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### Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science

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**Saffronisation of India:  
Exploring the Psychological Mobilization and Appeal of Hindu Nationalism**

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MSc Social and Cultural Psychology

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### Abstract

With the growing spread and acceptance of Hindu nationalism in India, this research aims to explore this form of ethnic nationalism using a socio-psychological framework that combines the social identity theory, social dominance theory, and social representation theory. Using a feedback loop approach of supply and demand, a multi-method qualitative research with two studies is conducted to gain a rich and in-depth understanding of Hindu nationalism where Study I analyses the top-down mobilization of support for Hindu nationalism by undertaking a Rhetorical Thematic Analysis of political speeches and interviews of BJP leaders between 2019-2023 and Study II examines the bottom-up understandings through Thematic Analysis of focus groups with BJP supporters to explain their appeal towards Hindu nationalism. The results reveal that BJP addresses citizens' pre-existing demands and also cultivates new demands supplemented by rhetorical strategies by constructing threats and fuelling collective narcissism which redefines national identity and grants Hindus dominance, creates legitimizing myths to justify the hierarchy of national belongingness and saffronization, and renders *Hindutva* malleable. Such a study on the dynamics of Hindu nationalism is theoretically and practically important because a unique theoretical framework and conceptual approach reveals underlying psychological processes of ethnic nationalism which can be translated into theoretical knowledge and practical actions.

*Keywords:* Ethnic nationalism, national identity, social representations, legitimizing myths, India

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## 1. Introduction

India's claim of being the largest democracy has been threatened by the *Bharatiya Janata Party's* (hereafter BJP) assumption of national power in 2014 since the political party has undermined democratic values, trampled civil liberties, and endangered the rights of minorities (Karat, 2022). Having returned to power with an increased majority in 2019, the BJP continues to marginalize Muslims by sabotaging the legal framework that protects them, emboldening non-state actors to carry-out violence against them, and demonizing them through baseless conspiracy theories (Mansoor et al., 2022; Siddiqui, 2017). To understand the success of this majoritarianism and authoritarianism in India, this dissertation aims to psychologically examine Hindu nationalism as a form of ethnic nationalism that stems from *Hindutva* and seeks to transform a secular, pluralistic India into a Hindu majoritarian nation (*Hindu rashtra*) (Jaffrelot, 2021; Mehta, 2022).<sup>1</sup> Therefore, using three socio-psychological theories, this research aims to understand how BJP leaders reconstruct nationalism and adopt the discursive and stylistic repertoire of populism to mobilize support for Hindu nationalism on the supply side along with how individual needs and factors on the demand side affect and are effected by the political discourse in a way that explains the appeal and acceptance of Hindu nationalism (Singh, 2021; Woods, 2016).

While Hindu nationalism is understudied and such a theoretical framework and supply-demand conceptual approach has never been employed to investigate ethnic nationalism before, this research is made especially important because of the unique context of India where *Hindutva* has become a hegemonic discourse and legitimate political repertoire that has been resisted unsuccessfully (Jaffrelot, 2021). Moreover, due to the lack of prior research, this study

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<sup>1</sup>Secularism ensures that all Indian citizens can freely practice their religion and all religions are considered equal. The underlying political ideology of Hindu nationalism developed by V. Savarkar is *Hindutva* (or Hindu-ness) which outlines the essence of being Hindu as having a common nation, race, and civilisation. This focus on historical-cultural traits makes Hindu nationalism ethnic and not religious (Tharoor, 2018; Jaffrelot, 2021).

combines three socio-psychological theories to comprehensively understand the successful rhetorical mobilization of and entrenched appeal of a type of ethnic nationalism. Examining such a topical and politically charged phenomenon in India can help generate theoretical insights and refine this analytical framework for future investigations of ethnic nationalism in different contexts and can also reveal ways of successfully challenging such nationalism in the real world. Ultimately, this research aims to enhance the dialogue between social psychological theory, research, and practice by advancing understanding of a current socio-political issue (Shani, 2021; Stathi & Guerra, 2021).

## **2. Literature Review**

The following literature review is divided into subsections which outlines the theoretical framework and discusses related research on ethnic nationalism.

### **2.1 Framing the Psychology of Hindu Nationalism using a Feedback Loop**

Nationalism is an ideological process in which the particular category of a nation is offered up as the basis for self-definition and generates a psychological bond termed ‘a sense of belonging’ (Hopkins, 2001; Triandafyllidou, 1998). Nationalist ideologies can broadly be differentiated into two distinct types: inclusionary, civic nationalism that defines membership in the national category in terms of aspects that citizens belonging to any group can adopt and exclusionary, ethnic nationalism that defines ‘true’ membership in the national category in terms of features limited to the majority group (Sibley, 2013). Specifically, ethnic nationalism occurs when a group considers itself bound by racial, linguistic, religious, or other cultural characteristics and derives a strong sense of belonging from these bonds (Jaffrelot, 2021). The key agents of ethnic nationalism are political elites or entrepreneurs of identity who convey their vision of an ‘imagined community’ to the wider population and create a sense of shared subjectivity with the aim of gaining, legitimizing, or exercising state power (Woods, 2016; Anderson, 2006).

With this focus on the supply side where populist leaders' discourses and rhetoric is used to understand how they frame nationalism to trigger a set of psychological processes, it is also important to investigate the demand or receipt side of ethnic nationalism to explain the psychological factors behind the acceptance and appeal of such discourse. This is because there exists a feedback loop between 'supply' and 'demand' where spontaneous demand can be read by political parties to mobilize support, but parties can also induce and cultivate demands by framing societal issues in ways that enhance their appeal (Woods, 2016; Mols & Jetten, 2020; Obradović et al., 2020). The rise of right-wing populism in East-Central Europe is explained using such a feedback loop where an unstable national identity encapsulating historically founded fears of cultural and territorial extinction and deeply embedded, normative prejudice toward historical minorities on the demand side is manipulated by an anti-immigrant, threatening political discourse on the supply side to mobilize political support even in the absence of Muslim immigrants (Kende & Kreko, 2020).

## **2.2 Social Identity Theory**

The social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tajfel, 1981; hereafter SIT) is vital to investigate the identity crisis in India as it can help understand the cognitive and affective underpinnings behind an individual's identification as a group member (Mansoor et al., 2022; Triandafyllidou, 1998). Defined as an awareness of one's objective group membership and a psychological sense of group attachment, social identity can lead to ingroup bias, outgroup discrimination, and intergroup conflict through social categorization of people into groups and favourable social comparison with 'others' to attain and maintain a positive distinctiveness (Huddy, 2001). The concept of national identity derives directly from SIT and is defined as a subjective or internalized sense of belonging and attachment to the nation (Huddy & Khatib, 2007). Apart from being defined using features that fellow-citizens share in common, national identity is made meaningful only through a process of differentiation from significant external

‘others’ of another nation or internal ‘others’ belonging to the same political entity that are all perceived to threaten the nation’s independence, territorial and cultural integrity, unity, or authenticity. Significant others can be used to (re)define national identity and also serve as scapegoats like Greek political parties using the ‘injustice’ caused by ‘foreigners’ as a campaigning device to discredit one another and distract the voters from internal economic and social problems (Triandafyllidou, 1998).

However, identity formation cannot simply be explained by making group boundaries salient as different internalized meanings of group membership have consequences on behaviour, attitudes, and values (Huddy, 2001). For example, Citrin and Sears’ found that the consensual meaning of being a ‘true American’ depended on support for equality and individualism but contested aspects of American identity concerning the need to believe in God or speak up for one’s country mediated political consequences such as reactions towards policies benefitting immigrants (Huddy & Khatib, 2007; Huddy, 2001). Moreover, as there is ample evidence of political leaders manipulating national identities, it is important to understand how political opportunists might construct group boundaries and make salient specific meanings of identity that get internalized by the electorate (Hopkins, 2001; Mader et al., 2018). Therefore, SIT will be used to understand the construction, dissemination, and reception of different versions of the nation's boundaries determining who belongs to the nation and the content of identity determining what it means to belong (Hopkins, 2001).

### **2.3 Social Dominance Theory**

Social Dominance Theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1992; hereafter SDT) offers a framework with interlinked, multifaceted factors to explain the production and maintenance of social hierarchies (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). A key role in SDT is played by legitimizing myths which are consensually held beliefs, values, stereotypes, and ideologies that are differentially endorsed depending on individuals’ preferences for group-based social dominance and

inequality (or SDO i.e. social dominance orientation) (Sidanius & Pratto, 2004). While legitimizing myths (hereafter LMs) may be hierarchy-enhancing (hereafter HE) or hierarchy-attenuating (hereafter HA), the same ideology can take on either HE or HA functions depending on one's SDO where specific elements of the ideology's content mutate (Pratto & Stewart, 2011; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Knowles et al., 2009).

Consistent with the logic of SDT, research has established that most multi-ethnic societies are structured as group-based hierarchies despite the inclusionary and pluralistic rhetoric where the 'ethnic majority' possess a range of valued characteristics that allows them to establish themselves as unconditionally belonging to the nation and gives them the right to pass judgements on the presence of other groups within the nation, construct powerful boundaries between those who belong unconditionally and conditionally, and define the conditions of belongingness (Sidanius & Petrocik, 2001; Sidanius et al., 2019; Skey, 2010). Therefore, SDT can be used to understand how LMs are used by dominant groups to justify subjugation of outgroups and maintenance of their superior position in the hierarchy of belongingness to the nation (Sidanius & Petrocik, 2001).

Sibley (2013) examined how privileged dominants strategically employ the prototypical exemplar of the national category as a LM to maintain hierarchy and justify negative outcomes experienced by disadvantaged groups. Specifically, high-SDO individuals rated exclusionary, monocultural features that fit the dominant group as characteristic of the national prototype but rated inclusionary, pluralistic features that could be adopted by anyone as less important in ways that emphasized exclusionary nationalism and privileged some groups over others in defining who constitutes a 'true' citizen. In constricting the definition of national character to de-emphasize features that might fit or be adopted by immigrant groups, discriminatory and exclusionary practices directed toward them are legitimized (Sibley, 2013). Hindricks et al. (2014) also conceptualized ethnic belonging and assimilation as HE-LMs but

civic citizenship and multiculturalism as HA-LMs and found that the relation between SDO and prejudice towards migrant groups was fully mediated by these HE- and HA-LMs among native Dutch majority members (Hindricks et al., 2014). Such subtle use of ideology allows political elites and dominant national groups to deny rights and privileges to citizens who do not fit the hegemonic definition of what it means to be a citizen yet affords them with plausible deniability in the face of accusations of discrimination (Sibley, 2013).

#### **2.4 Social Representations Theory**

Social representations are structured systems of knowledge or underlying worldviews created and shared by a social group about a social object and Social Representations Theory (Moscovici, 1961; hereafter SRT) provides a way to study common-sense knowledge which is socially elaborated through social influence and communication (Rateau et al., 2012). SRT proposes a triadic model of knowledge construction where subjects are linked together in a common vision or project within which they communicate about an object. National identities are these objects in the political projects of nationhood and their content is determined by the social influence of ‘entrepreneurs of identity’ and lay representations of what it means to be a member of the nation (Andreouli & Chryssochoou, 2015). SRT also provides a useful framework to understand history as it helps make sense of the ways in which the past is remembered and how history is used to construct and maintain the imagined community of nationhood (Liu et al., 2002). As representations focus on socially elaborated and constructed content, it supplements social psychological approaches that study intergroup relations by focusing on processes (Hilton & Liu, 2017).

