populist leaders also try to identify themselves to “the people” to ensure that they are considered as one of them (Cullen, 2017).

In the case of the main subject of this thesis work, the proponents of Hindutva movement laid out a clear framework to construct “the people” or a “Hindutva-nation” through their publications and speeches from the late 19th century. Bankim Chandra, Savarkar, Golwalkar and Hedgewar established an outright agreement to construct “the people” of Hindutva doctrine on the basis of Hindu identity, nationhood, culture, religion and symbols. Likewise, the analysis of the discursive texts of the BJP’s 2019 election drive also revealed that the BJP leaders also relied on a number of direct references, connotations, symbols and historical analogies under the umbrella of an abstract designed on the basis of Hindu identity. However, the analysis revealed that most of the discursive texts avoided a certain clarity on the identification of “the people” and rather benefited from the construction of “the antagonizing others” to conceptualize the Hindutva-nation, as asserted by Cas Mudde (2016). This implicit vagueness enables the populist leaders to allow more people to associate themselves with “the nation” constructed by them (Westlind, 1996).

The analysis of the photos included in the texts showed that several material props associated with Hinduism were consistently present, i.e. lotus flowers, saffron color and caricatures of the Hindu lords to convey the symbolic association with the Hindu identities. The flower of lotus is commonly mentioned in the Hindu Vedic literatures and in the prominent caricatures of the Hindu gods they are often portrayed along with the lotus (Tresidder, 1997). During the 2019 election campaigns of the BJP, the lotus was seen everywhere as a decoration at the political rallies and garlands used to greet the top leaders. Similarly, the connotations of Hinduism consider saffron colors as a symbol of purity and it is accepted as the most sacred color in the religion (Jha, 2014). The historical accounts also confirm that the RSS had also demanded the plain saffron color flag to be the national flag of India after independence which happens to be the flag of the right-wing Hindu organization as well. The saffron color was the second most dominant element of the visuals of the 2019 election campaign. The leading BJP leaders and their supporters were seen wearing mufflers, scarves and turbans of saffron color. The decorative materials and marquees used for political gatherings were also found to have used saffron-colored clothes. The third important Hindu connotations used to signify the religious identities of “the people” were the caricatures of the mythological gods of Hinduism. Due to the fact that discursive text was sampled on the basis of days that carried Hindu festivals or important events, the presence of such caricatures and visuals of Hindu religious rituals seems to be natural. However, their significance

to construct “the Hindutva-nation” cannot be ignored. These Hindu gods included *Lord Ram*, *Lord Buddha* and *Lord Hanuman* whose birth festivals took place during the 2019 election days.

Likewise, the texts other than the photos also carried the mentions of these Hindu religious symbols. The plain citations of word “lotus” were frequently found in the texts. However, another reason for these frequent mentions could be the fact that it was also the electoral sign of the BJP. The messages to convey the religious significance of festivals such as *Vishu*, *Akshaya Tritiya* and *Baisakhi* were sent out to the public. However, the textual mentions of “saffron” were always used by the leaders of the BJP to show dominance of Hinduism and strong hold of the Hindutva doctrine. These tweets carried the connotations such as “saffron-ization of India”, “saffron wave”, “saffron is coming” and “saffron flag” to express the bond of pro-Hindutva forces of the *Sangh Parivar*. The textual mention of the Hindu gods, except the public message about their birth festivals, were also found to be used to draw metaphorical references to the BJP and the opposition parties based on their mythological characters.



**Photo 2: The illustration of different Hindu lords found in visual content**

For example, a tweet stated “On May 23, the people will know who is Duryodhana and who is Arjun (@AmitShah)” while drawing an antagonizing mythological reference of a villain and a hero among the BJP and the opposition parties respectively. Similarly, while delivering his victory speech to the public gathering on May 23, 2019 Prime Minister Narendra Modi also relied on Hindu mythological gods to address “the people” while also asserting the subtle vagueness as suggested by Westlind (1996). He said:

“Friends, when the war of Mahabharata ended, then Krishna was asked who you were on your side. I understand that the answer given by Lord Shri Krishna during the Mahabharata era at that time is today in the 21st century, 130 crore citizens of India in this election of 2019, *Janata Janardhana* has responded as *Shri Krishna*. And *Shri Krishna* replied that I was not in favor of anyone, I was standing in favor of *Hastinapur* only for *Hastinapur* (Narendra Modi at public gathering on May 23, 2019).”



Here, Modi has compared the 2019 Indian election with the legendary war of mythological Mahabharat while equalizing himself and his supporter to the Hindu mythological lord Krishna.



**Photo 3: Dominance of saffron color at political gathering (tweeted by @BJP4India)**

All this use of symbolism also goes in complete and absolute alignment with the argument of the RSS founder K. B. Hedgewar who said that the cultural and religious legacy of Hinduism must become the primary essence of India's national identity once it gains freedom from Britain (Chitkara, 2004; Goyal, 1979; Kanungo, 2002; Andersen and Damle, 1987). Savarkar also endorsed this conception of Hindutva-nation as follows: "the Hindu culture is the life-breath of Hindustan. It is therefore clear that if Hindustan is to be protected, we should first nourish the Hindu culture... It is therefore the duty of every Hindu to do his best to consolidate Hindu society" (Kumar and Muralidhar, 1997). These tweets shared by the BJP stalwarts Amit Shah and Narendra Modi also signify the similar construction of the Hindutva-nation or the people: "Shree Ram is the idol of every Indian, he exists in the culture and ethos of India. No one can stop us from worshipping him (@AmitShah)." Another one is as following: "The iconic Badrinath Temple remains an important part of our culture and ethos. Had the honour of joining the Puja at the Temple today (@narendramodi)".



**Photo 4: BJP leader Amit Shah attending a ritual at Hindu temple (tweeted by @BJP4India)**

The conception of “the people” based on the teachings of another RSS leader named M. S. Golwalkar, was also seen in the text. He said:

“we [the Hindus] have been in undisputed and undisturbed possession of this land for over 8 or even 10 thousand years before the land was invaded by any foreign race... we Hindus came into this land from nowhere, but are indigenous children of the soil always, from times immemorial and are natural masters of the country” (Golwalkar, 1939).

The following tweets sent out by Amit Shah and Adityanath Yogi also highlight the same debate on Hindu identity and a pretext to protect that identity:

- “During the SP-BSP era, the youth of Uttar Pradesh had an identity crisis, the youth was hesitant to name their city (@myogiadityanath)” – in order to draw a reference to a recent movement across India to rename the cities named after Muslims to give them Hindu identity.
- “You decide for yourself, who will you vote for ? Congress has a fraud letter: silence on Ram temple construction. BJP has a resolution letter: Construction of Ram temple soon within the scope of the constitution (@AmitShah)” – to show that only the BJP was sincere



to establish the Ram mandir on the place of *Babri* Mosque as outlined by the Hindutva movement.

- “Were Kashmiri Pandits massacred or not? (@AmitShah)” – in an attempt to repeat the claim of most pro-Hindutva groups that Hindus living in Jammu and Kashmir were brutally killed and forced to leave this region by the Muslims.
- “There's a difference between the infiltrators and refugees. The Citizenship Amendment Bill is meant for the persecuted refugees (@AmitShah)” – while drawing a subtle reference to what Golwalkar said even before the independence of India. Another tweet which stated: “The Hindu, Sikh, Christian, Jain and Buddhist arrived as refugees, we are going to give them citizenship (@AmitShah)” completes the exact context of the Citizenship Amendment Act introduced by the BJP which discriminates Muslims immigrants, just as they have been referred to as infiltrators here. This antagonism symbolizes that “the Hindutva-nation” does not include the Muslims.
- “Those Muslims continued to unite, did not know when the Hindu became one (@myogiadityanath)” also exhibits a similar prejudicial sentiment towards Muslims.

Although a considerable amount of the texts explored for the Critical Discourse Analysis proves the presence of manufacturing of “the people” through the concept of the Hindutva doctrine, still it appears that the BJP mainly depended on the conception of “the antagonizing others”. The tweets mentioned above also point towards this discourse practice. That is why this section must be reviewed in connection with the next section to grasp a whole contextual understanding which deals with the construction of the two core concepts of populism.

### 3.2.3. Construction of Antagonistic Others

The construction of “the others” is another important dimension of every populist movement, which identifies an antagonistic group of “the people” (Kazin, 1995; Westlind, 1996; Mudde, 2016). Generally, populist leaders associate themselves with “the people” in order to establish their opposition to “the others” which are seen to be responsible for the ailment of the existing system. The populists hence offer a solution to the people in this “us versus them” conundrum (Barr, 2009). However, the populists are cautious while constructing “the people” in electoral populism and instead attempt to expand their outreach of public support and put more efforts on the construction and ostracization of “the others” (Westlind, 1996; Barr, 2009; Savage, 2010). In other words, the subtle vagueness associated with the construction of “the people” gets transformed into outright public declaration when it comes to defining “the others”.

This study takes the Hindutva doctrine into consideration to assess the nature of its application to single out a specific segment of society and attack the established political elites with an aim to secure victory in the 2019 general election. The thematic CDA of the selected discursive texts revealed that the BJP explicitly targeted Muslims as the potential others, and levelled accusations of being pro-Muslim, pro-Kashmiri, pro-Pakistan and anti-Hindu against opposition parties on the basis of contextual historical references to declare them “the corrupt elites” and part of “the others”. The literature cited in previous chapters also confirmed that the Hindutva movement has historically demanded the abolishment of special civil code for Muslims, abrogation of special autonomous status of Jammu and Kashmir, and restrained ties with Pakistan. The 2019 election manifesto of the BJP also categorically made electoral promises to fulfill this Hindutva-focused political agenda.