First, beyond group membership, social representations are drawn on as content to give meanings, values, and beliefs to the national identity and this identity can itself be considered a social representation of what it means to be and to act as that nationality which helps individuals position themselves within a social context and guides action (Dougherty et al.,

1992; Andreouli & Chrysoschoou, 2015). For example, cultural, myths, and traditions are integral in contrasting the ingroup from the outgroup whereas history can provide symbolic resources to reify boundaries, give identity meaning, and position another group's identity in relation to one's own group (Huddy, 2001; Liu et al., 2002; Liu & Hilton, 2005). Moreover, consensually shared representations of history within a nation like Malaysia and Singapore create positive correlations between ethnic and national identity that is a feature of pluralistic societies but different versions of history that exaggerate historical glories or losses are used by ethnic groups for psychological self-enhancement (in-group favouritism) and self-verification (or in-group ontogeny) in societies with group dominance (Liu et al., 1999; Sidanius & Petrocik, 2001).

Second, in the realm of political attitudes, social representations act as a '*symbolic reserve*' from which important ideologies or LMs can be derived to justify anti-egalitarian goals (Sibley & Liu, 2012). Historical narratives can also be elaborated under the identity entrepreneurship of political elites to produce culture-specific ideologies or LMs used to legitimize societal order and justify political agendas while dominant groups can impose their versions of history on subordinate groups as part of the legitimizing myths that gives them right to sovereignty and justifies unequal division of value and resources in society (Hilton & Liu, 2017; Sibley et al., 2008; Liu et al., 1999). For example, discourse on historical negation of past injustices was found to function as a HE-LM to oppose aspects of bicultural social policy and promote systemic inequality and this opposition increased when participants were presented with political discourses on historical negation (Sibley et al., 2008; Liu & Sibley, 2009). Therefore, SRT can be used to understand 'the thinking society' where the social representations shape the process of identity construction and legitimization of hierarchies and inequality (Billig et al., 1988).

Ultimately, a socio-psychological theoretical framework focusing on identity, social representations, and hierarchies on the demand and supply sides would be used to answer the main research question: *What is the psychology behind BJP leaders' mobilization of support for and upper-caste, Hindu BJP supporters' appeal towards Hindu nationalism in India?*

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

Qualitative research was chosen to answer the research question because it is exploratory, detailed, and context-dependent and would help shed light on a phenomenon that is socio-psychologically understudied (Creswell & Cresswell, 2018). To develop a complex picture of the issue, a multiple-method qualitative study was conducted to understand the top-down mobilization of support for Hindu nationalism by political elites and bottom-up understandings and acceptance of such visions by dominant members of the national community (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Obradović & Howarth, 2018). In Study 1, speeches and interviews of BJP politicians as 'entrepreneurs of identity' were analysed as political 'rhetoric' meant to influence and persuade the public which could help to understand how Hindu nationalism has been constructed and why it has succeeded (Obradović, 2018). In Study 2, focus groups with BJP supporters were conducted because it is a useful exploratory method that would help collect ordinary people's opinions, allow participants to talk about their own interests and concerns, and identify everyday '*assumptions and ways of talking*' about Hindu nationalism that mimic real-life (Skey, 2010, p. 722). As individual interviews capture detailed personal narratives and experiences, focus groups grounded in constructivist worldview were considered more suitable as they would perfectly capture how individuals construct and debate meanings through social interactions, provide critical insights into complex behaviours and motivations, and better help in exploring social representations and social identities (Morgan, 1996; Creswell & Cresswell, 2018; Obradović, 2018).

### 3.2 Research Process and Data Collection

A rationale was developed and refined for the sampling of political speeches, interviews, and participants and a specific procedure was undertaken during data collection. For Study 1, existing literature was used to determine 10 controversies and events between 2019 and 2023 that have been associated with the *Hinduization* of regional and national politics, marginalization of minorities, and the transformation of the socio-political sphere of India (Mufti, 2023).<sup>2</sup> Using purposive, convenience sampling, one speech and one interview that occurred in relation to each of the 10 events (except the NCERT row), that addressed the domestic Indian audience, was full-length, and was either completely or partially transcribed was randomly selected.<sup>3</sup> As only one interview was found for the NCERT row, a speech given during the inauguration of the controversial New Parliament House was selected. Moreover, speeches given by PM Modi over the last 5 years on key occasions like Independence Day and Republic Day were also analysed because they are significant and have a widespread audience. While archives found on the official websites and YouTube channels of the Prime Minister, the Indian Government, the BJP, and news agencies were used to access political discourse, some problems were encountered in the form of limited official records for all politicians except PM Modi, lack of access to complete speeches and interviews, and removal of hate speeches by BJP leaders. These limitations might have biased the sampling to only those speeches and interviews that were easily accessible due to being more popular, receiving greater media coverage, or having larger political significance. However, this ensured that discourse chosen from even regional contexts would have received media attention and would be familiar to Indian citizens. Ultimately, a total of 19 speeches and 10 interviews were

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<sup>2</sup> This time-period was determined on the basis of the last General Elections in 2019 but also proved to be convenient because it is only from 2019 that more systematic records of speeches and interviews were available.

<sup>3</sup> In some cases, discourse around controversies and events was difficult to find which resulted in the longest available speech or interview that fit the time range being chosen.

analysed in order to explore the top-down construction of and mobilization of support for Hindu nationalism (see Appendix 1).

For Study 2, two focus groups were conducted with 11 BJP supporters, one in Prayagraj in the BJP-governed Uttar Pradesh and the second in Kolkata in the non-BJP governed West Bengal, in order to explore how they understand and why they support Hindu nationalism (see Appendix 5 for details and demographics). The inclusion criteria required participants to be an Indian citizen and a BJP supporter to ensure that participants had voted for the BJP in at least two regional and national elections. A broad age range of 18 to 80 was outlined because a 2019 pre-poll survey found that near 50% of respondents aged between 18 to 29 and more than 50% of respondents aged more than 30 supported the BJP rather than any other national political party (Kwatra, 2019). Moreover, only Hindus were recruited because they are the dominant group in India that are being appeased by the BJP's promotion of *Hindutva*. This has also resulted in Hindus forming the largest group of the party's supporters as evidenced by a 2019 post-poll survey which found that 44% of all Hindu voters supported the BJP compared to 11% of all Christian and Sikh voters and 8% of all Muslim voters (Sardesai & Attri, 2019). Any Hindu belonging to lower-caste communities were excluded from participation in order to reduce the sensitivity and ethical complexities of the project. Convenience and snowball sampling was used to recruit participants based on their ability to provide information-rich data and generate insights around the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Due to the novelty of the research, the topic guide for the semi-structured discussion was divided using the three psychological theories which included open-ended questions on Indian politics, support for the BJP, Hindu nationalism, the Indian and Hindu identities, ethnosymbolism, Indian history, social hierarchy, and reactions to BJP political discourse (see Appendix 4). Participant were fully informed about the purpose of the study and ensured of anonymity and confidentiality of

their data. All participants gave written consent before the start of the focus group while demographic information was collected at the end of the study (see Appendix 3).

### **3.3 Method of Data Analysis**

For Study 1, most political discourse was available in English but some speeches and interviews were in Hindi whereas for Study 2, the first focus group was conducted primarily in Hindi but the second was conducted in English. All data was transcribed verbatim and translated only at the writing stage and a different version of thematic analysis was used to analyse the data in both studies. The use of thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) was deemed suitable as it could provide high flexibility, rich and complex accounts to open-ended, exploratory research questions, and a useful lens to identify patterns within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). Consequently, given the lack of prior psychological research on mobilization of support for and appeal of Hindu nationalism, all transcripts were read, re-read, and completely coded through a inductive, ‘bottom-up’, data-driven approach. However, as the analysis process was recursive and iterative, the socio-psychological literature on identity, social representations, and hierarchies undoubtedly influenced open-coding and the production of themes that meaningfully answered the research question (Byrne, 2022).<sup>4</sup> Ultimately, the data corpus was analysed using the 6-phase framework where codes that described the data were clustered to create sub-themes, which were sorted into themes, and related and interpreted to produce overarching themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

In Study 1, Rhetorical Thematic Analysis was used where thematic analysis was combined with the framework of Aristotelian rhetoric and Walton’s (2007) rhetorical pragmatics to understand what recurring linguistic tools are used by political leaders to directly

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<sup>4</sup> This refers to the fact that it is not possible to conduct an exclusively inductive thematic analysis yet this study prioritised respondent/data-based meaning over researcher/ theory-based meaning.

appeal to the audience. Rhetoric is important to analyse because linguistic performance is one of the most effective means by which leaders legitimize their leadership and mobilize their followers (Alo, 2012; Adebomi, 2023). Therefore, rhetoric can enrich thematic analysis by helping in the identification of mechanisms used to present and convey persuasive representations of reality that can influence an audience by demonstrating credibility and trustworthiness (ethos), producing emotions (pathos), and using logic or reason (logos) (Derakhshani et al., 2021). The final codebook included 24 relevant sub-themes clustered into 6 themes and organised under 3 overarching themes to reveal the preoccupations inherent in political discourse. Apart from this, 4 main rhetorical strategies were identified and discussed in relation to the study's socio-psychological framework. In Study 2, NVivo was used to undertake Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis where 26 relevant sub-themes were extracted from the codes and clustered into 9 higher level themes on the basis of their similarity and organized to reveal 3 overarching themes.

### **3.4 Ethics and Reflexivity**

Before beginning data collection, a detailed research plan was laid out in the ethics review form and was granted ethical approval by LSE's Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science on the 10th of April, 2023. The General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act of 2018 was complied with. Instead of pseudonyms, all participants were assigned a number representing the order of speaking in the focus groups.

Given the sensitive and controversial nature of the topic, I was mindful of the psychological and emotional aspects associated with the research process to ensure that no major ethical issues would be faced. While this study entailed no deception, a challenge that was anticipated was disclosing my own political views as a non-BJP supporter that could either hinder the freedom with which the participants would share opinions or could have an

aggressive response where I get termed an ‘anti-Hindu’ or ‘anti-national’.<sup>5</sup> As a result, I decided to withhold my own political views during the course of the research but took care to debrief participants about the divisiveness of the topic, alternate perspectives, minority experiences, and misinformation. Moreover, despite the major struggles faced in recruiting participants and organising the focus groups, trust and rapport were established easily during the discussion probably because an upper-caste, Hindu moderator recruited participants through mutual acquaintances and snowballing ensured that each participant knew someone in the focus group. As a result, all participants seemed quite interested in the topic and answered questions with ease and openness which can be evidenced by the lengthy discussions and participants’ willingness to share personal stories and examples to general questions designed to be ethically low risk.

Additionally, I recognized my thoughts, feelings, interests, and experiences associated with this topic and remained conscious of who I was and how I could impact the discussion and the broader research process (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). For example, during the focus groups, I tried to be self-aware, objective, and not respond in a manner that might reflect any personal opinions or biases and influence the discussion. Specifically, with the discussion about support for CAA/ NRC, Article 370, or the *Ram Mandir*, I avoided voicing my own opinions as it could have harmed the openness in the discussion. Moreover, care was taken not to impose my own worldview on participants. For instance, a participant kept using the terms Hindu and Indian interchangeably but instead of imposing my definitions of the terms on them, I went along with their interpretation, asked for clarification sometimes, and built on what I wanted to ask based on their answer which led to a crucial insight during analysis. Lastly, in acknowledging the knowledge held by BJP supporters that points to a complex reality, I was able to challenge my

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<sup>5</sup> BJP’s rise to power has popularized such terms where anyone questioning the ruling government or speaking against them gets termed ‘anti-national’.

own assumptions and negative emotions held against BJP supporters. Nevertheless, this research influenced and was influenced by my identities as an Indian and practicing Hindu who believes that great aspects associated with Hinduism and India are being morphed and weaponized to slowly destroy the pluralistic and constitutional foundations of Indian democracy.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Study 1

There are three overarching themes that appear in the analysis of mobilization of support for Hindu nationalism: 1) Promoting BJP, 2) Promoting Indianness, and 3) Promoting Hinduness (see Appendix 2).<sup>6</sup> These themes point to the BJP promoting themselves through messages of inclusive development and their party’s superiority, emphasizing togetherness and unity through India’s illustrious history, past grievances, and exceptionalism, and assertively pushing a sectarian agenda that redefines national boundaries and belongingness and promotes the *Hindutva* project through actions that Hinduize India and militarise Hinduism.

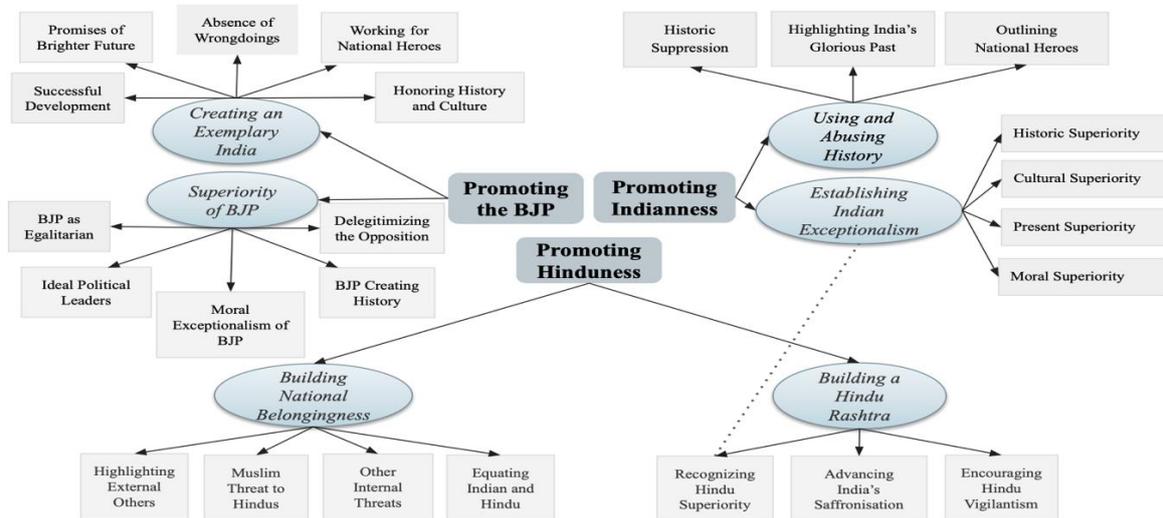


Figure 1: Thematic Network Map for Study I

#### 4.1.1 Thematic Analysis

#### Overarching Theme 1: Promoting the BJP

<sup>6</sup> *Hindutva* translates to Hinduness and is used synonymously here.

*Excerpt 1*

*“There are four big issues with which the people of UP have supported and strengthened us more than in the previous three elections. First is law and order. Second, ‘welfare of the poor. Third has been development – including access to drinking water and electricity. The fourth issue is the way we have improved the administration of Uttar Pradesh...I don’t think this election is about Muslims or Yadavs or Hindus. Yogi ji may have spoken about vote percentages but not about Muslims Vs Hindus.”* (Shah, 2022)

One of the crucial themes is creating an exemplary India where BJP’s work for the growth and development of the country in the present and the future are repeatedly mentioned in political discourse. Simultaneously, wrongdoings and failures that promote communalism are either explicitly denied or rationalized using multiple strategies. For example, rising lynchings of minorities is explained as a social evil that is continuing from the past, Adityanath’s pitching of elections as being between ‘80 (% Hindus) vs 20 (% Muslims)’ is justified as being about vote percentages, law against *love jihad* is presented as controlling communal riots, the slogan *Jai Shree Ram* in campaigning speeches is defended as a greeting, and the proposal of Muslim population control is rationalized as tackling poverty. Moreover, BJP’s actions and decisions, especially controversial ones like revocation of Article 370, are presented as fulfilling the goals and visions of national heroes. Lastly, the BJP encourages citizens to learn about India’s glorious history and culture rooted in the ‘golden’ past and presents itself as honouring these by constructing museums and memorials or quoting scriptures.

*Excerpt 2*

*“In contrast, the SP government had taken steps to withdraw cases lodged against ‘terrorists’ who attacked the Ram Janmabhoomi. Supporting SP means encouraging terrorism...For the BJP, nation comes first whereas for the Congress, nation comes last. Could you imagine free*

*vaccines during Covid, a Ram temple in Ayodhya after 500 years of wait, abrogation of Article 370 in Kashmir, or carrying out surgical as well as air strikes by entering an enemy country's borders during a Congress government? All these became possible because of the dynamic leadership of PM Modi” (Adityanath, 2022)<sup>7</sup>*

The second theme is establishing the superiority of BJP which is achieved using various ways where first, BJP highlights that they work for all Indian citizens without caste or religious discrimination. Second, BJP leaders, especially Modi, Shah, and Adityanath, present themselves and each other as selflessly fulfilling their duties and responsibilities to the nation which creates a cult of personality essential in national populism. Describing himself as a ‘*fakir*’, Modi constructs himself as a moral paragon who is sacrificing his life for Indians and in whom self-interest is not possible. Third, claims about BJP being committed to democracy and federalism and upholding values like inclusion or unity establishes their moral exceptionalism. Populism often relies on such ‘empty signifiers’ to construct a common identity and meet a plurality of social demands of the citizens (Jaffrelot, 2021). Lastly, BJP emphasizes themselves as ‘creating history’ through their decisions and actions while they repeatedly delegitimize and defame the opposition as being corrupt, incompetent, and anti-national. While attacking the opposition is normal in politics, BJP’s emphasis on other political parties engaging in vote-bank politics by appeasing certain sections (often Muslim) of the population and valuing their political power over the nation is unique. The idea promoted by the BJP is that opposition parties’ ‘pseudo-secularism’ resulted in ‘minoritarianism’ at the expense of Hindus and this moral contempt makes it easier for the BJP to position themselves as ‘true’ nationalists.

## **Overarching Theme 2: Promoting Indianness**

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<sup>7</sup> SP refers to Samajwadi Party which is the opposition to the BJP in Uttar Pradesh. Congress refers to the Indian National Congress (INC) which forms the main opposition to the ruling BJP government.

*Excerpt 3*

*“This great land, India, has given birth to innumerable great men whose deeds for the sake for humanity have been extraordinary, truly unforgettable. Our country is ‘Bahuratna vasundhara’ - the land of myriad gems...I was fortunate to get an opportunity to inaugurate a museum dedicated to heroes who fought in India’s freedom struggle...Every inch, every brick of these museums is redolent with the fragrance of our glorious history.” (Modi, 2019)*

The first theme is either explicitly or implicitly emphasizing centuries of British and Mughal rule that suppressed Indian culture, harmed Indians, and left Indians with a ‘*slave mindset*’. However, at the same time, India’s past that extolls the grandeur of Hindu civilization before the Muslim invasions, the freedom struggle to achieve independence in 1947, and national heroes that shaped the country pre- and post-independence are highlighted. While freedom fighters are mentioned as heroic role models to hijack their legacies and appropriate a halo of nationalism, mentioning of saints like Meera Bai and Hindu kings like Maharana Pratap glorify Hinduism and valorise the struggle against Muslim invasions.

*Excerpt 4*

*“Our Vedas teach us the democratic ideals of Sabhas and Samitis. The system of ‘ganas’ and republics is mentioned in texts like the Mahabharata. We have lived through republics like Vaishali. ...India is the largest democracy in the world and we Indians are also proud of the fact that our country is also the Mother of Democracy...Another example of Democratic Values in the history of our country is the Anubhav Mandapam of Lord Basaveshwara of the 12th century. You will be surprised to know that it is even before the Magna Carta. The republican traditions of the Kakatiya dynasty kings of Warangal were also very famous... As the Mother of Democracy, we should constantly think deeply about this topic, discuss it and also inform the world.” (Modi, 2023)*

Indianness is also promoted by establishing the nation's historical, civilizational, contemporary, and moral exceptionalism. India is presented as being renowned in the past and in the present, being better in comparison to some nations, having exceptional national moral characteristics, and serving as an inspiration to and leader of other nations. Moreover, while India's culture is presented as being appreciated by and influencing the world, this is grounded in *Hindutva* as references are made to ancient Buddhist and Sikh past, Hindu temples and gods, Vedic religious texts, Hindu empires, and practices like Yoga and Ayurveda.<sup>8</sup>

### **Overarching Theme 3: Promoting Hinduness**

#### *Excerpt 5*

*“Khader (a Muslim politician) is an expert in burning the society. People with the mentality of U.T. Khader did the acts in Godhra (train burning incident). People with his mentality burnt the karsevaks in Godhra...People have given us a mandate for this reason. Those who are protesting (against the CAA) are anti-democratic and against the constitution. We will not be scared of their threats.” (Ravi, 2019)*

The ‘Other’ is constructed by first highlighting external threats in the form of Pakistan and China whose terrorism and expansionism threaten the security and territorial integrity of the nation. Second, internal threats are made salient in the form of Muslims, Christian missionaries, and illegal Muslim immigrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan who respectively threaten the unity and cultural integrity of Hindus, decrease the Hindu population through conversion activities, and increase the competition over resources. In outlining these significant threats, the group boundaries determine only certain groups as truly belonging to the nation but BJP leaders redefine being Indian by equating it with being Hindu and associate aspects of Hindu religion with the entire nation. This transformation of national identity occurs

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<sup>8</sup> *Hindutva* views Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism as Indic religions that are part of the Hindu fold.

to construct the nation as a homogeneous or exclusionary group to serve the political project of nationalism (Andreouli & Chrysochoou, 2015).

*Excerpt 6*

*"There is nothing in the world that is impossible. 'Ghar wapsi' should be taken up in neighbourhoods, villages. Ram Mandir has been established in this nation, Article 370 in Kashmir has been abrogated. Those converted to Islam in Pakistan have to be brought back to Hinduism. Religious mathas, temples should take a lead in this regard... There is no other way than ensuring the 'Ghar wapsi' of Hindus who have converted to Islam and Christianity"* (Surya, 2021)

The BJP leaders also promote actions and goals that align with the construction of a Hindu *rashtra* like making Hindi the official language of the country, retelling history in a way where Hindu nationalist leaders like Savarkar become heroes, reconverting individuals practicing Islam or Christianity to Hinduism (called *Ghar wapsi* or Homecoming), fighting against love *jihad*, and attacking people accused of slaughtering cows. Hindu hegemony is also promoted by underlining the superiority of Hindu values, texts, and history to other religions and countries. Lastly, there are also calls for a more militant *Hindutva* that promotes vigilantism through retaliation against those individuals or groups who have harmed Hindus or Hinduism, whose actions are perceived as 'anti-national', or who arouse fear among the local majority. In subjecting minorities to such physical and symbolic violence, the Modi government establishes majoritarianism and promotes 'unity in hierarchy' where Hindus unite under a common ethnic identity while Muslims are treated as second-class citizens.