Before going into an in-depth interpretation of the texts under this theme, it is important to take note an interesting transformation in the Hindutva doctrine. The historical references and cited literature confirmed that Muslims, Christians and Communists of India were included in “the others” (Savarkar, 1924; Golwalkar, 1939; Chaudhuri, 1951; Qureshi, 1989; Savarkar, 1989; Sil, 2002); however, the discursive analysis revealed that the Christian Indians are now included as a part of “the people” instead of “the others”. On the matter of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the excerpts from Twitter-based text stated: “The Hindu, Sikh, Christian, Jain and Buddhist arrived as refugees are going to be given citizenship by government (@AmitShah)”, meanwhile the Muslims have been left out as the others by saying that “Modi ji's government will first give citizenship to refugees through Citizen Amendment Bill. Later, the evacuation of intruders will be done from Calcutta to Kutch and from Kashmir to Kanyakumari (@AmitShah)” with a tag of intruders. This is exactly how the early proponents of the Hindutva doctrine also referred to Muslims in their publications. Likewise, the communists also continue to be part of “the others” through negative referencing as per teachings of the original Hindutva doctrine: “Communists ruled in Bengal when they sowed the seeds of violence in Bengal politics. When Communists were removed from power TMC has pursued the same culture (@AmitShah)”.

Similarly, the repeated references and mentions to the anti-Muslim anthem known as *Vande Mataram* or *Bande Mataram* at the political rallies of the BJP leaders connote that the Muslims have been excluded from conception of “the people” under the Hindutva doctrine. An excerpt states: “Brothers and sisters, they have brought such people into the field who are also reluctant to speak *Vande Mataram*. Who will not respect *Vande Mataram*, how will respect mother India?”, and the mention of a Muslim name in the tweet “Real Name - Mohammad Nisar, Orange T-shirt, *Tilak* on Forehead. Now you can understand many things, You can also connect this (RT

@BJP4UP) exhibits an alignment the same tone of “the others” for the Muslims. Another dimension of tagging the Muslims as “the others” was the use of contents about Rohingya Muslims of Myanmar in some tweets and retweets: “Amnesty forced to admit genocide of Hindu population by the Rohingyas. All those who campaigned for Rohingyas to be given refuge should answer it now (RT @BJP4UP)”. The human rights activists and politicians of opposition parties who urged the BJP government to give refuge to the persecuted Rohingya Muslim community in India seem to be the immediate target of this text: “There was a ruckus inside Islampur to recruit Urdu teachers, the children there said that we want to study in Bengali. But Mamta said that you have to study in Urdu, when the children protested, the 2 children named Rajesh and Tapas were hurt (@BJPLive)” was tweeted by the BJP leader Amit Shah to signify the Urdu language of Muslims as a foreign language while suggesting that it is unwelcomed by the Indian children. In the same excerpt, he tagged the opposition leader Mamata Banerjee as part of “the antagonizing others” and “the elite of the ailing system” for being a supporter of the Urdu language of Muslims. Another tweet by the BJP leader said that “During her press conf, Mamata Banerjee today said she will attend an iftar party next week. While saying it she also added, “*Jai Shri Ram* cannot be chanted in Bengal” (@RajatSethi86)” to suggest the notion of “the others” for the same opposition politician from the West Bengal state for expressing an intention to become part of a ceremony to break the fast with Muslims during the month of Ramadan. Likewise, the UP Chief Minister Adityanath Yogi labeled several opposition political parties as “the others” for objecting to the BJP’s move to abrogate special civil code for the Muslims and introduce “a uniform civil code in India”: “When it comes to triple talaq, SP, BSP, Congress unite against it (@BJP4India)”, suggesting that these political parties were pro-Muslim through such efforts.

Another significant aspect of “construction of the antagonizing others” was by accusing the opposition parties of being anti-Hindu:

- “I have always held that the @MamataOfficial led TMC is anti-Hindu, opposed to our traditions, has disdain for our faith & our modes of worship, works to decimate our legacy, our heritage & stands for appeasement politics... here is one more example of that contempt (@anirbanganguly)” – Mamata Banerjee was seen to have been accused of being anti-Hindu in order to symbolize her political party as “the others”.
- Again Mamata Banerjee’s political party which holds power stakes in the West Bengal state has been accused of anti-Hindu and blasphemy: “TMC goons demolished the idol of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar during Bhai Amit Shah's roadshow in Kolkata (@anirbanganguly)”.
- “Mamata Didi, why do you want to stop us from chanting ‘Jai Shree Ram’ in India? Shree Ram is the idol of every Indian, he exists in the culture and ethos of India. No one can stop

us from worshipping him (@BJPLive)” – this time Mamata Banerjee has been accused of being anti-Hindu for allegedly opposing Hindutva's iconic slogan which means “Hail Lord Ram”.

- Here the BJP leader Amit Shah offers “the people” to get rid of “the others” and practice the Hinduism more freely after bringing the BJP to power: “Now the procession of Saraswati Pooja, Durga Puja and Ram Navami will take place inside Bengal and there is no need for Mamta Didi to stop it. Once you feed the lotus to 23 seats in Bengal (@AmitShah)”. Another tweet also offered a similar narrative of challenging the others: “I have been watching for 3 days, Mamata didi objecting to Jai Shri Ram slogans in Bengal. You tell me, in any corner of India, by taking the name of King Rama, a symbol of Indian culture, whose life was dedicated to the subjects. Can anyone stop us? (@AmitShah)”
- The INC that is considered as the largest opposing political party in India was also identified as “the others” for the accusation of maligning Hinduism: “The Congress government had created a fake theory of saffron terror and has maligned our culture in the world (@AmitShah)”.
- “How dare you say 'drama in Kedarnath'? With such comments, @RahulGandhi is confirming he is an “Election time Hindu (Chunavi Hindu)” and the so-called Dharmik Yatra to Mansarovar was just a political stunt. Now that the elections are over, @RahulGandhi is showing real colours! (@GVLNRAO)” – The BJP has openly called the INC chief Rahul Gandhi as an opportunist Hindu who only uses the religion to garner electoral support. Meanwhile, an impression of Gandhi's being anti-Hindu has been created by criticizing him for calling Narendra Modi's meditation on May 18 and May 19 to be a political stunt.

The BJP also tried to build a political discourse around the events of militancy in the Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) region while accusing the INC of not doing enough to protect the Hindu residents of the J&K: “They saw the atrocities on Kashmiri Pandits but ignored them (@AmitShah)”. The BJP outrightly accused the INC for backing the Kashmiri youth who allegedly chanted anti-India mantra at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) of New Delhi during a protest. An excerpt from the texts suggested: “The Manifesto of the Congress Party has been created by a dismembered gang [*tukde tukde gang*]. Those who used to chant slogans in JNU, Bharat will be into pieces, *InshaAllah, InshaAllah*. I think this gang has made the Congress manifesto (@AmitShah)”. The local Kashmiri politicians and the pro-communism media outlets also got tagged as “the others” for being anti-Hindu or a little accommodating to the Muslims of Kashmir – “A man is killed in Kashmir. Left Media & Omar Abdullah start spreading fake news that he was killed by Cow

vigilantes (@vinay1011)". Similarly, the sentiment of being anti-national was also applied in the context of Jammu and Kashmir to signify several opposition leaders as "the others" for questioning a militant attack which killed dozens of Indian soldiers in Pulwama, Kashmir region: "SP leader Ram Gopal Yadav insulted the martyrs of Pulwama, he questioned the army, Ram Gopal Yadav is speaking the language of Pakistan (@myogiadityanath)". Evidently, the INC's stand that they will hold talks with the separatist leaders of the Jammu and Kashmir to normalize the situation also got attacked by the BJP: "Brothers and sisters, the Congress is saying that they will talk unconditionally with those who instigate the youth by taking money from Pakistan (Narendra Modi at public gathering in Jammu and Kashmir on April 14, 2019)".

The rhetoric of being pro-Pakistan was widely used against the opposition political groups as well as their political leaders with the most common reference as "Is Congress talking about India's favor or Pakistan's? (Narendra Modi at public gathering in Jammu and Kashmir on April 14, 2019)".

Below are some more excerpts from the texts along with their contextual and historical references that helped the BJP to build a political discourse through construction of "the antagonizing others":

- "Terrorists used to come from Pakistan, and used to do blasts here, and the Congress government used to cry in the world. They hit us, hit us, hit us. They used to do this, they used to cry, but today this is a new India (Narendra Modi at public gathering in Uttar Pradesh on April 14, 2019)"

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi presented a notion that the INC government only used to do hue and cry while the BJP government is taking practical measures to handle Pakistan's alleged involvement in terrorist activities inside India. He is apparently drawing references to the claims of Indian government to have conducted two surgical strikes against militant camps in Pakistan in 2016 and 2019. It was also during the 2019 election campaign when the UN Security Council moved to declare Pakistan-based Masood Azhar as a global terrorist. Modi refers to the INC's failure to do anything like this as a pro-Pakistan gesture. The politicians from the opposition parties who demanded explanation from the government on the claims of anti-militant surgical strikes in India were also symbolized as pro-Pakistan:

- “Those who sing songs of Pakistan should question why you are talking about the question on air strike. The country is unfortunate that bread eaters in our country are talking like this (Narendra Modi at public gathering in Utter Pradesh on April 14, 2019).”
- “On the one hand, leaders like Ashok Gehlot themselves demand proof of the surgical strike carried out by India, on the other hand they are fully aware of the surgical strike done by Pakistan. (@BJP4Rajasthan)”.