#### ***4.1.2 Rhetorical Strategies for Weaponized Communication***

Modi invented a new style of politics that combined Hindu nationalism and populism and is regarded as the key to his resounding victory in 2014. (Jaffrelot, 2021). To understand this national populism that constructs BJP leaders as saviours of people and Modi as the

‘Emperor of Hindu Hearts’, BJP’s sophisticated communication techniques were analysed to reveal four recurring rhetorical strategies used to mobilize support towards the party’s project of Hindu nationalism.

First, the **use of pronouns** promotes identity politics where ‘*we*’, ‘*us*’, and ‘*our*’ is used to build solidarity and unity, ‘*you*’ and ‘*your*’ is used for personalization, and ‘*those*’, ‘*their*’, ‘*they*’ and ‘*them*’ is used for othering groups. This strategy supports the building of national group boundaries being undertaken by the BJP. Second, the repeated use of **modal auxiliaries** like ‘*can*’, ‘*must*’, ‘*will*’ and ‘*should*’ expresses political will and commitment of the politicians while also invoking obligation on part of the citizens (Alo, 2012). This emphasis on fulfilling duties and responsibilities to the nation is a strategy the BJP uses to establish its superiority. Moreover, these duties can be seen as one of the conditions of national belongingness that a ‘true’ citizen must undertake and can also invoke patriotism in citizens due to a sense of being united with the BJP in nation building. Third, use of **greetings** in the form of “*brothers and sisters*”, “*friends*”, and “*my dear countrymen*” function as a persuasive strategy to build solidarity and oneness beyond social divisions (Alo, 2012). Emotionally charged words like “*sisters*” and “*brothers*” reflect Modi’s preferred family-oriented discourse that aligns with the organic view of society prevailing among Hindu nationalists while the term “*friends*” can be seen as an attempt at establishing a personal connection with India’s citizens that builds Modi’s personality cult as an everyman (Jaffrelot & Martelli, 2017; Jaffrelot, 2021).

Fourth, **figures of speech** are used to ornament the language and attract the attention of the audience (Adebomi, 2023). However, in BJP discourse, metaphors also play a role in using pathos by creating fear, anger, and insecurity. For example, Thakur’s metaphor of infiltration of “*our house*” that refers to the nation and Modi’s metaphors of socio-economic problems of corruption and nepotism like “*termites*” and “*disease*” aims to promote anger at the internal Muslim ‘Other’ and the elite Congress. Moreover, instead of the English term India, BJP

leaders often use the mythological Sanskrit term *Bharat* and then personify their country as a Mother culminating in “*Bharat Mata*”.<sup>9</sup> This along with party officials’ regular use of “*Hindustan*” promotes *Hindutva* and reflects their demand for a Hinduized nation.

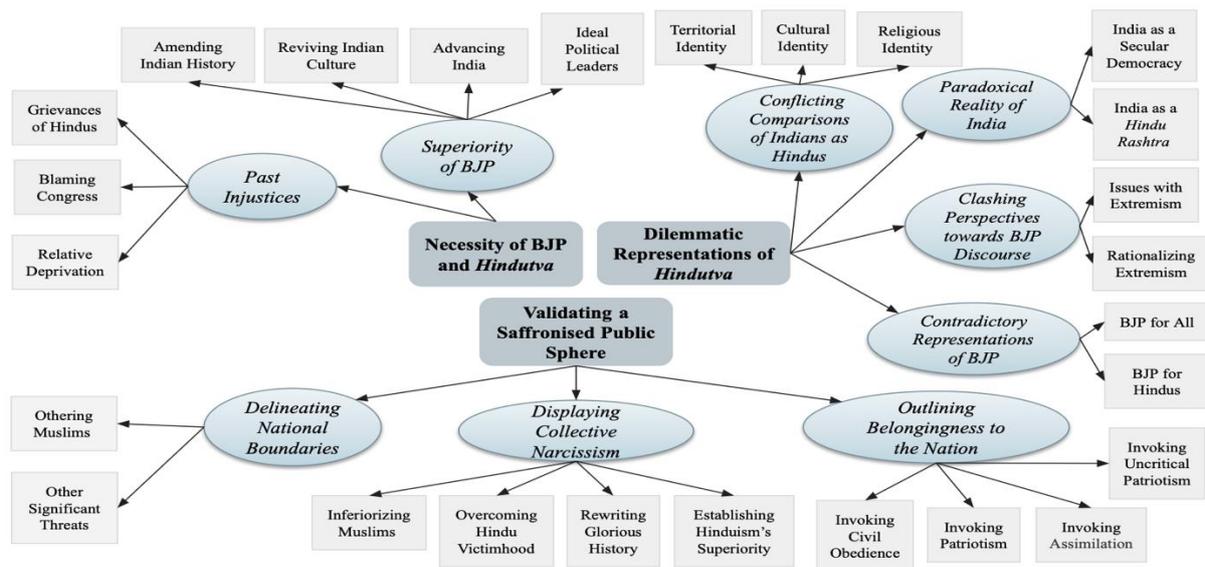
Therefore, while BJP leaders do rely on *logos* by quoting facts and statistics but the predominant use of the above rhetorical strategies seeks to develop *pathos* (specifically, anger, resentment, fear, pride) by using meaningful language with emotive tones and indirect meanings and develop *ethos* by establishing BJP leaders as trustworthy characters (Fanani et al., 2019). Ultimately, these strategies supplement BJP’s promotion of themselves, Indianness, and Hinduness that increases the persuasiveness of exclusionary nationalism and makes it easier to mobilize support for Hindu nationalism.

## 4.2 Study 2

The thematic analysis in Study 2 resulted in three overarching themes: 1) Necessity of BJP and *Hindutva*, 2) Dilemmatic Representations of *Hindutva*, and 3) Validating a Saffronised Public Sphere which points to BJP supporters’ appeal towards Hindu nationalism being rooted in the importance of *Hindutva* and the BJP, clashing representations that point to the malleability of *Hindutva*, and justification of the saffronisation of India (see Appendix 7).

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<sup>9</sup> Bharat was a legendary King in Hindu mythology who presided over the creation of the territory bearing the same name.



**Figure 2: Thematic Network Map for Study II**

### Overarching Theme 1: Necessity of BJP and *Hindutva*

*Excerpt 1:*

“2: India was ruled by Britishers and they left this country in 1947. But they left with huge problems of poverty...that slavery ideology was continuing. And I've seen that BJP is a nationalist party. This party want(s) to bring the actual history of this country which was destroyed by Britishers. And the Congress government, they continued with the wrong histories imposed on us, the glorious past of India. India was ahead, our great scientists, our great heroes. So we (have) all forgotten our heroes, our great ancestors. So I was very attracted that this is the party which can bring the real history, the glorious past... Our politicians and the intelligentsia continued that anything which is Hindu, which is of this country's civilization, is inferior.. They were dividing the Hindus on caste, on language...And to get votes of Muslims who remain in the country, they were giving them some, in Hindi we call, *Pushti Karan*, appeasement of Muslims.” (FG 2)

Excerpt 1 clearly outlines an inferiority complex rooted in being conquered and subjugated by Islamic rulers and British colonizers along with the perception of deprivation felt due to the previous ruling party appeasing the Muslim community for votes. The first stems

from the idea of a ‘wounded civilisation’ where a perfect Hindu land was subjugated over the centuries at the hands of Muslim invaders and British colonizers that leads to the present-day desire to restore the glory of Hindu history and culture. Second, the sense is that Hindus were betrayed by the corrupt and elitist Congress who protected and privileged the interests of ‘Others’ for votes, divided the Hindus, and deteriorated the country’s conditions. Moreover, unlike the BJP, Congress is perceived to have contributed to greater Westernisation that eroded the basic values and customs of Hinduism. Third, resentment due to the feeling of being inferiorised while perceived privileged Muslims constantly got more benefits or were given religious leeway to violate the rules and norms of civil society became a factor in voting for the BJP.

*Excerpt 2:*

*“5: And 10 years have gone and he has proved that people in power were not allowed to do corruption and neither was any corruption allegation against them disregarded...Therefore, the common man loves this political party as its leader is honest and the people with him are honest.... and seeing BJP’s ideology and way of work, we are with BJP and will remain with BJP.*

*3: And one more thing is that since the BJP has come, there is a lot of inclination towards our civilization and culture. People wanting to know about it, visiting old temples, ... see right now, we are talking in Hindi. Perhaps this trend also came because of the BJP. We do not like to speak English now.” (FG 1)*

*Hindutva* and the BJP have emancipatory consequences for Indians as it provides socio-economic advancement and restores their sense of security, self-worth, pride, and dignity. The BJP is perceived as shedding light on the glorious (Hindu) past of India and reviving its cultural and civilizational practices. Simultaneously, the BJP is associated with development and is viewed as working for the common man, empowering women, the poor, and the rural

population, and improving India's foreign policy. Lastly, people's allegiance to BJP stems from their perception of persuasive saintly politics where Modi is seen as a strong leader with a sense of morality, a humble background, and exceptional achievements.

### **Overarching Theme 2: Dilemmatic Representations of *Hindutva***

*Excerpt 3:*

*“3: The word Hindu is used to describe the culture, it is used to describe the religion, it's also used to describe the spiritual traditions in the country...the word Hindu is tied to this geography...It is connected to the area around the Sindhu river...There are lots of things about us that are culturally Hindu. And that is the same for many people who are following other religions. So they should actually be called, like a Hindu Christian.” (FG 2)*

The term Indian and Hindu are equated and are seen as having multiple definitions where it can be used to mean the population occupying a particular geographical territory on one side of the Sindhu (Indus) River, a ethnocultural community sharing a Hindu way of life, and a group of people practicing the religion- Hinduism. These definitions clash with each other because the first defines all occupants of India as Indians whereas the second and third are rooted in Savarkar's *Hindutva* that limits the definition of an Indian to only those who adopt Hindu cultural traditions and practice the Hindu faith.

*Excerpt 4:*

*“5: Our culture is such that- ‘one is a relative, the other a stranger, says the narrow-minded. The entire world is a family live the magnanimous’. So everything gets over- Indianism, Hinduism, non-Hinduism. We have also said- ‘may all be happy, may all be free from illness, may all see what is auspicious, may no one suffer.’ We have said this for everyone, not for a particular caste, religion, or community”<sup>10</sup> and*

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<sup>10</sup> The phrase and prayer were said in Sanskrit and have been roughly translated.

*“5: Who has got the right to say why or where should the Ram Mandir be built? This is wrong and for such people it is said that if you are not liking it, then you should leave the country... unnecessarily, without your right, without your capacity, you speak that it should be not constructed or we won't let it be constructed...”*

*6: These people came in 711 AD*

*5: Outrightly they should be advised, that in matters in which you have no rights or which are outside your jurisdiction, if you dare speak, we have the right to say that you are going out of your jurisdiction, so you should not remain in this country.” (FG 1)*

There exists a conflict between the values of equality and pluralism in the secular democracy of India that is grounded in Hinduism and the Republic's foundational values, and the views of Muslims being second-class citizens rooted in *Hindutva*. In some instances, supporters invoke Hindu texts and prayers and the Constitution to argue that all religions in India are considered equal and no one is discriminated against. However, at the same time, Muslims are denied rights like freedom of expression because Hindus are viewed as descending from the “*sons of the soil*”, the original occupants of the Indian territory, who have greater rights or privileges due to this birthright (Jaffrelot, 2021, p. 189).