Here the references have been drawn to the claims of surgical strikes by India and Pakistan’s retaliatory actions against India during February 2019 when an Indian pilot was also arrested by Pakistan after his airplane was shot down by the Pakistan Airforce:. The demands for explanation on the UN’s move to declare Masood Azhar a terrorist was also responded by the BJP in the same manner:

- “What does Kamal Nath want the UN meeting to be about India's election ? Today the whole world has accepted that Pakistan is harboring terrorism (@AmitShah)”.

It is important to note that this development at the United Nations took place just weeks ahead of the 2019 general election of India.

Here is another statement by Prime Minister Narendra Modi:

- “Even Pakistan had accepted that its people were involved in the terror attack but here in India they were saying there was no Pakistani involvement. We should question those who live in our country and hail Pakistan. Why do they speak Pakistan’s language? Even after the 26/11 attack they almost released a book giving clean chit to Pakistan. What kind of mentality is this? (Narendra Modi at public gathering in Jammu and Kashmir on April 14, 2019)”

Modi here draws a reference to the alleged inaction by the INC government after the 2009 Mumbai attacks for which India had accused Pakistan-based militant groups. By pinpointing the INC as anti-national, pro-Pakistan and inefficient, Modi actually tried to highlight the efforts of the BJP government after the similar militant attacks in India: they claimed to have conducted two surgical strikes inside Pakistan, pursued the cases against the alleged Pakistani militants at the UN, and speeded up diplomatic efforts against Pakistan at forums like Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to get it blacklisted for having weak laws on terror financing.

### 3.2.4. Portrayal of Charismatic Leadership

The Hindutva movement as discussed in the chapter has also progressed over the time as per the teachings of several charismatic personalities who provided a necessary direction to the movement just like other populist movements (Di Tella, 1965 and 1997). These charismatic leaders maintained a strong and direct communication with the people to shape the public discourse, and this feature clearly helped the Hindutva movement to build a strong network at the grassroots level. Lately, Narendra Modi emerged as a central leader and ideologue of the BJP and consolidated the ideological and political power in the image of the “Development Man or *Vikas Purush*” (Diwakar, 2014; Kaul, 2017). The electoral campaign of the BJP during the 2019 general elections was outrightly focused on Narendra Modi as an undisputed central and charismatic leader of the Hindutva struggle for the Sangh Family (*Parivar*).

An analysis of the texts shows that “Narendra Modi” was the most frequently repeated keyword associated with a political figure. Likewise Modi’s Twitter username “@narendramodi” was also among top mentions. The visuals shared by the selected Twitter accounts also confirm that Narendra Modi’s photos were popularly used by the public and the leaders at political rallies i.e. face masks, banners and stage backdrops. Additionally, the slogans used by the BJP in the texts were also focused on just one person: Narendra Modi. These were the top five slogans from the texts:

- “*Apni Sarkar Modi Sarkar*” – Our government, Modi government.
- “*Phir Ek Bar Modi Sarkar*” – Once again, Modi government.
- “*Bharat Mangay Modi Sarkar*” – India wants Modi government.
- “*Bharat Mange Modi Dobara*” – India wants Modi government again.
- “*Bharat Bole Modi Phir Se*” – India says Modi once again.

Similarly, the content shared by the BJP and its leadership also carried a large number of hashtags and all of them were built around Narendra Modi. It also indicates the primary focus of the 2019 election campaign as well as the clear realization of the presence of Narendra Modi as the charismatic leader of the Hindutva movement, and the people were appealed to stand behind him. It was also noticed that the specific hashtag would change on different days and all of the Twitter accounts of the BJP and its leaders would share the political messages using the same hashtags on that specific day, which is a feature of a well-organized election campaign. A list of most frequent hashtags appearing in the texts is as follows in order of their frequency:

- #hardilmeimodi – Modi is in every heart.
- #bharatmangemodidobara – India wants Modi again.
- #bharatbolemodifirse – India says Modi again.
- #phirekbaarmodisarkar – Once again Modi government.
- #jeetegatomodihi – Modi will be the winner definitely.
- #harvotemodiko – Every vote to Modi.
- #modi2begins – Modi 2.0 begins.
- #modiaagaya – Modi has come.
- #modireturns – Modi returns.
- #everyvoteformodi – Every vote for Modi.
- #modionceagain – Modi once again.
- #myfirstvoteformodi – My first vote to Modi.
- #deshkagauravmodi – Modi is pride of the country.
- #harboothparmodi – Modi at every [polling] booth.
- #modiagain – Modi again.
- #modihiaayega – Modi is definitely coming.
- #firekbaarmodisarkar – Once again Modi government.
- #modihaikaamdar – Modi is the once who works.
- #modihaitohmumkinhai – It's possible, if there's Modi.
- #modiphirse – Modi again.

The analyzed texts shared by the selected Twitter accounts of the BJP and its leaders also mentioned certain distinctive features associated with the charismatic personality of their undisputed and central leader: Narendra Modi. These characteristics were referred to through following keywords:

- Leadership – it refers to Narendra Modi as a politician who has great leadership skills and the people of India hold a high confidence in him.
- Development – a reference to Narendra Modi's development oriented imagery while he was head of Gujarat's state government as well as being the Prime Minister.
- Economic Growth – it has been used to indicate that Narendra Modi introduced extraordinary economic policies for India and the showed the results that country's economy is making a great performance under his leadership.
- Surgical Strike – this refers to Narendra Modi's aggressive trait of leadership when it comes to attack the enemies and protection of national interest. It cites the decisive move of the



BJP government to conduct a surgical strike inside Pakistan in 2016 following an alleged militant attack in the Jammu and Kashmir region.

- Balakot Airstrike – it refers to India’s airstrikes near Pakistan’s Balakot district where according to the Indian claims around 300 militants were killed. This citation also underscores Narendra Modi has strong leader who would take handle the terrorism in the hardest possible way to ensure national security.
- Watchman – this keyword refers to the popular trend among the BJP leaders who added the word “chowkidar” which means watchman to their Twitter usernames to build a discourse that they were protectors of the national security and economy of India. It was adopted by the BJP after an opposition leader sarcastically called Modi a watchman who was stealing from the public.
- Diplomatic Success – these keywords refer to the Indian diplomatic efforts against Pakistan at the UNSC (United Nations Security Council) and Financial Action Task Force (FATF) where Pakistan-based alleged militant commander Masood Azhar was declared a terrorist and Pakistan was placed in grey list for weak laws against terror financing.

Here are some excerpts carrying references to the several characteristics and successes associated with the charismatic guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi:

- “There was a feeling in the public mind that there is no concrete action against terrorism. After the arrival of Modi ji, the public felt confident that now a leader has come who can enter the house of terrorists and take action. (@BJP4India)”
- “It is only under Modi that India has struck twice at the place of origin of terrorists in the form of the 2016 surgical strike and 2019 airstrike at Balakot. (@BJP4India)”
- “The terror tag on Masood Azhar is the biggest diplomatic victory of Narendra Modi. (@AmitShah)”
- “Bomb blasts have stopped in Delhi as well as in the whole country, because now the fear of Modi that is in the minds of terrorists. (@AmitShah)”
- “They do not believe how much diplomatic success has been achieved by the Prime Minister of India? Today the whole world has recognized that Pakistan is harboring terrorism. (@BJPLive)”
- “The people of the country are feeling safe under the leadership of Modi ji, the country’s economy has become the world’s fastest growing economy and has become the sixth largest economy in the world. (@AmitShah)”

The characteristics of self-praise were also found in the speeches made to the public gathering by Prime Minister Narendra Modi showing an effort to pitch himself as the most appropriate contender for the high office of the Prime Minister of India.

- “Earlier the army used to ask for permission, but the Congress government was unable to show courage. While our policy on the security of the country is clear and the country has confidence in the watchman. (Narendra Modi at public rally in Jammu and Kashmir on April 14, 2019)”
- “Friends, when scientists were asked by the government of this watchman, I said brother, why tomorrow, do so today, and we immediately cleared the test of the missile targeting the satellite. (Narendra Modi at public rally in Utter Pradesh on April 14, 2019)”
- “At the same time, this watchman is doing one day and night to transfer 75 thousand crore rupees to the account of 12 crore farmers. (Narendra Modi at public rally in Utter Pradesh on April 14, 2019)”

The qualitative analysis of the sampled discursive texts also showed how the popularity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi among the public and the global leadership made him a special and distinctively loved leader of India.

- “Parents in UP name the kid born on May 23 Narendra Modi. (@narendramodi\_in)”
- “When I went to Saudi Arabia for the first time, he [Modi] had the greatest honor. In Palestine and Afghanistan also we were honored with great respect. (@AmitShah)”
- “In India New definition of EVM- “Everybody Voted Modi” (@kuljeetschahal)”
- “I salute the people of India for making 'Modi Sarkar' a symbol of people's faith and unprecedented development. To all the countrymen! (@AmitShah)”

These excerpts also suggest how the discourse built by the BJP was being perceived and consumed the common people in a categorically positive way, leading to a reciprocal steps by the people.

### **3.2.5. Politically Reluctant Populism of Hindutva**

The Hindutva movement has always tried to portray itself as a struggle of social and cultural reforms instead of an outright political drive since the very early days. The calls for “one nation, one religion, one culture and one language” in the name of Lord Ram to provide Hindu icons, symbols, norms and values a dominance as the national elements of India (Frykenberg, 2008).

The cited literature also suggests that the Hindutva movement began as a Hindu revivalist campaign from the time of Brahma Samaj, Theosophical Society, Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna Movement and Prarthana Samaj (Udayakumar, 2005; Frykenberg, 2008). The RSS also declared that it sought spiritual and cultural revival of Hinduism (Kanungo, 2002; Goyal, 1979; Chitkara, 2004; Andersen and Damle, 1987), and it even kept itself at a distance from the political process of India's independence also and remained busy with the character building of Hindus only (Andersen and Damle, 1987; Bhatt, 2001). Likewise, Christophe Jaffrelot (2013) maintains that the BJS was also more focused on spreading its Hindutva ideology at the grassroots level instead of winning elections. However, this reluctance of politics slowly diminished with the establishment of the BJP, but yet this subtle political reluctance dominates the public sphere of the BJP as it promises to protect Hinduism as a religion and revive its culture to the heights of mythological *Mahabharata* in the light of the Hindutva doctrine. The election manifestos of the BJP released in 2014 and 2019 also carried several electoral promises to revive the Hindu culture and ensure protection of Hinduism as a religion, i.e. the establishment of the Ram Temple at the place of the Babri Masjid and the introduction of the Citizenship of Amendment Act (CAA) to issue citizenship to the persecuted Hindus of the neighboring countries. This political reluctance of the BJP and the Hindutva doctrine is completely aligned with the scholarly features of populism: populist movements hardly call themselves something political and greatly rely on the slogans such as “a call for better governance” and always focus on their ideological struggle as a reason to mobilize the masses (Taggart, 2002: 67).

A Critical Discourse Analysis of the sampled texts reveals that the promises of the religious protection and cultural revival of Hinduism were also effectively utilized by the BJP and its leaders to build their political discourse during the 2019 election campaign. It suggests that the historical references, elements of mythological greatness, development projects for the construction and restoration of Hindu temples, several possible threats to Hinduism and a promise to undertake necessary legislation to fulfill the revivalist dream were frequently mentioned by the BJP to appeal the people for getting their electoral support in the 2019 general election. Here are the sub-themes found under this theme as a result of qualitative analysis of the texts:

- Construction Ram Temple in Ayodhya – “Our stand on issues of faith like that of the building of Ram temple (@AmitShah)”.
- Restoration of Anti-Women Hindu Tradition at Sabarimala Temple – “Our stand on issues of faith like... restoration of tradition in Sabarimala temple is crystal clear (@AmitShah)”

This one refers to the BJP's opposition to the verdict of an Indian court which allowed adult women to enter the Sabarimala temple. Traditionally, the women above the age of menstruation were not allowed in the temple, and despite the court's verdict the BJP still continues to view it as a violation of Hindu culture and promises the restoration of status quo.

- “Magnificent, Soulful and Divine Somnath (@AmitShah)”, “Somnath ... unique symbol of faith and glorious eternal tradition @AmitShah” and “In video clip: BJP chief Amit Shah performing puja at Somnath temple in Gujarat (@BJPLive)”:

This refers to the historic campaign of Mehmood Ghaznavi who attacked the 13th century India for seventeen times and eventually destroyed the Somnath temple. Ghaznavi's campaign in India is considered a major step towards the arrival of Muslims in Indian sub-continent. These excerpts connote the BJP's strong will to protect the Hindu religion and revive its culture as per the mythology of *Mahabharat*.

- “The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inquired about the pace of development works going on in Kedarnath temple (@BJP4India)” and “ Photos: Reviewing aspects of the ongoing Kedarnath Development Project (@narendramodi)”.

It refers to the BJP's effort to provide all necessary facilities at the key temples to conserve Hinduism as a religion and culture.

- “Now the procession of *Saraswati Pooja*, *Durga Puja* and *Ram Navami* will take place inside Bengal and there is no need for Mamta Didi to stop it. Once you 23 seats to lotus in Bengal (@AmitShah)”.
- “Shree Ram is the idol of every Indian, he exists in the culture and ethos of India. No one can stop us from worshipping him (@AmitShah)”.
- “When we came to power, we...Also started the *Kandar* yatra again. Also prohibited people living in Rampur who do not respect sisters and daughters (@AmitShah)”.
- “Samajwadi Party government then went to ban *Krishna Janmashtami*, when we remain in government...so that nothing happens during the festival...we worked on Budget speech Shri Yogi Aditya (@BJP4UP)”.

These quotes refer to the BJP's effort to portray the antagonistic others as anti-Hindu while itself as a defender and protector of the Hindu religion and rituals.

- “The Congress government had created fake theory of saffron terror and maligned our culture in the world (@AmitShah)”.
- “In the world without evidence, the culture that gave the message of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* is called a terrorist. This is going to be costly for Congress (@narendramodi)”

The BJP thus aims to take all significant steps to guarantee that Hinduism is cleared of any association with terrorism, unlike the INC, which is accused of being anti-Hindu by the BJP.

- “Modi ji’s government will... give citizenship to refugees through Citizen Amendment Bill..(@AmitShah)”:

Making India a Homeland for Hindus refers to the electoral promise of the BJP that Hindu, Jain, Christian and Sikh refugees who face persecution in the neighboring countries will be provided Indian citizenship. Muslims have been discriminately singled out of this legislation.

- “On the initiative of India, the United Nations declared June 21 as International Yoga Day and today this day is celebrated with great enthusiasm all over the world (@BJP4MP)”.
- “Swami Vivekananda had said that America will adopt our culture the day a sleeping Hindu wakes up. That day is getting closer (@rohit\_chahal)”.

The promotion of the Hindu culture at the global level refers to the construction of a political discourse in favor of the BJP to show that it is committed to the conservation and promotion of the Hindu culture unlike the typical political parties to confirm the contemporary political reluctance in the Hindutva movement.

- Modi’s Meditation in Cave – refers to the most important incident during the final round of voting during the general polls of 2019 of India when Narendra Modi started an hours-long meditation in a Himalayan cave near *Kedarnath* temple. Modi’s meditation was also broadcasted live through social media platforms and traditional media channels. It signifies how Modi practices Hinduism and its rituals at personal level and gives importance to their conservation.

These discourse built on the basis of Modi’s meditation in the cave also depicted that he was a person just like the common Indians who holds his beliefs very close to heart and also puts them into practice, unlike the general imagery of a politician in the minds of the public.

### 3.2.6. Introduction of Hindutva Reforms in India

The BJP's electioneering movement for 2019 polls largely built the political discourse on the basis of the Hindutva doctrine and promised several reforms to the public to lead toward practical implementation. That is why the victory of the BJP was also termed as the beginning of Hindutva 2.0 in the political messages. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also stated the following in his victory speech to a public gathering on May 23, 2019: "We are about to embark on a new journey from here to take forward our pledge of new India with a new energy (@BJP4UP)". The rhetoric of "Hindutva 2.0" or "New India" also widely visible in the analyzed discursive texts and #NewIndia hashtag was frequently mentioned with a contextual common public discourse that it was "March towards Renaissance (RT @vinay1011)" of the Hindutva in India.

The promises of reforms associated with the conception of "New India" refer to the cited literature about the claim on the rise of populism: a sense of crisis and a belief that existing political setup is unable to resolve the crisis prevails in the society, and the populists build an alternative discourse on this basis to offer a political pathology to the ailing existing system (Taggart, 2002). A CDA of the sampled texts reveals a number of reforms promised by the BJP had clear historic and ideological connections with the Hindutva movement. Furthermore, it is important to be mentioned here that promises of these reforms were also made to re-connect the 2019 election campaign with the original standing of the Hindutva movement. An earlier section of this chapter has already discussed these proposed reforms in a different manner. However, in order to establish the clarity about the Hindutva-based populist discourse of the BJP, it seems appropriate to enlist these Hindutva reforms along with their historical and contextual explanations here:

- Citizenship for the non-Muslim Refugees – "We will first bring CAB to give Indian citizenship to the Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain and Christian refugees from the neighbouring countries and then will ensure that every infiltrator is identified and deported out of India (@AmitShah)".

It embodies the long standing demand of the Hindutva movement that India should serve a secure homeland for the Hindus from around the world. Under the CAB or the CAA, although other minorities such as Christians, Sikhs or Jains have also been promised Indian citizenship, the exclusion of Muslims indicates the rhetoric of the Hindutva doctrine that Muslims are foreign infiltrators and they must not be welcomed in India.

- Completion of National Register of Citizens (NRC): “The SC had asked the previous government to implement NRC as well but they did not do it. Now, when we are implementing the NRC. If someone is trying to make unfounded allegations then they seem to consider themselves good enough to question the wisdom of the SC (@BJPLive)”.

It draws a meaningful reference once it is taken into consideration along with the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) which would enable all non-Muslims to get Indian citizenship, and only the Muslim immigrants and undocumented Indian Muslims will be reduced to second-level citizens with no fundamental rights. However, the Muslims can avoid possible expulsion from India or humiliation of being unequal citizens by simply converting to Hinduism, exactly as suggested by all of the leading proponents of the Hindutva doctrine.

- Abrogation of Constitutional Article 370 – “In the last five years we have made all the necessary efforts to ensure peace in Jammu and Kashmir through decisive action and a firm policy. We reiterate our view of Article 370 from the time of the Jana Sangh (@AmitShah)”.

The Hindutva proponents had opposed the inclusion of Article 370 of India legislative guidelines which granted autonomous status to the country’s Muslim-dominant Jammu and Kashmir region.

- Abrogation of Constitutional Article 35A – “We are also committed to abolishing Section 35A. We believe that Section 35A is discriminatory against non- permanent residents and women of Jammu and Kashmir. This section is also a hindrance in the development of Jammu and Kashmir (@BJPLive)”.

This refers to Hindutva-led efforts for abrogation of article 35A of the Indian constitution whose absence could possibly change the demographics of the Muslim-majority Jammu and Kashmir region. The article forbade the non-residents to buy any properties, jobs or domicile of the Jammu and Kashmir region.