*Excerpt 5:*

*“1: So I totally agree with what PM Modi is saying in the first quote, absolutely 100% agree with that. I don't agree with what MLA Rupjyoti Kurmi is saying, because as I said that, our culture should allow all sorts of things to come...the Taj Mahal and Qutub Minar also should be there. And the Mughal history also should be there, but it should be given proportionate importance.*

*3: Yeah, same. I agree with the first one fully and the second one... there are a few things that are correct that the money was earned here only. But it should not be removed...it should not be an extreme reaction.” (FG 1)*

This excerpt outlines the fact that the extremist BJP discourse of some politicians is seen to be unacceptable in a India that believes in Hinduism yet that same discourse is rationalized and justified using multiple reasons such as being necessary to control Muslims, having some truth in it, being propounded by only a few politicians, being a natural reaction in response to years of cultural suppression, or as something that would not be an issue in the long-term because Hindus would return to their values of acceptance and tolerance. The conflict again exists between Indian and Hindu moral values that should not allow extremism and this extremism linked with *Hindutva* being justified and accepted.

*Excerpt 6:*

*“ 3: I also started supporting the BJP when in Ayodhya Mandir, the Mosque was destroyed and the process of constructing a temple was started and it is true that because we are Hindus and BJP promotes Hindus-*

*2: -Somewhere it does promote Hindus and that’s why we are BJP supporters...*

*5: I don't think BJP is for Hindus only. I think BJP is for everyone in India...it is a very wrong notion to think that BJP is for Hindus only. We think for all those who are living in India and we have faith in Indian culture and Indian thinking...We are for all.” (FG 1)*

This last excerpt presents the contradiction between representations of the BJP being egalitarian by working for everyone in a pluralistic, secular India yet supporting the BJP because their ideology matches the Hindu way of life and because they promote *Hindutva* and support Hindus.

### **Overarching Theme 3: Validating a Saffronised Public Sphere**

*Excerpt 7:*

*“4: A state that has slowly but completely, I would say, 101% become only for Muslims. You do not see Hindus there...they are not there...and there are a few states where Hindus have*

*slowly been wiped out. Hindus meaning Indian and only Muslim culture and Muslim things are adopted and followed there. So I don't think that this is correct and that things should be done in this way,...like JNU where this is happening and second, there are some madrasas which need to be monitored...the education that is being imparted in madrasas is not only anti-Hindu but also anti-nationalist.” (FG 1)*

Muslims are clearly identified as significant ‘Others’ whose distinct culture and practices is perceived by the dominant population to threaten the unity of India and to disrupt the cultural and political order of the nation. Apart from Muslims, certain liberal and left-wing universities that criticize the government along with threats in the form of illegal Muslim immigrants, Pakistan, and China are identified as external and internal ‘others’ that endanger India’s national integrity and security. This allows the population to outline their boundaries of “us” and “them” and determine the inclusivity of the nation.

*Excerpt 8:*

*“6: We have gratitude which is not present in any other culture. It is said that Muslims kill people after making them sons-in-law...but for us, our gratitude leads us to worship the Tulsi plant. Christians can say we won’t do it, Muslims can say we won’t do it but if they do it, it would benefit them. How? The Tulsi plant gives oxygen even at night- this science says, we are not saying it.” (FG 1)*

The glorification of Hindu culture and religion points to a display of collective narcissism. First, Hinduism is positioned as being better in competition to Islam because of Hindu values, teachings, and historic structures. Second, victimhood is overcome by reclaiming structures that are symbols of the ravages of Muslim ‘intruders’ like the *Ram*

*Mandir* while also claiming popular Islamic architecture as being originally Hindu to physically establish Hindu hegemony. Third, the belief that India's history is not taught properly or is taught incorrectly leads to the demand to teach the correct past of India that emphasizes Indian superiority and instils pride by including depictions of the 'Vedic golden age' and Hindu empires predating or countering the Mughals, highlighting the negative aspects of the Mughal Empire, including religious or mythological texts, and outlining major Hindu figures as heroes who fought against Muslims. Lastly, India's supreme culture and heritage are highlighted as being eternal and scientific but some accomplishments are exaggerated in a ludicrous manner to essentially state that traditional practices and ways of life in ancient Indian civilization were vastly better than imported modern, Western ideas and science.

*Excerpt 9:*

*"2: Anyone who is living in India and following all things of India. And who follows it wholeheartedly is Indian.*

*4: We live in Bharat. If there is something happening in Bharat, if somebody is saying something against our country and if we have no problem with that, then are we really the citizens of our country? If we support other countries while staying here, then maybe we are declared citizens on our passport but we are not citizens of this country by heart. In wrong actions, we stand by them and start harming our country...*

*5: The true definition of Indian is who is India minded...Indian does not mean anyone who stays in India but anyone who, in his mind, thinks of this country...*

*2: Their heart should beat for India*

*4: Some people who chant anti-national slogans, can they be Indians?" (FG 1)*

The excerpt outlines the conditions of national belongingness where only citizens who 'truly' love and are loyal to India over their religions, follow Indian rules and customs, accept and respect Hindu traditions and practices, and do not criticize the nation or the government,

can be termed as Indians. These conditions propose an Indian to be a certain kind of Hindu and implicitly target Muslims as their allegiance is seen as lying to their holy places in the Middle East rather than the sacred land of India, they are viewed as being intolerant towards Hindu traditions and practices, and they are criticized for being allowed to follow Sharia law and condemning the government (Jaffrelot, 2021).

### 5. General Discussion

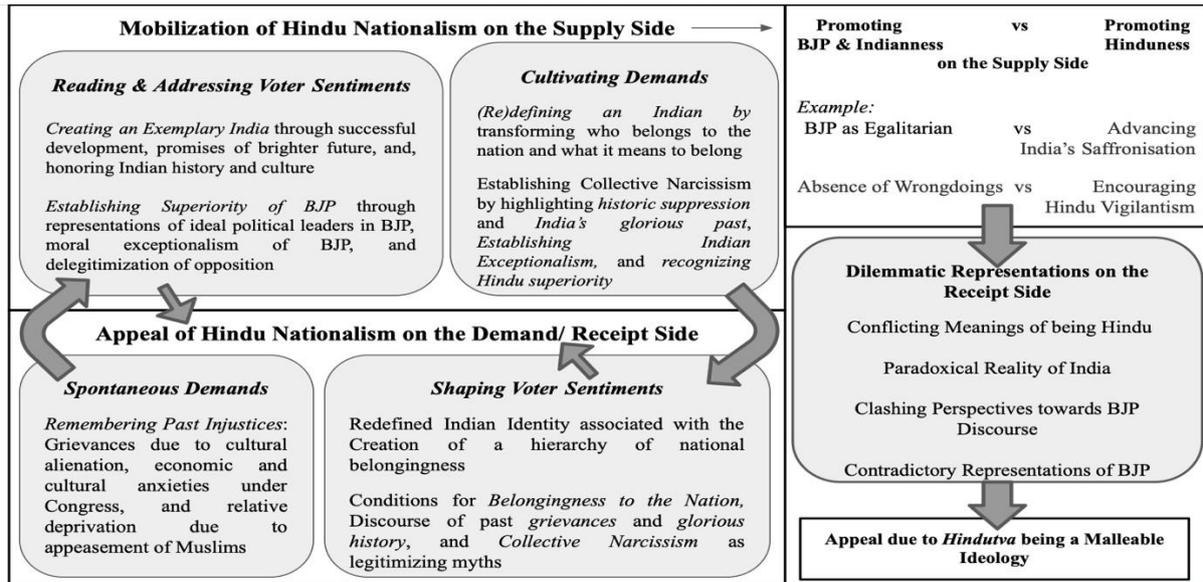


Figure 3: Framing Psychological Mobilization and Appeal as a Feedback Loop

Psychology plays an important role in explaining the success of ethnic nationalism in India because it provides the theoretical tools for examining facets of its mobilization on the supply side and appeal on the demand side. First, support for the BJP is fuelled by grievances on the demand side- beliefs about cultural alienation experienced due to past ‘invasions’, Congress’ role in generating economic and cultural anxieties, and relative deprivation stemming from past appeasement of Muslims (Mols & Jetten, 2020). These grievances reflect status concerns associated with the perceived lowering of Hindus in the societal hierarchy in the past (Obradović et al., 2020). In such a context, BJP’s representations of their own party as working for socio-economic development, honouring history and restoring cultural dominance, and being superior compared to the opposition attracts voters because it addresses their grievances but these representations have little basis in reality as there exists a growing gap

between these promises and BJP's performance (Prabhakar, 2023). Nevertheless, the electorate gravitates towards this party because when national populists do not deliver socioeconomic reforms, they replace social issues with more symbolic ones (Mols & Jetten, 2020). Therefore, on the supply side, BJP leaders not only strategically portray themselves and their political project as the solution to demand-side grievances but also create demand by reframing societal events and constructing narratives that make ethnic nationalism appealing and more persuasive by using rhetorical strategies that promote *pathos* and *ethos*. Such cultivation shapes voter sentiments because it either changes attitudes relating to specific aspects of that issue or reinforces certain general attitudes anchored in widely accepted social representations (Sibley et al., 2006).

One of the first re-framings involves creating an identity crisis where BJP politicians construct sociological boundaries around a 'national group' using significant threats and make salient specific meanings of what it means to be Indian that are rooted in social representations of history (Henderson, 2007). Specifically, BJP leaders use fear to present the Hindu 'Self' as being threatened externally and internally by 'Others' and this is believed by BJP supporters who think that there exist realistic threats and symbolic threats posed by external enemies on India's security, by illegal immigrants on India's scarce resources, and by Muslims, Christians, and liberals on Hindu culture and identity. This fabrication of an unabated sense of anxiety, insecurity, and vulnerability among the Hindus creates demand so that the BJP can present itself as being the protector from these threats and Hindu nationalism as being a necessary project to preserve Hindu identity.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the outlining of such group boundaries condition the redefinition of the national identity of Indians as an awareness of and attachment to Hindu religious, ethnocultural, and historic traits which gets internalized by BJP supporters

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<sup>11</sup> The relationship between demand and supply is complex and non-linear and although these threats did exist in the Indian social psyche pre-2014, the BJP reinforced and popularized the threats of the significant other and activated the base, communal instincts of Indians to gain political support (Mols & Jetten, 2020; Prabhakar, 2023).

who define the Indian identity as being territorially, culturally, and religiously Hindu (Triandafyllidou, 1998). This transformed meaning of an Indian as being Hindu is based on social representations of the past where only Hindus are believed to have originally occupied the sacred land of *Hindustan* and have practiced Hinduism as a way of life but as having suffered violence and oppression by groups not indigenous to the Indian subcontinent whose descendants are now outlined as the 'other'.