- Introduction of Uniform Civil Code – “Prime Minister @narendramodi ji who has given justice to women suffering from triple talaq in the history of independent India” and “Be it a demand of uniform civil code, be it Section 370 or 35A...We will sit and decide that we will remove it (@BJP4Punjab)”.

It refers to early concerns of the Hindutva movement after independence of India when the INC government had introduced a secular civil law for Hindu population while an Islamic civil code

was allowed for the Muslims, since then the Hindutva-associated groups demand an end to this special Muslim civil code and introduction of uniform civil code in all of India. This reform equals to a mere symbolic victory over Muslims, however, shows the anti-Muslim sentiments of the Hindu movement at the same time.

### 3.2.7. Identifying a Foreign Enemy

The cited literature suggests that the populist movements along with conception of the antagonistic other, also rely on the identification a foreign enemy to mobilize the voters behind themselves (Mouzelis, 1985; Taguieff, 1995; Taggart, 2000; Mudde, 2004). The political environment of India presents Pakistan as a perfect foreign enemy. The analysis of excerpts from the discursive texts associated with the theme of construction of “the antagonizing others” within India also showed that the BJP and its leaders accused their opponents of being pro-Pakistan to build a political discourse against them. The mention of “Pakistan” as a negative keyword was found to be very frequent. In addition to Pakistan’s mention for the construction of “the antagonizing others”, the thematic conception of Pakistan as a foreign enemy has been done on the basis of three sub-themes:

- Pakistan is Behind Terrorism in India – “Thus the most important issue which, confronts India in the short, medium and even the long run, is how do we handle the State of Jammu and Kashmir and terrorism emanating from Pakistan and from within? (@arunjaitley)”.

It refers to an outright accusation that Pakistan’s involved in sponsorship of terrorism in India, especially in the Jammu and Kashmir, and India needs to handle this foreign enemy in the best way possible.

- Pakistan wants Separation of Jammu and Kashmir from India – “You see, are they threatening to separate Jammu and Kashmir from India, threatening bloodshed, threatening to make a separate Prime Minister here... Jammu and Kashmir is an unbreakable part of India (Narendra Modi at public gathering in Jammu and Kashmir on April 14, 2019)”.
- “By voting heavily in Jammu and Baramulla, you have given a strong blow to the terrorists’ bosses, Pakistan’s opportunists and the depressed bigots. (Narendra Modi at public gathering in Jammu and Kashmir on April 14, 2019)”



It refers to the Indian accusation of Pakistan's backing of Kashmiri separatist fighters and a conspiracy to break away the J&K from the remaining India. It has been suggested that a higher voter turnout in the J&K region should definitely send a negative message to Pakistan. It should also be taken into consideration here that Jammu and Kashmir is a contested territory between India and Pakistan.

- Pakistan is the top Target of India's Diplomatic Efforts in the World – “They do not believe how much diplomatic success has been achieved by the Prime Minister of India? Today the whole world has recognized that Pakistan is harboring terrorism (@AmitShah)”.

It refers to the Indian diplomatic efforts to isolate Pakistan in the global world or a notion that India is doing a lot to ‘expose’ Pakistan in the world so it must be treated a top foreign enemy.

The next section of this chapter includes a detailed discussion based on a number of events followed by the 2019 general election of India with a central idea that how the use of the Hindutva doctrine in the election campaign and introduction of Hindutva- reforms could potentially restructure the political and public sphere of India.

### **3.3. DISCUSSION**

In the light of the analysis of the selected texts from the 2019 election movement of the BJP, this section carries a debate on the transforming picture of India which is largely being re-shaped under the Hindutva doctrine. The discussion mainly revolves around four major developments were immediately followed by the 2019 general election of India and a series of events that complete the context of these developments, i.e. removal of article 370 of Indian's legislative constitution, the invocation of Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), Delhi's anti-Muslim riots, and the introduction of new domicile law in Jammu and Kashmir region. These incidents have been viewed as a part of the BJP's moves to implement the Hindutva doctrine as all these developments are completely aligned to the teachings and demands of the pro-Hindutva elements as outlined in the previous chapters of the thesis.

#### **3.3.1. Abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution**

Through its article 370, the constitution of India gave a special and autonomous status to the state of Jammu and Kashmir; a Muslim-majority region in the north of India which happens to be

disputed between India and Pakistan (Osmanczyk, 2003). The article empowered the state to have an autonomous administrative power, a flag of its own and a separate constitution (Venkataramanan, 2019). Additionally, Jammu and Kashmir's State Constituent Assembly was also authorized to suggest and review the relevant sections of the constitution that should be applied to the state or even recommend the removal of Article 370. However, the Jammu and Kashmir Constituent Assembly announced its dissolution without the abrogation of Article 370 in 1954, and a Presidential Order released a list of the articles of India's constitution which would be enforced in the state. Ever since, Article 370 became a key part of the Indian constitution (Noorani, 2011). During the last six decades, the same article 370 was time and again used by the Indian government to issue presidential decrees which directly reduced the administrative power of the state government. Thus, Article 370 always remained a topic of political disagreement in India, and the political and the social groups which identified themselves as part of the Sangh Parivar and participants of the Hindutva movement demanded the complete abrogation of this article since the early days of independence of India. They argue that the presence of Article 370 in the constitution depicted the incomplete accession of J&K region to India (Smith, 1966; Lahiry, 2005; Kanungo, 2006; Jaffrelot, 2007 and 2013), which is according to them "an integral, inseparable part of India" (Jaffrelot, 2009). The RSS also outrightly announced a similar opposition to the article which gave autonomy to a Muslim-majority region within India.

During the 2019 election campaign, the BJP once again made the abrogation of Article 370 part of its election manifesto and the BJP's central ideologues including Narendra Modi and Amit Shah announced to complete legislation on this issue immediately after the 2019 general election. They also drew a number of references to the Hindutva ideology and early leaders to prove the abrogation as an implementation of the Hindutva doctrine and a promise of decades. The texts analyzed in this chapter also endorsed the presence of such a political discourse during the 2019 general election. After gaining major dominance in the parliament during May 2019, the BJP tabled a bill to revoke Article 370 which was approved by the Lok Sabha as well as the Rajya Sabha on August 5 and August 6, 2019 respectively. The President of India also immediately signed the bill into the Indian law the autonomous powers associated with the state of Jammu and Kashmir ceased to exist. Consequently, the J&K region was divided into two union territories which were directly ruled by the Indian central government. Article 35A of the Indian constitution which supported autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir also became void. Prior to the introduction of this law, the Indian government enforced a state of curfew along with the blockade of telephones, cellular services, internet and cable TV while the political leadership was also arrested or placed under strict observation by the security forces. This kind of restrictions continued to stay enforced in the whole region for a several months to follow. It was only in January 2020 when the

restrictions were partially lifted, however, the political leadership was not released by the law enforcement agencies.

The abrogation of Article 370 and the restrictions that came along attracted harsh criticism, reactions and protests from within India as well as across the world. The main leader of India's largest opposition and center-left party, the INC, Rahul Gandhi termed the restrictions and arrests in Jammu and Kashmir as undemocratic and unconstitutional. There were also reports of protests in different parts of India while the protestors faced worst torture and action in Jammu and Kashmir particularly. The protests were also reported in different countries including the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bahrain, France, Australia, Germany and South Korea. The abrogation of the constitutional article and the restrictions imposed by the Indian government also triggered a massive global debate on social media networks and several hashtags including #KashmirBleeds became top discussed global topics on Twitter. Also, the strict way that was used by the Indian government to handle the possible protests and criticism is also an indication that the rulers of world's largest democratic are ready to go to any undemocratic-extent to enforce their ideological standing and reform India by challenging the local as well as global community in region which is globally recognized as a disputed region between India and Pakistan, and at least three wars have been fought between India and Pakistan over this territory.

All points taken together, the annulment of Article 370 of the Indian constitution is BJP's first practical move towards implementation of the Hindutva doctrine which largely shaped its election campaign during the 2019 general election. The abrogation of this article has resulted in virtual annexation of Jammu and Kashmir into India and an end to the autonomous status of the Muslim-majority region: a demand put forward by the Hindutva movement during the preliminary time of Indian independence, and later on renewed by the political parties such as the BJS as well the BJP which maintained that the oneness of the Indian motherland was the first and foremost pillar of the Hindutva doctrine. However, the abrogation of this iconic constitutional article also comes with a number of possible consequences at local and regional as well as global sphere as the United Nations Security Council has again renewed its recognition of J&K as a contested region and Pakistan has also moved the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to seek annulment of the Indian measures. The implementation of a controversial constitutional change through imposition of months-long harsh restrictions has also raised a question over the quality of democratic practices in India and sidelining of Indian minorities and dissent at local as well as international levels.

### 3.3.2. Citizenship Amendment Act

After a rather turbulent implementation on the decision to annul Article 370 of legislative framework, the Hindutva-oriented government of Narendra Modi moved to fulfill another electoral promise through introduction of Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) in the parliament in December 2019. This bill, as outlined by the Hindutva doctrine, was a clear move to single out Muslims and declare them as a lesser-equal religious minority group in India. The bill was approved by the lower and the upper houses of Indian parliament after a minimal debate and on December 12, 2019, the President of India introduced it as Citizenship Amendment Act into the law. Under the CAA, the Indian government is entitled to issue Indian citizenship status to the illegal immigrants who identify themselves as Hindu, Jain, Sikh, Parsi, Christian and Buddhist from the neighboring countries while Muslim immigrants do not qualify to benefit from this controversial law. The law would become lethal to the Muslims living in India for generations without any documentation as the BJP has also promised to complete the National Register of Citizens (also referred as the NRC) during the 2019 election campaign. For the completion of the NRC, all of the individuals living in India would be required to provide a set of documents prove their citizenship, and the undocumented or illegal immigrants of almost all other religions will eventually be granted Indian citizenship under the CAA, except Muslims. The CAA is fundamentally designed to function as discriminatory towards Muslims as the BJP while providing a reasoning behind approval of this law underscored that it aims to protect the minority groups from neighboring countries. However, it ignores the grave fact that a number of minority groups facing persecution in neighboring countries actually identify themselves as Muslims, i.e. the Rohingya community from Myanmar and the Ahmadiyya community from Pakistan.

The CAA can also be viewed as a stark implementation on “one nation, one caste, one religion and one language” slogan of Hindutva movement. In the light of the teachings of the Hindutva doctrine, which has been accepted as a guiding political ideology by the BJP, the Muslims of India who will fail to provide necessary documentation for the National Register of Citizens (NRC) will be left with exactly these options: either become a second-level citizen within India or even moved to the concentration camps or jails, convert or reconvert to Hinduism to benefit from the Citizenship Amendment Act, or quit India and settle somewhere else. Apparently, the introduction of the CAA and eventual completion of the NRC is a perfect move to meet the demand of the Hindutva movement to make India a home for Hindus. The same pro-Hindutva rhetoric of “the people” and “the others” was also seen during the campaign of 2019 election where the BJP leaders openly categorized the undocumented or illegal residents of India as

“immigrants” and “infiltrators”. The introduction of the CAA proves the assertion that only the Muslims are still being treated as “infiltrators” by the BJP.

The events that unfolded along with the introduction of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) were not much different from the ones followed by the abrogation of Article 370, but only fiercer as the whole India could not be placed under a lockdown to contain the protests and criticism. The strongest protests and government’s harshest response, however, was witnessed in Delhi where historically Muslim-dominated universities, i.e. Aligarh Muslims University and Jamia Millia Islamia became the center of anti-CAA protests and police tortured the students. The violence against the anti-CAA protesters were also reported at other places such as Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Delhi where the masked and armed mob who were allegedly the activists of BJP’s student off-shoot Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad attacked the representatives of JNU Student Union (JNUSU). A similar attack was also recorded at Jamia Millia Islamia where an armed man shot fire at the anti-CAA protesters while chanting “Jay Shri Ram” slogan which is commonly used by the pro-Hindutva groups. The multiple incidents of firing were also reported to have taken place at *Shaheen Bagh* where thousands of Muslim women staged months-long protest against the CAA. Interestingly, these incidents of attacks against anti-CAA protesters by the non-police elements took place during the days when the BJP’s key leader and Uttar Pradesh (UP) Chief Minister Adityanath Yogi publicly said “*Boli Nahi, Goli Se Samjhaya Jayega* (we will not talk, but use bullets to reason)” about the anti-CAA protesters.

The CAA is a textbook example of the ostracization of Muslim minority groups and the BJP’s inclination towards undemocratic practices to implement its political agenda which finds roots in the Hindutva doctrine. Although the BJP tried to portray the CAA as an assurance to safeguard the minority groups against persecution in the neighboring countries, the subtle exception of Muslims make this outrageous and discriminatory against the Muslims. Especially, when the millions of Muslim migrants are already living inside India for decades, a large number of people living as undocumented citizens in India are Muslims, and at least two main groups which have been facing persecution in their homelands claim to be Muslims, i.e. Rohingya community in Myanmar and Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan. However, the worst consequences of this divisive legislation are yet to be seen and a considerable percentage of Indian Muslims might be ostracized and forced to choose any of these possibilities as soon as the NRC is completed across India as the implementation of the NRC in Assam state alone had left out around 1.9 million people which included more than a half million Muslims which will not be able to benefit from the CAA to acquire Indian citizenship.

### 3.3.3. Delhi Riots Against Muslims

While the anti-CAA protests became center of electoral politics during the election in Delhi State, the anti-Muslim rhetoric built by the leadership of the BJP started taking a different shape at the grassroots level. The anti-CAA protesters that were mainly Muslims were attacked by the armed people a number of times; however, the situation became really intense as a result of inaction on the part of the government and the law enforcement agencies when anti-Muslims riots erupted in Delhi during the last week of February 2020. It was the same time when the United States President Donald Trump was touring India along with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The riots started on February 23 and continued for the following days in northeastern part of Delhi which is largely Muslim dominated. A serious damage was caused to the properties owned by Muslims, mosques were burnt down and Hindu religious flags were hoisted on them, and at least 53 people died as a result of violence. The videos circulated online showed that the law enforcement agencies either remained absent from the violent-struck areas or did nothing to stop the mob attacks, or even at some places coordinated with the attackers. As a result of these riots, hundreds of Muslim families evacuated their houses in Delhi and relocated to other places while hundreds of applications were also filed for provision of shelter

The reports suggested that the violent mob attack on Muslim-majority areas took place only after a politician associated with the BJP, Kapil Mishra, warned the Delhi Police to clear the roads of anti-CAA protestors or they will do it themselves. Similarly, a video released by the *Aam Aadmi Party* (AAP) which holds power in Delhi State showed another leader of the BJP, Abhay Verma, to be leading the Hindu mobs which attacked the properties of Muslims and injured many people. Another important aspect that must also be discussed here was the use of Hindutva-specific slogans raised by the attackers during violence. The media reports, accounts of eyewitnesses and videos shared on social media platforms confirmed the use of at least three pro-Hindutva slogans: “*Jai Shri Ram* (Hail Lord Ram)”, “*Jou Hindu ki bat karega, wohi desh pe raj karaga* (the one who will talk about the welfare of Hindus, will only rule the country)”, and “*Vande Matram* (the iconic anti-Muslim anthem of the Hindutva movement)”. On the backdrop of anti-Muslim riots in Delhi, another interesting development took place at Delhi High Court where the judge, Justice S. Muralidhar, who had heard the pleas related to the anti-Muslim violence was removed and transferred to on the night of February 26, 2020. During the first day of hearing, the judge had reprimanded the Delhi Police for their inaction during the violent incident and also ordered registration of cases for hate speech against at least four BJP politicians i.e. Kapil Mishra, Parvesh Verma, Abhay Verma and Anurag Thakur. This event also gave a clear message to the judiciary about possible consequences of moving against the leaders of the BJP.

Although communal violence is nothing new in India, this particular incident of anti-Muslim mob attacks in the Indian capital city show a different aspect of India's social fabric: if Muslims do not accept the discriminatory legislation and try to resist it even through peaceful protests, the Hindu mobs supervised by the local leaders of the BJP will go to any limit to teach them a lesson. Summarily, if the Delhi riots are seen with the exact context of the hate speech of the BJP leadership that surrounded anti-CAA protests, it is an implicit message by the pro-Hindutva elements to the opponents if they create any hurdles. The scale of these riots can also be estimated at a larger scale if Muslims resist any move to implement the NRC in India which could possibly result in the repatriation or transfer of millions of Muslims to concentration camps. Thus, it can be inferred that a much more communal and violent situation might prevail across India as soon as the CAA and the NRC are fully implemented and the undocumented citizens of all other religious groups would benefit from the Citizenship Amendment Act except Muslims.

#### **3.3.4. New Domicile Law in Jammu and Kashmir**

Within the very first year of its second tenure in power, the BJP and its coalition partners which largely make up the political face of the modern-day Hindutva movement in India kept introducing one after another measure to mark a stark beginning of the implementation of the Hindutva doctrine as exhibited during the 2019 election campaign. As this thesis has explained in the earlier part of discussion that abrogation of article 370 which also resulted in automatic annulment of article 35A of Indian constitution was actually aimed to ensure the oneness of motherland India and transform the demographics of the only Muslim-majority state of India. Once Jammu and Kashmir ceased to exist as an autonomous state, the BJP government introduced the sequel to its controversial constitutional move of August 2019 through another order in the form of a new domicile law in March and April 2020. Under this law any citizen of India who has or would stay in Jammu and Kashmir for a duration of 15 years or acquired education for 7 years and took matriculation or intermediate examination in J&K, and the government officials themselves and their children upon completion of government service in Jammu and Kashmir for 10 years would be considered eligible to acquire the domicile of the territory. The registered migrants living in Jammu and Kashmir have also been declared eligible to benefit from the new domicile law. Interestingly, the original order issued on March 31, 2020 stated that only the subordinate government jobs will be specified for the people having a domicile of Jammu and Kashmir. However, the harsh criticism resulted in issuance of a revised order on April 3, 2020 and all of the government posts were announced to have been reserved for domiciled applicants only.

As already mentioned, the new domicile law was just a part-two of the legislation that was initiated by the BJP in August 2019, only this time the government did not require to impose special restriction to control the public anger as the whole India was already under a lockdown due to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. However, still the global and some local media publications raised a strong criticism of the new law which took the shield of a pandemic to serve the political cause of the Hindutva movement. The law directly threatens to change the demographics of Jammu and Kashmir and issuance of domiciles to the non-indigenous residents would possibly transform the country's only Muslim-majority region into yet any other territory of India, as it would open ways for new settlers in Jammu and Kashmir region. Previously, the demographics of the J&K were largely secured due to the presence of articles 370 and 35A in the Indian constitution which granted autonomy to the region. It also ensured the right of indigenous residents to buy land in Jammu and Kashmir along with a special quota on jobs within the state. Nonetheless, the introduction of the new domicile law followed by the annulment of article 370 has changed it all for the locals.