On the demand/receipt side, this (re)definition of national identity in ethnic terms proposed by political leaders becomes a social representation and is used by supporters to derive conclusions about their own sense of belongingness in the nation that in turn endows them with social positioning and mobilizes them towards action (Andreouli & Chryssochoou, 2015; Henderson, 1999). As membership in a nation is defined in exclusive terms, a mere sense of belonging to this new sense of 'who Indians are' predicts intergroup hostility and grants Hindus dominance and power in the new hierarchy of national belongingness as they are seen as one and the same as the nation (Kende & Kreko, 2020). While this partially explains the attraction towards Hindu nationalism, supporters also need to legitimize this hierarchy to fully validate their appeal and they do this by outlining the conditions of belonging to the nation. Therefore, description of the national prototypes provide a unique ideological resource wherein BJP supporters emphasize both inclusionary characteristics that can readily be adopted by anyone like displaying patriotism or following rules and norms set by the government and exclusionary characteristics that does not fit ethnic minorities like blind patriotism or honouring and adopting Hindu culture. As these national character representations implicitly discriminate against Muslims, I propose that these characterizations are developed using culturally specific representations about Muslims not participating in Hindu culture, not truly loving India, supporting Pakistan in trivial matters like cricket matches or serious issues like

terrorism, and demanding special legal privilege (Andreouli & Chrysochoou, 2015).<sup>12</sup> The national prototype then acts as a legitimizing myth that strategically highlights inclusionary and exclusionary features that do not fit a significant ‘other’ and provides a subtle way to justify discrimination toward minorities seen as not really belonging to the nation and validate appeal towards Hindu nationalism (Sibley, 2013).

On the supply side, the second construction of narrative is the promotion of Indianness where social representations of India’s history and India’s exceptionalism are highlighted to glorify the Hindu in-group and influence political behaviour because of individuals’ tendency to believe in various shared collective fictions (Lantos & Forgas, 2021). BJP propaganda cultivates a sense of victimhood, invokes pride, and presents over-evaluation of the national ingroup to build collective narcissism in voters that exploits an individual’s need for positive group identity and positive in-group distinctiveness and can mobilize support for ethnic nationalism and illiberalism (Chandra, 2018; Lantos & Forgas, 2021). This is substantiated by existing research where collective narcissism significantly predicted conservatism and support for the ruling populist party in Hungary, was associated with populist support that led to Trump’s electoral victory in America, and played an important role in attraction to nationalism in Poland (Lantos & Forgas, 2021; Cichocka & Cislak, 2020; Federico et al., 2023).

On the demand/receipt side, the BJP’s and the dominant group’s historical narrative that enhances the glory of the pre-Muslim age for self-enhancement and exaggerates victimhood under Muslim rulers for self-verification redefines the historical relationship between Hindus and Muslims and acts as a charter that justifies social order by explaining how things came to be. This representation presents the semi-mythological Vedic civilization as the national in-group’s origins and the interaction between Hinduism and Islam as the beginning of India’s colonization and oppression and not as the foundation of India’s syncretic and secular

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<sup>12</sup> These representations were all discussed during the focus groups.

culture. This discourse on history then becomes a legitimizing myth that validates the subordination of the present-day descendants of the ‘looters’ and ‘invaders’ (Sibley et al., 2008; Liu et al., 1999; Liu & Hilton, 2005). Simultaneously, collective narcissism is a set of psychological beliefs about the unappreciated and threatened in-group’s exceptionalism and entitlement to privileged treatment that can be seen as acting as a legitimizing myth (like historical negation) to justify illiberal demands (Lantos & Forgas, 2021). Therefore, historical discourse and collective narcissism acts as legitimizing myths that help explain and validate the appeal of Hindu nationalism for the promotion of saffronization of India.

Lastly, as part of promoting Indianness and *Hinduness*, the BJP attempts to promote a civic definition of national identity that is rooted in Hindu religion and culture while also exploiting fear, anger, and resentment towards the ‘other’ to propose an ethnic definition as being Hindu. These two differing representations have been transmitted into everyday thinking to produce dilemmatic representations of Indians being Hindus, of India, of BJP extremist discourse, and of BJP’s character that causes no cognitive dissonance and sheds light on the social nature of thinking (Billig et al., 1988; Billig, 1993). This “*dynamic coexistence—interference and specialization—of distinct modalities of knowledge*” is called cognitive polyphasia which points to a much more complex ideological positioning for dealing with social reality than assumed (Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernández, 2015). These antithetical understandings point to an ideological dilemma between soft *Hindutva* and hard *Hindutva* where the former emphasizes an inclusionary civic nationalism rooted in the Hindu religion and the latter highlights an exclusionary ethnic nationalism rooted in Savarkar’s idea of a homogenous Hindu culture.<sup>13</sup> In line with the motivated construal hypothesis, BJP supporters endorse egalitarianism, tolerance, pluralism, coexistence of diverse cultures, and acceptance

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<sup>13</sup> Anderson’s (2015) terminology on neo-*Hindutva* has been adopted and redefined (Anderson & Longkumer, 2018). *Hindutva* is not proposed to be originally HA as the hard *Hindutva* is its original conceptualization. Instead, *Hindutva* as the underlying ideology of Hindu nationalism is proposed to have different meanings that can make it appear HA.

by referring to a HA soft *Hindutva*. However, in response to perceived realistic and symbolic threats to Hindus, this diverse, pluralistic religion gets mutated into a rigid, homogenous, and codified culture that appears to be egalitarian because it seeks to create a unified Hindu community but actually imposes Hindu culture on all Indians, justifies social inequality, and legitimizes saffronization of India. Therefore, this mutation of a soft *Hindutva* into a hard *Hindutva* proves the malleability of this ideology, proposes this sophisticated legitimizing manoeuvre to be highly persuasive, and explains supporters' appeal towards Hindu nationalism where this ideology can be construed differently to serve illiberal socio-political interests while allowing supporters to deny any accusations of anti-egalitarianism (Knowles et al., 2009).

Ultimately, Hindu nationalism in India has provided a context for the application of a unique theoretical framework and conceptual approach which has generated underlying socio-psychological insights that can be relevant to academics, policy makers, and educators. First, through this research, greater dialogue between SIT, SDT and SRT is proposed to understand ethnic nationalism because each theory is intertwined with the other. Specifically, the formation of new boundaries around the national in-group and redefinition of identity itself becomes a social representation which grants the dominant group power and conditions a social hierarchy of belongingness, culturally specific social representations of the past and present act as key resources in explaining the process behind the redefinition of national identity and the legitimization of hierarchy, and the mutating content of a malleable *Hindutva* stems from perceived identity threats while being anchored in the contradictory representations in political discourse and existing knowledge systems of Hinduism and *Hindutva*. Second, these underlying psychological processes can also be used to counter exclusionary nationalism (Singh, 2021). For example, efforts can be taken to increase political literacy and encourage critical evaluation from an early age to minimize blind patriotism and national populist appeal. Moreover, social representations are not impervious to change so the examination of everyday

knowledge can also help in formulating alternate representations of the nation like historical narratives that unite disparate groups to promote greater social equality.

### **6. Limitations and Future Studies**

While this research provided important understandings into the socio-psychologically understudied topic of Hindu nationalism, it has several limitations. First, Study 1 makes no claims about the generalizability of the themes due to the sampling bias, and can only be seen as a starting-point for exploring the top-down psychology of mobilization of Hindu nationalism in India. Second, while BJP speeches and interviews explain mobilization to a certain extent, they do not completely explain the attitudes held by the BJP supporters because extreme discourse by members of other *Sangh Parivar* organizations or misinformation spread by BJP IT cell trolls were not analysed (Jaffrelot, 2021). Third, accessing a different political group, requesting them to participate in a group discussion, and organising the focus group were all challenges that were faced. This prevented conducting a third online focus group and resulted in a limited sample size which restricts the understandings that were captured and does not provide sufficient empirical evidence. Fourth, the focus groups were homogenous but heterogenous discussions in terms of religion, caste, and class can be conducted to better capture interaction, contestation, and clarification to understand the diversity in opinions and experiences contributing to the success of Hindu nationalism. Fifth, the BJP promoting itself was an unexpected finding that shows that BJP relies on populism along with ethnic nationalism which proposes the value of socio-psychologically investigating national populism in India. Therefore, this research can be replicated ideally to overcome these limitations and better investigate mobilization and appeal by examining social media discourse, conducting heterogenous focus groups, and organizing discussions with more participants from different Indian states. Moreover, instead of qualitative studies, future research can be quantitative in nature to understand whether the proposed legitimizing ideologies mediate the relation between

SDO and prejudice towards Muslims and support for anti-Muslim policies and if ingroup identification and exposure to BJP political discourse plays a role in this process (Huddy & Khatib, 2007; Sidanius et al., 2019; Hindricks et al., 2014, Sibley et al., 2008).

## 7. Conclusion

In India, the mobilization of support for and appeal of ethnic nationalism are rooted in the demand and supply feedback loop. The BJP not only meets the pre-existing demands of the supporters that stem from representations of anxieties and grievances in the historic and recent past but also cultivates demands by reframing societal events and constructing narratives and using rhetorical strategies to render these demands more persuasive. The BJP mobilizes support for Hindu nationalism by highlighting significant threats to the national in-group, re-framing history to exaggerate glory and victimhood, and constructing narratives of Indian and Hindu superiority on the supply side. This shapes voter sentiments and leads to the appeal of Hindu nationalism for BJP supporters being rooted in the redefinition of national identity and creation of a hierarchy of belongingness, construction of three legitimizing myths that justify this hierarchy and the saffronization of India, and *Hindutva* as a malleable ideology that mutates in response to significant threats to the nation and allows supporters to claim egalitarianism yet promote illiberalistic saffronization. As the Indian context illuminates the interconnections between each theory, this dissertation proposes the value of initiating dialogue between the theories of social identity, social power, and social knowledge that can help better understand the growing ethnic nationalism over the world. To conclude, BJP does not seem likely to fall from power soon and even if it does, a greater concern is that this regime has psychologically mobilized support for a nationalism hostile to ethnic minorities that could outlive their political tenures because of its appeal and transform India from the present illiberal, ethnic democracy to a future authoritarian Hindu *Rashtra* (Jaffrelot, 2021).

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Table of Political Speeches and Interviews of BJP Politicians (Study I)

Year	Event	Speeches		Interviews	
		Speaker	Speech Context	Interviewee	Interview Context
Conspiracies/ Controversies (2019- 2023)	Love <i>jihad</i> <sup>14</sup>	<i>Sadhvi</i> Pragya Singh Thakur [Member of Parliament representing Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh]*	Addressing the Hindu Jagarana Vedike South Annual Convention, Shivamogga, Karnataka December 26, 2022	Yogi Adityanath [Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh]	Interview with India Today, New Delhi, Delhi February 27, 2021
	Growing Muslim Population <sup>15</sup>	Himanta Biswa Sarma [Chief Minister of Assam]*	Addressing the State Assembly, Dispur, Assam July 19, 2021	<i>Sadhvi</i> Pragya Singh Thakur [Member of Parliament representing Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh]*	Interview with Times of India, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh June 11, 2021
	Religious Conversion & <i>Ghar Wapsi</i> campaign <sup>16</sup>	Tejasvi Surya [Member of Parliament representing Bangalore South, Karnataka, National President of the BJP <i>Yuva Morcha</i> ]*	Address at the Vishwarpanam programme, Udupi, Karnataka December 25, 2021	Subramanian Swamy [Former Member of Parliament representing Uttar Pradesh]*	Interview with Times Now, Virtual Interview April 19, 2023
	Cow Protection/ Cow Vigilantism <sup>17</sup>	Yogi Adityanath [Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh]*	Address at an election rally, Amethi, Uttar Pradesh February 23, 2022	Yogi Adityanath [Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh]	Interview with News18, Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh September 19, 2019

<sup>14</sup> “Love *Jihad*” is a conspiracy theory which states that Muslim men marry Hindu women to convert them to Islam (Mansoor et al., 2022).

<sup>15</sup> Part of Hindutva propaganda where the ‘rapidly growing’ population of Muslims (14%) is seen to threaten and subjugate the 80% Hindu population in India (Jaffrelot, 2021).

<sup>16</sup> The *Ghar Wapsi* ( ‘coming home’ or ‘homecoming’) campaign seeks to set forth coerced mass conversions of Muslims, Christians, and Buddhists to Hinduism (Mansoor et al., 2022).

<sup>17</sup> Cows are considered sacred in Hindu religion and Hindu nationalists protect cows by opposing their slaughter and perpetuating violence against cow traders who are mostly from Muslim and Dalit communities (Tharoor, 2018).

Year	Event	Speeches		Interviews	
		Speaker	Speech Context	Interviewee	Interview Context
2019	General/Lok Sabha Elections	Narendra Modi [Prime Minister of India]	Victory Speech New Delhi, Delhi May 23, 2019	Narendra Modi [Prime Minister of India]	Interview with Times Now, New Delhi, Delhi April 19, 2019
2019	Revocation of Article 370 in Jammu & Kashmir	Yogi Adityanath [Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh]	Address at an election rally, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh November 08, 2022	Amit Shah [Minister of Home Affairs, Also President of the BJP in 2019]	Interview with CNBC-Network18, New Delhi, Delhi October 21, 2019
2019- 2020	Citizenship Amendment Act/ National Registers of Citizens (CAA/NRC)	Amit Shah [Minister of Home Affairs, Also President of the BJP in 2019]	Addressing the Rajya Sabha, New Delhi, Delhi December 09, 2019	C.T. Ravi [Current National General Secretary of BJP, Member of Karnataka Legislative Assembly in 2019]	Interview with News18 Kannada, Bangalore, Karnataka December 18, 2019
2019- 2020	Verdict on Ayodhya dispute and Construction of the Ram Mandir	Narendra Modi [Prime Minister of India]	Address during the Ram Mandir Bhoomi Poojan, Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh August 05, 2020	Yogi Adityanath [Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh]	Interview with India Today, Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh August 05, 2020
2022	Karnataka Hijab Row	Narendra Modi [Prime Minister of India]	Address at an election rally, Sahranpur, Uttar Pradesh February 10, 2022	Amit Shah [Minister of Home Affairs]	Interview with CNN-News18, Delhi, New Delhi February 21, 2022
2023	Historical Revisionism/ NCERT History Textbook Row	-	-	Rupjyoti Kurmi [Member of Legislative Assembly from Assam]	Interview with Asian News International, Guwahati, Assam April 06, 2023

Year	Event	Speeches		Interviews	
		Speaker	Speech Context	Interviewee	Interview Context
2023	Inauguration of New Parliament House	Narendra Modi [Prime Minister of India]	Address at Inauguration, New Delhi, Delhi May 28, 2023	–	–
2019- 2022	Independence Day	Narendra Modi [Prime Minister of India]	Address to the Nation, New Delhi, Delhi August 15, 2019 August 15, 2020 August 15, 2021 August 15, 2022	–	–
2019- 2023	Republic Day	Narendra Modi [Prime Minister of India]	Address to the Nation during <i>Mann ki Baat</i> , <sup>18</sup> New Delhi, Delhi January 27, 2019 January 26, 2020 January 31, 2021 January 30, 2022 January 29, 2023	–	–

\*These speeches and interviews could not be accessed in full but were included because they met the inclusion criteria of revolving around the chosen controversies/ events and being given between the specified period of 2019-2023 .

<sup>18</sup> The official Republic Day Address on 26th January is given by the President of India but PM Modi's first episode of the year during the *Mann ki Baat* series is always close to the 26th of January and is the only address given by him revolving around Republic Day themes. While called India's first visually enriched radio programme, *Mann ki Baat* allows PM Modi to uninterruptedly address the nation on a range of issues and is thus classified as speech in this study.

## Appendix 2: Thematic Codebook for Study I

### Overarching Theme 1: Promoting the BJP

<i>Theme 1: Creating an Exemplary India</i>		
Successful Development	Focus on success achieved by the BJP in terms of promoting growth and development in all sectors, ranging from infrastructure, health, economy, security, agriculture, law and order, science and technology, environment, social justice and empowerment	“ Under Article 370, there was no anti-corruption bureau and today all laws of the country are applicable there...We have tightened the screws around the menace of corruption. Central aid and state revenue are now reaching the public. This will increase development... we have allotted a huge amount of 6500 crore rupees directly to the panchayats. This will also boost development work in villages. Thirdly, a group of experienced administrators are making a 15-year roadmap for the development of Jammu and Kashmir and I believe that based on that if we develop the infrastructure, education, health, industry and tourism sectors of the Valley, then nobody can stop the state from becoming a developed one.” (Shah, 2019, Interview)
Promises of Brighter Future	BJP is creating a new, developed India where prosperity in all public sectors, flourishing harmony, and fulfilment of every Indian’s goals and dreams is promised in the future.	“ In 25 years from now, India will celebrate 100 years of independence. We also have 25 years of ‘Amrit’ period ahead of us. Our goal is to make India a developed nation by working together in these 25 years...Over the next 25 years, the new laws enacted in this new Parliament House will transform India into a developed nation. The laws enacted in this Parliament will help alleviate poverty in India. The laws enacted in this Parliament will create new opportunities for the youth and empower women. I believe that this new Parliament House will serve as the foundation for the creation of a new India. It will be a prosperous, strong, and developed India that adheres to principles of policy, justice, truth, dignity, and duty” (Modi, 2023, Speech)
Absence of Wrongdoings	Any controversial statement or event and discriminatory decision is either denied or rationalized and justified using different reasons.	“(About lynching) If any person is killed, we have section 302 for that and that has been applied everywhere... Now, if you want to give it a political angle or you want to understand this as a social evil, that is what society has to decide...The instances of so-called mob lynching haven’t increased under the BJP. A certain propaganda is being created about this. If any loot used to happen in villages and the people after getting hold of the thief would thrash him resulting in death. That would happen in the past as well. A colour is being given to these incidents and that is not right....(About predominantly Muslims and Dalits victims) It isn’t as such. You can look at the analysis of previous incidents too. Such incidents happen to the poor” (Shah, 2019, Interview)  “Every action has a reaction. If you have a vote bank, then we also have a vote bank. If you are proud of your

		<i>vote bank, then we are also proud of ours. I did not mention any caste or community. I think a normal Hindu worships Bajrang Bali, but Mayawati appealed to a particular community. So I feel every action has a reaction, and the public considered it.” (Adityanath, 2019, Interview)<sup>19</sup></i>
Working for National Heroes	Present-day political decisions and actions of the BJP are presented as fulfilling the goals and visions of national heroes.	<i>“As far as the Kashmir decision is concerned, it is like fulfilling the dream of Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ambedkar. It is like fulfilling the dream of Sardar Vallabhai Patel and there can never be a bigger honour to Shyama Prasad Mukherjee than this.” (Adityanath, 2019, Interview)</i>
Honouring History and Culture	The importance of respecting and preserving Indian history, culture, and heritage is outlined to achieve greater modernization and development in India.	<i>“We should feel proud of our heritage and legacy. Since it is this same legacy which had given India its golden period in the past. And it is this legacy that has an innate capability of transforming itself with time. It is this rich heritage that transcends tests of tide and times. It embraces the new. And hence we should be proud of this heritage.... Let us not forget this and India has seen this for centuries, while some model works are needed in the country, some great heights must be achieved, but at the same time we should remain rooted and grounded while accomplishing heights as a nation.” (Modi, 2022, Speech)</i>
<i>Theme 2: Superiority of BJP</i>		
BJP as Egalitarian	BJP presents itself as working for everyone’s progress and welfare in India with no discrimination and division in terms of religion or caste.	<i>“We have extended benefits to every section of society, irrespective of caste and religion. Whoever was eligible has received benefits.” (Shah, 2022, Interview)</i>  <i>“We don’t divide the society on the basis of caste and religion...we have never tolerated communalism, hooliganism and we won’t tolerate in future either. See, poor is poor. Government plans should reach everybody without discrimination. It has been our motive that development is for everybody. Remember, in 2014, PM Modi said ‘Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas’ (‘Together with all, development for all’)...If we have given 25 lakh houses, all were not for Hindus. Muslim population in UP is 18 percent, but 30-35 percent Muslims have availed the benefits” (Adityanath, 2019, Interview)</i>
Ideal Political Leaders	There is an emphasis on BJP selflessly serving the nation along with the virtues and the work of certain BJP leaders being	<i>“Today we can see that crores of India’s citizens have filled the jholi (satchel) of the fakir (a saint who has taken a vow of poverty)...You have given me such a big responsibility, I want to reiterate that I won’t do anything just for myself. I want to say one thing publicly, every</i>

<sup>19</sup> In response to a question on the communal framing of elections and attack on the opposition where Adityanath had said that “if Congress, Samajwadi Party and the BSP have Ali, then we have Bajrang Bali (the Hindu god Hanuman)”. This statement implies the opposition appeasing Muslims and the BJP’s electorate consisting of Hindus.

	repeatedly emphasized and glorified.	<p><i>second of my time and every cell of my body is dedicated solely to the citizens of this country.” (Modi, 2019, Speech)</i></p> <p><i>“On how to completely immerse my public life for welfare, I got my inspiration from Modi Ji. Due to this, we have not only been able to carry forward welfare activities in the state but have also excelled in them...Modi ji has a magical personality. We tried to make the programs run under his guidance available to the last person...Modi ji's five-year tenure is the most ideal tenure after Independence.”(Adityanath, 2019, Interview)</i></p>
Moral Exceptionalism of BJP	BJP portrays itself as dedicated to moral ideals and values like dedication, respect, or humility, and as committed to democracy, federalism and the Constitution.	<p><i>“I want to emphasise this, no one needs to worry. This is Narendra Modi's government and it operates in the spirit of the constitution [which means that] minorities will receive full protection” (Shah, 2019, Interview)</i></p> <p><i>“BJP has a speciality. And that is, even when we were split into two, but we never changed our path, didn't allow our values to disappear...We didn't lose our hope when we were two, and now, we have come back twice but we haven't left our politeness, we haven't left our wisdom, we haven't left our values, and we haven't left our culture.” (Modi, 2019, Speech)</i></p> <p><i>“See, we need to respect the sentiments of the people...whatever their sentiments might be. And democratic values not in speeches but also in our work...we respect public sentiments whether that be in developmental work or whether that is connected to their religion.” (Adityanath, 2020, Interview)</i></p>
BJP Creating History	BJP presents itself as creating history in India through its various extraordinary decisions and actions.	<p><i>“On the 150th year of Gandhi's birth anniversary, India freed its villages from open defecation. Be it the Citizenship Amendment Act for the refugees suffering due to their beliefs, reservation rights for Dalits/Backwards/SCs/STs/OBCs, historic peace agreement in Assam and Tripura, appointment of Chief of Defence staff for making the collective power of armies more effective, or the construction of Kartarpur Sahib Corridor in a record period, India has created history, it saw history being created, extraordinary feats were achieved. Ten days ago, the construction of Lord Rama's magnificent temple in Ayodhya began. A peaceful culmination has been achieved to the age-old issue of Ram Janmbhoomi.” (Modi, 2020, Speech)</i></p>
Delegitimizing the Opposition	Opposition parties, especially Congress, are implicitly and explicitly attacked by painting them as being corrupt, engaging	<p><i>“Congress sowed the seeds of terrorism in India by introducing Article 370 in the Constitution giving special status to Jammu and Kashmir as part of their appeasement and vote bank politics...Congress' hands</i></p>