The new domicile law of Jammu and Kashmir and the possible change in the demographics of the region can also be viewed in the light of the fact that this territory still remains a disputed on the basis of the resolutions of the United Nations (UN) and the UN Security Council (UNSC). Accordingly, a plebiscite has to be held in this region to determine its future and a possible change in the change the demographics of this disputed territory would definitely have long-lasting impact on the plebiscite if ever held. Yet, the introduction of the new domicile law in Jammu and Kashmir seems to be another foundation stone of the under-construction Hindutva-modeled India under the motto of "one nation, one caste, one culture and one religion" which aims to ensure only one thing in India: Hindu chauvinism.

### **3.4. GENERAL EVALUATION OF CHAPTER**

The BJP's resurgence on the electoral and political scenario of India was galvanized due to early exploitation of new media forums and the malpractices of governance by the INC. It engaged the masses through social media through mildly political campaign and incorporated excessive usage of these platforms as soon as the election campaign for the 2014 general election was kicked off. Among all other social media networks, Twitter was given the main part to play in the political strategy as it worked just as the traditional peer-to-peer election campaign. Combined together with traditional media outlets, Twitter became the driver of the electoral and political



communication of the BJP. Almost the same pattern continued during the 2019 electioneering campaign of the BJP.

The analysis of the texts based on the 2019 election campaign through the lens of CDA provided meaningful findings to provide the answers of the enlisted research questions of the study. It was found that the Hindutva doctrine was widely produced and pitched by the BJP to build a populist political discourse, and the Hindutva doctrine played a role of determining factor to underscore the populist characteristics of the electoral campaign. The texts were found to have been evidently placed under seven major themes: (Re)connecting with Hindutva, Construction of Hindutva-nation, Construction of Antagonistic Others, Portrayal of Charismatic Leadership, Politically Reluctant Populism of Hindutva, the Introduction of Hindutva-reforms in India and Identifying Foreign Enemy. The themes were developed on the historical, mythological, symbolical or contextual references which connected the discursive texts to the Hindutva doctrine at the textual, discursive and societal levels.

Finally, the analysis of the texts of the BJP's election campaign revealed that the Indian government's imprudent implementation on the Hindutva-focused agenda has sent alarming messages to the global players and the concerned international bodies. These developments include annulment of Article 370 to curb the autonomous status of the Muslim-majority J&K region, introduction of Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) which ensures Indian citizenship for suppressed Hindus, Jains, Christians and Sikhs of the neighboring countries; however, discriminates against the Muslims despite the fact they persecuted Rohingya community of Myanmar and Ahmadiyya community of Pakistan identify themselves as Muslims and could lead to possible repatriation or arrest of millions of Muslim immigrants and undocumented Indian Muslims. The invocation of new domicile law in Jammu and Kashmir could lead to the alteration of demographic structure of India's only Muslim majority territory. Meanwhile, the way the BJP government violated democratic and humanitarian rights of its citizens including the rights of protest, free movement and access to information indicate that the Hindutva-centered Indian government ready to go to any extent to transform the future of India as a "Hindu Rashtra". The deadly anti-Muslim riots in Delhi and other isolated violent attacks on Muslims, with months-long protests against the CAA on the backdrop, and the support of state institutions including law enforcement agencies to such Hindutva tactics also highlight the quickly shifting social fabric of India.

## CONCLUSION

This research has undertaken the Hindutva doctrine as form of right-wing political populism which has been shaped over the last two centuries and it resurged as the central thought of the BJP's electoral politics and political communication to mobilize the masses in order to reform India in the light of its motto of "one nation, one religion, one culture and once language". After a detailed theoretical debate on populism and historical discussion of the evolution of Hindutva as a movement and a doctrine, the political messages sampled from the 2019 election campaign of the BJP, i.e. public speeches, textual and visual tweets were qualitatively assessed through technique of CDA as put forward by Norman Fairclough to develop thematic interpretation. This comprehensive review not only confirmed the vital connection between the Hindutva doctrine and the political agenda of the BJP at macro, meso and micro levels but also provided broad explanation and answers to the research queries of the thesis work.

The versatile presence of the Hindutva doctrine in the BJP's 2019 election campaign confirmed that it was actually central driving force to shape the political messages of the BJP. While the historic and mythological references, symbolism and ritualistic notions were outrightly used to establish the BJP as a contemporary political face of the Hindutva doctrine, as many as six key features of populism were also found to be functioning with the Hindutva doctrine being a determining factor of these essentials of populism. The conception of the people, construction of the antagonizing others, identification of a charismatic leader, portrayal of politically reluctant agenda and definition of a foreign enemy were completely built on the basis of the teachings, reference and set of demands recorded by the Hindutva movement since the independence of India. Additionally, an ambitiously Hindutva-focused collection of political and constitutional reforms to correct the mistakes of anti-Hindutva governments were also made part of the public discourse to assert that the BJP was totally committed to the populist struggle of Hindutva and would definitely guarantee correction of the ailing political system of India as outlined by the proponents of Hindutva doctrine. The analyzed speeches of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Twitter-based messages of the BJP and its key leadership, and the visual contents shared on Twitter functioned in an organized and endorsing-each-other manner to construct this Hindutva-centered populist discourse during the 2019 election campaign.

The extensive discussion involving the steps taken by the BJP government immediately after taking over the governance offices in May 2019 also undertakes Hindutva-based prejudice and discrimination against the segment of the Indian society which was outrageously declared as "the others", "foreign invaders" and "infiltrators" – Muslims – during the election campaign. The three

major constitutional reforms introduced by BJP i.e. cancellation of constitutional articles 370 and 35A, insertion of Citizenship Amendment law and enforcement of new domicile law in Jammu and Kashmir region clearly stand aligned to the decades-old aspersions of the Hindutva movement and victimize Muslim community of India. Another Hindutva-focused reform known as “completion of the National Register of Citizens (NRC)” still happens to be in the offing and can be announced at any time during the government of the BJP. These constitutional and administrative reforms appear to be a mere fulfillment of the electoral promises made by the BJP, however, they do have deep roots to the Hindutva movement and further suppress the Indian Muslims who already face the societal suppression under the rule of the BJP.

Another sad display of weak and challenged democratic and liberal practices in India as a result of the tarnished public and political discourse is the further adoption of ruthless, undemocratic and inhuman schemes to enforce these Hindutva-based reforms. The government’s subtle silence and inaction of the law enforcement agencies against the attackers despite their presence on the sites of such incidents indicates that anti-Muslim steps or Hindutva reforms cannot even be protested in India: the most primary human rights being violated in the largest democracy country on earth.

The discriminatory and Islamophobic attitude of government authorities, certain segments of society and TV channels was also witnessed in India following the spread of COVID-19 in different regions when a large gathering of a Muslim missionary group was held and several people who attended this congressional activities were tested positive for the coronavirus. As a result, the already ostracized Muslims of India were blamed to have hatched the conspiracy of spreading COVID-19 in the country. The incidents of verbal and physical assault against Muslims were also reported from different parts of the country, as well as social media hatemongers came up with “corona-jihad” analogy against the Muslims. The government officials also mentioned a separate sub-category of corona-positive patients who belonged to the Muslim missionary movement to further strengthen the theory that Muslims were deliberately spreading coronavirus in India. Contrary to this, no Hindu patients were tagged under any such sub-category due for participating in congressional activities at Hindu temples nor any top Hindu temples were barred from mass public gathering until the second half of March.

It is certainly evident through the cited discussion and historical references that the production of the Hindutva doctrine by the BJP was not merely limited to the campaign itself, but it is rather transforming the system of governance as well as the social fabric in India. The great momentum of anti-Muslim hatred in the Indian society – which was also expressed by the early proponents of Hindutva – has been renewed under the rule of the BJP and due to excessive political

communication based on the Hindutva doctrine. And, it seems to be a definite outcome that India is quickly transforming itself as a Hindu Rashtra in a top-to-bottom manner and pace of this transformation toward fascism would only increase if the BJP government continues to appease the majority Hindu population instead of protecting the rights of its citizens irrespective of their religious beliefs. The exploitation of the channels of direct communication between the political leaders and the common public also proves that the online political communication could be far more full of hatred and social division: paving way for distribution of any political slogan which can potentially appease the majority of voters irrespective of the future consequences.

Any future study on this subject should involve the amalgamation of the qualitative as well as quantitative analysis of the texts can possibly lead to more interesting revelations about the subject of the study. The use of the quantitative analysis can result in an expansion of the sample size of the discursive texts to be subjected to analysis, and hence decreasing impact of the potential limitation caused by the sample size. Furthermore, a study which involves the Twitter accounts of the common users to analyze the production of the Hindutva doctrine during the 2019 electoral campaign but this would be about the reception and popularization of the Hindutva doctrine rather than its production? can also become an extraordinary contribution of the literature on this subject. Finally, the study of the Hindutva doctrine which views it as a discourse of social change as well, and not only a political discourse, can also result in revelation of significant aspects of the transforming Indian social sphere. The theoretical debate and methodological analysis included in this study can also serve as a reference and guidelines for the recommended studies in the future.

This thesis has provided an outlook of populist discourse built on the basis of the Hindutva doctrine, which was given a central role to garner electoral support for the BJP in the 2019 general election of India. Through delineated theoretical and scholarly discussion leading to the analysis of the texts used by the BJP in political communication, it provides an extensive debate on how the new media tools have been facilitating the politics of division, discursion and extremism, and marking return of populism. As a contribution to the field of communication, this thesis is expected to further strengthen the debate on the different forms of political communication and provide a necessary basis for the improvement of digital media tools and digital media literacy among the common users to enable them to become active participants in the uncontrolled flood of information. The researchers and architects of the contemporary communication platforms i.e. social media forums need to review the current situation where populist and extremist agenda is widely distributed through political communication based on these networks, so that the social networking spirit of these platforms can be maintained. First of such measures could be an

algorithm-based audit of any online political campaigns to ensure that no fallacy, hatred or discrimination is published through new media platforms to secure the strategic integrity of political communication.

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## APPENDIX-I

### Detailed Description of Analyzed Twitter Accounts

No.	Account Name	Username	Description
1	BJP LIVE	@bjplive	“Official Twitter account of Bharatiya Janata Party that was used to share livestream/publish activities of key BJP leaders as it happened during the electoral campaign.”
2	Bhartiya Janta Party	@bjp4india	“Official Twitter account of Bharatiya Janata Party. Remained active throughout the years. Primarily focused on discourse and rebuttals of BJP, and statements of top BJP leaders.”
3	Amit Shah Office	@amitshahoffice	“The official Twitter handle of the head of Bharatiya Janata Party. The account is managed by his office.”
4	Narendra Modi	@narendramodi	“The official handle of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.”
5	Amit Shah	@amitshah	“The personal Twitter handle of BJP chief. He has assumed the position of Interior Minister in the new cabinet of Narendra Modi. In 2019, he was officially leading the election campaign of BJP.”
6	GVL Narasimha Rao	@gvlrao	“Rao is the National Spokesperson of Bharatiya Janata Party. He hails from Utter Pradesh which has most seats in

			Indian Parliament. He was declared as winner in the 2019 elections. He also known as an election strategist and author.”
7	Arun Jaitley	@arunjaitley	“He served as Finance Minister in Modi’s first cabinet from 2014 to 2019, however, he recused himself to become member of the new cabinet. He’s also among the newly elected members of Indian Parliament.”
8	Sushma Swaraj	@sushmaswaraj	“She was one of the most senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader. She became parliamentary opposition leader of in place of LK Advani in 2009 and retained this position till May 2014 when she joined Narendra Modi’s cabinet as Minister of Exterior Affairs. She was the second woman to hold this office after former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.”
9	Uma Bharti	@umasribharti	“She is National Vice President of the party. She has held different state and cabinet-level positions in the past. Bharti was present at the location during the destruction of the <i>Babri</i> Masjid in the year of 1992. She is also accused of an involvement in the 1994 Hubli Hindu-Muslim riot case.”

10	Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore	@ra_thore	“He is the former military officer and Olympian who joined Bharatiya Janata Party in 2014. He has held different ministries in the government of BJP.”
11	Yogi Adityanath	@myogiadityanath	“Best known Hindu nationalist after Modi. He is Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh state. He openly accepts his hateful speeches against Muslims and is involved in violence including 1992 Babri Masjid case.”
12	BJP Rajasthan	@bjp4rajasthan	“The official Twitter handle of Bharatiya Janata Party Rajasthan chapter.”
13	Narayan Lal Panchariya	@npanchariyabjp	“BJP’s chief whip in parliament’s Upper House. He hails from Rajasthan state.”
14	Nirmala Sitharaman	@nsitharaman	“She is member of parliament’s Upper House of the Parliament, who served at different positions in the cabinet. Before this she also served on the position of national spokesperson for the BJP.”
15	Dr. Anirban Ganguly	@anirbanganguly	“He is the head of Dr. S. P. Mookerjee Research Foundation, a think tank of BJP. He is a member of the policy making division of BJP.”

16	BJP Madhya Pradesh	@bjp4mp	“The official Twitter handle of Bharatiya Janata Party Madhya Pradesh chapter.”
17	BJP Utter Pradesh	@bjp4up	“Official Twitter handle of BJP UP chapter.”
18	BJP Taripura	@bjp4tripura	“Official Twitter handle of BJP Taripura chapter.”
19	Biplab Kumar Deb	@bjpbiplab	“He is the current Chief Minister of BJP’s state government in Tripura. He also remained a member of RSS. He is known for his claim that satellite and internet existed in mythological Mahabharat era.”
20	Ram Madhav	@rammadhavbjp	“He holds the position of the National General Secretary in BJP. He was a member of the National Executive body of the RSS and has authored several books.”
21	BJP Kashmir	@bjp4jnk	“Official Twitter handle of BJP Jammu and Kashmir chapter.”
22	Jugal Kishore Sharma	@mpjugalkishore	“He was a parliamentarian from J&K region on BJP ticket.”
23	Kiren Rijiju	@kirenrijiju	“A member of the BJP to have served in the cabinet of Narendra Modi.”



24	Rajat Sethi	@rajatsethi86	“A Harvard graduate and BJP’s strategist who is believed to have won Assam state for Bharatiya Janata Party. He has authored “The Last Battle of Saraighat: The Story of the BJP’s Rise in the North-east”.”
25	Vinay Prabhakar Sahasrabuddhe	@vinay1011	“He is National Vice President of BJP and also heads party’s think tank named as Public Policy Research Centre.”
26	BJP Maharashtra	@bjp4maharashtra	“The official Twitter handle of BJP Maharashtra chapter.”
27	Smirithi Irani	@smritiirani	“Former actress turned politician. She has defeated INC President Rahul Gandhi in latest polls.”
28	Manoj Tiwari	@manojtiwarimp	“He is known as an actor and musician in entertainment industry. He is a member of Parliament from Delhi (North-East) and also serves as the Delhi President of BJP.”
29	Hans Raj Hans	@hansrajhansrh	“He is a well-known singer who is also a member of Parliament from Delhi on BJP ticket.”
30	narendramodi_in	@narendramodi_in	“The official account of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, managed by his personal PR staff.”
31	Dr. Mahendra Singh	@bjpdrmahendra	“A minister of BJP’s state government in Uttar Pradesh.”

32	Dr. Anil Jain	@aniljaindr	“He is the national secretary general of BJP. He is also a member of parliament’s upper house.”
33	Vijay Rupani	@vijayrupanibjp	“He is the chief minister of BJP’s state government in Gujarat.”
34	Rohit Chahal	@rohit_chahal	“He is the national media panelist of the BJP.”
35	Kuljeet Singh Chahal	@kuljeetschahal	“He is the member of BJP’s national council and secretary general of BJP Delhi chapter.”
36	Rajnath Singh	@rajnathsingh	“He is the senior member of the BJP who has served along with LK Advani and Atal Bihari Vajpayee. He is former home minister and current defence minister of India.”
37	Devendra Fadnavis	@dev_fadnavis	“He is leading member of the BJP from Maharashtra.”
38	BJP Bihar	@bjp4bihar	“The official account of BJP’s Bihar chapter.”
39	Manoj Sinha	@manojsinhabjp	“He is a three-time parliamentarian of the BJP. He has held top ministries in the past.”
40	Sunny Deol	@iamsunnydeol	“He is an actor-turned politician who is also member of Parliament from Punjab on BJP ticket.”
41	BJP Punjab	@bjp4punjab	“The official account of BJP Punjab chapter.”

42	Prof. Rakesh Sinha	@rakeshsinha01	“He is the member of parliament’s upper house and has also authored a biography of the RSS founder Hedgewar.”
43	Nityanand Rai	@nityanandraibjp	“He is member of Indian parliament from Bihar state on BJP ticket.”
44	Ram Lal	@ramlal	“He is one of the oldest members of the BJP and the RSS who is known to have served as ideological bridge between two parties.”
45	Rajiv Pratap Rudy	@rajivprataprudy	“He is the national spokesperson of BJP and a member of Indian parliament from Bihar state.”

## APPENDIX-II

### Schedule of India's General Election 2019

No.	Polling Date	Total Constituencies	Detail of Constituencies
Phase-I	April 11, 2019	91	“Andhra Pradesh (25), Arunachal Pradesh (2), Assam (5), Bihar (4), Chhattisgarh (1), Jammu and Kashmir (2), Maharashtra (7), Manipur (1), Meghalaya (2), Mizoram (1), Nagaland (1), Odisha (4), Sikkim (1), Telangana (17), Tripura (1), Uttar Pradesh (8), Uttarakhand (5), West Bengal (2), Andaman (1), Lakshadweep (1)”
Phase-II	April 18, 2019	97	“Assam (5), Bihar (5), Chhattisgarh (3), Jammu and Kashmir (2), Karnataka (14), Maharashtra (10), Manipur (1), Odisha (5), Tamil Nadu (39), Tripura (1), UP (8), West Bengal (3), Puducherry (1)”
Phase-III	April 23, 2019	115	“Assam (4), Bihar (5), Chhattisgarh (7), Gujarat (26), Goa (2), Jammu & Kashmir (1), Karnataka (14), Kerala (20), Maharashtra (14), Odisha (6), UP (10), West Bengal (5), Dadra &

			Nagar Haveli (1), Daman & Diu (1)”
Phase -IV	April 29, 2019	71	“Bihar (5), Jammu and Kashmir (1), Jharkhand (3), Madhya Pradesh (6), Maharashtra (17), Odisha (6), Rajasthan (13), Uttar Pradesh (13), West Bengal (8)”
Phase-V	May 6, 2019	51	“Bihar (5), Jammu & Kashmir (2), Jharkhand (4), Madhya Pradesh (7), Rajasthan (12), Uttar Pradesh (14), West Bengal (7)”
Phase -VI	May 12, 2019	59	“Bihar (8), Haryana (10), Jharkhand (4), Madhya Pradesh (8), Uttar Pradesh (14), West Bengal (8), Delhi-NCR (7)”
Phase-VII	May 19, 2019	59	“Bihar (8), Jharkhand (3), Madhya Pradesh (8), Punjab (13), West Bengal (9), Chandigarh (1), Uttar Pradesh (13), Himachal Pradesh (4)”