	<p>in appeasement and vote-bank politics, and also being unpatriotic and anti-national</p>	<p><i>have always been with the mafia – be it drug, animal, mining, land, or forest mafia.” (Adityanath, 2022, Speech)</i></p> <p><i>“Secondly, do you think that the voter will get influenced by their clever tactics? There is a match-fixing between them (Congress) and Pakistan. They make a statement here in India and that becomes the headline in Pakistan that's when you know there is match-fixing”(Modi, 2019, Interview)</i></p> <p><i>“SP and BSP governments that worked on caste lines and dynasty never listened to the voice of the people. One government came...worked for one caste, another government worked for another caste. After the elevation of Narendra Modi to national politics, ‘parivaarvadi’ (dynasty politics), ‘jativaadi’ (casteism) aur ‘tushtikaranvadi’ (appeasement) politics has ended and has been replaced by the politics of performance.”(Shah, 2022,Interview)</i></p>
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### **Overarching Theme 2: Promoting Indianness**

<i>Theme 3: Using and Abusing History</i>		
<p>Historic Suppression</p>	<p>Centuries of oppressive rule left Indians with an inferiority and suppressed Indian culture, traditions, and heritage.</p>	<p><i>“During this freedom struggle, several efforts were made to douse the fire of revolt and throttle the soul and spirit of our motherland. Many attempts were made to ruin the Indian culture, tradition, customs and heritage.” (Modi, 2020, Speech)</i></p> <p><i>“This slavery of hundreds of years has kept us bound, has forced us to keep our emotions tied up, have developed distorted thinking in us. We have to liberate ourselves from the slavery mind set which is visible in innumerable things within and around us.” (Modi, 2022, Speech)</i></p> <p><i>“It’s a matter that the Mughals came to India in the year 1526, and later made the Taj Mahal in 1632- after 104 years. If they didn't go back, how did the Mughals get the money after 104 years? Obviously, they looted money from Hindu Kings and Hindu people using violence and dacoity to build the Taj Mahal.”(Kurmi, 2023, Interview)</i></p>
<p>Highlighting India’s Glorious Past</p>	<p>Hindu empires pre-dating Muslim rule and India’s struggle and sacrifice for independence is highlighted to shed light on the glory of the past.</p>	<p><i>“There was a time when India was counted among the most prosperous and splendid nations of the world. India's architecture proclaimed India's expertise from India's cities to palaces, from India's temples to sculptures. From the town planning of the Indus Civilization to the Mauryan pillars and stupas, from the magnificent temples built by the Cholas to the reservoirs and large dams” (Modi, 2023, Speech)</i></p> <p><i>“Sengol was considered a symbol of the path of duty, service and nationhood in the Great Chola Empire. This</i></p>

		<p><i>Sengol became the symbol of the transfer of power under the guidance of Rajaji and the sages of Adheenam. But I believe it is our good fortune that we have been able to restore the glory and dignity of this sacred Sengol.</i>" (Modi, 2023, Speech)</p> <p><i>"India has fought for the motherland, culture and freedom for centuries. This country never gave up the pain of slavery and the longing for freedom for centuries. In the midst of victories and defeats, the aspiration of freedom engraved in the mind was never diminished."</i> (Modi, 2021, Speech)</p>
Outlining National Heroes	Emphasizing on freedom fighters, philosophers, social reformers, spiritual leaders, and other figures like scientists and educators as role models in India.	<p><i>"Portraits of other hermits and people who have influenced the nation in a positive manner. You will find Guru Nanak Dev Ji here along with Guru Govind Singh Ji, Sant Kabir Das, Ravi Das Ji, Meera Bai, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Rana Pratap."</i> (Adityanath, 2019, Interview)</p> <p><i>"India is a land of saints. Our saints have conveyed the message of goodwill, equality and social empowerment through their thoughts and deeds. One such Saint was - Sant Ravidas."</i> (Modi, 2019, Speech)</p> <p><i>"The country is remembering every personality, including the revered Bapu, who made freedom a mass movement, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, who sacrificed everything for the freedom, or great revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh, Chandrasekhar Azad, Bismil and Ashfaqulla Khan; Rani of Jhansi Lakshmibai, Queen Chennamma of Kittur or Rani Gaidinliu or the valour of Matangini Hazra in Assam; the country's first Prime Minister Pandit Nehru ji, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, who integrated the country into a united nation, and Baba Saheb Ambedkar, who determined and paved the way for the future direction of India. The country is indebted to all these great personalities."</i> (Modi, 2021, Speech)</p>
<i>Theme 4: Establishing Indian Exceptionalism</i>		
Historic Superiority	India is said to have inspired other countries and have been known and appreciated all over the world in the past.	<p><i>"And history bears witness to the fact that the belief of Indians is not limited to India alone. The struggle for our independence had ignited a new consciousness in many countries around the world. Through our fight for independence, India not only gained freedom but also inspired several nations on the path to freedom. India's belief supported the belief of other nations."</i> (Modi, 2023, Speech)</p> <p><i>"History is a witness to the fact that there was a time when the products made in our country by our skilled</i></p>

		<i>manpower used to get appreciated all over the world.” (Modi, 2020, Speech)</i>
Cultural Superiority	Superiority stemming from certain aspects associated with India’s culture like its customs, practices, art, and heritage.	<i>“But when it talks about holistic health care, it looks towards India's yoga, India's Ayurveda and India's holistic lifestyle. This is our legacy that we are providing the world with. The world is being influenced by it today... We are the people who know how to live with nature. We know how to love nature. Today the world is facing environment related problems. We have that legacy and the solutions to the problems of global warming. Our ancestors have given us the same...our heritage is being appreciated around the world today... We have a lot to offer to the world” (Modi, 2022, Speech)</i>
Present Superiority	India is highlighted to have achieved international renown and contributed to global welfare while also being better than other countries and leading the world in certain aspects.	<i>“Today, the world looks up to India whenever it is faced with a crisis. India’s global stature is continuously rising under the leadership of the Prime Minister. During the Covid-19 pandemic, India provided free tests, treatment and vaccines in addition to free ration to 80 crore people, none of which any other country did” (Yogi, 2022, Speech)</i>  <i>“The world is looking at India with pride and with anticipation. The world has started looking for solutions to the problems on the soil of India, friends. ....The world is observing the way we have started moving ahead with the resolution, and ultimately the world too is living with a new hope. The world has started realising where the power to fulfil the expectations actually lies.” (Modi, 2022, Speech)</i>
Moral Superiority	Exceptional national moral characteristics are highlighted by emphasizing India’s commitment to ideals and values like secularism, unity, diversity, cooperativism, federalism, nonviolence, sacrifice, and valour are highlighted.	<i>“Above all these things our values draw inspiration from our ancient culture and the penance of our sages and saints... let us move ahead to build a new India keeping these ideals and resolves in mind.” (Modi, 2019, Speech)</i>  <i>“The peaceful co-existence of innumerable traditions and creeds are our pride. For us all are equal. For us all are equal. No one is inferior or superior; all are our own. This feeling of oneness is important for unity....When we talk of Unity, why not have only one parameter or standard-that of India.” (Modi, 2022, Speech)</i>  <i>“This agreement also epitomises the inherent compassion and sensitivity of Indian culture. Considering everyone as its own and living with the spirit of togetherness is embedded in the ethos of this holy land.” (Modi, 2020, Speech)</i>

**Overarching Theme 3: Promoting Hinduness**

*Theme 5: Building National Belongingness*

<p>Highlighting External ‘Others’</p>	<p>External threats to Indian security are identified in the form of Pakistani terrorism and Chinese expansionism.</p>	<p>“India has also given the message of the might of New India to the enemies of the country by carrying out surgical and air strikes....Today the world is looking at India from a new perspective. There are two important aspects of this perception -- one is terrorism and the other is expansionism. India is fighting both these challenges and is also responding strongly in a restrained manner.” (Modi, 2021, Speech)</p>
<p>Muslim Threat to Hindus</p>	<p>Muslims are presented as the main threat to the safety of Hindus and to Hindu culture and heritage.</p>	<p>“The way Bengal is moving towards violence, the way those who perpetrate this are being shielded, the state is moving in the direction in which Kashmir moved in 1980s when Hindus were forced to flee. In Bengal, this is the start of such an incident.” (Modi, 2019, Interview)</p> <p>“The law is clear; if a person marries by fraudulent means or deception, then it will be a punishable offense. There have been dozens of such offenses across U.P and not in U.P but also in India. In U.P, the law has been made now but in 2009, Kerala and Karnataka high courts had spoken about it. Kerala HC had said that love jihad is a conspiracy to convert Kerala into an Islamic state.” (Adityanath, 2019, Interview)</p> <p>“They used a knife to stab our Harsha. They used a knife on our courageous Hindus, Bajrang Dal activists, Bhajpa’s activists and Yuva Morcha’s activists to stab them...to cut them.” (Thakur, Speech, 2022)</p>
<p>Other Internal Threats</p>	<p>Christians, liberals, Christian missionaries along with illegal Muslim immigrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh are believed to threaten Indian, especially Hindu, interests internally.</p>	<p>“Christianity and Islam are not mere religions. They are political imperial ideologies, and Hindus should understand this...The first thing we need to do, identify who is trying to wipe our religion from the face of the earth. This is essential for survival for Hinduism and the Hindu race” (Surya, 2021, Speech)</p> <p>“Not only Uttar Pradesh, but India was struggling with internal security issues. In previous years, infiltrators entered India and exploited our resources. They are a threat to national security. Most of these infiltrators are from Bangladesh...Bangladeshis, Pakistanis and from other places as well. We will take action against them.” (Adityanath, 2019, Interview)</p>
<p>Equating Indian and Hindu</p>	<p>There is an emphasis on viewing all Indians as Hindus while treating aspects of Hindu religion as being equal to Indian national culture.</p>	<p>“When you talk about Hindu, then people misinterpret it. Every Indian is Hindu. India’s identity is Hindu. When we talk about India, it represents our geographic boundaries... But when we talk about Hindu, it denotes our cultural boundaries, from the Himalayas to the South, and then our boundaries go even to other South Asian nation who have linkages with Ram or</p>

		<p><i>Buddha...the identity of a Hindu unites us with a culture.”</i> (Adityanath, 2021, Interview)</p> <p><i>“Lord Rama is the foundation of our culture; he is the dignity of India... Shree Ram Temple would be the modern symbol of our culture and I am intentionally using the word ‘modern’. It will epitomise our national feeling. (Modi, 2020, speech)</i></p>
<i>Theme 6: Building a Hindu Rashtra</i>		
Recognizing Hindu Superiority	Ancient philosophies and values associated with Hinduism are presented to be superior, especially in comparison to Islam, and is promoted for adoption all over the world.	<p><i>“In the period of ‘holier than thou’ mentality, today the world is facing a severe crisis due to conflicts caused by the attitude of one upmanship- the reason for all tensions. We have the wisdom to resolve this. Our scholars have said “Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti” meaning that absolute Truth is one but it is manifested differently. This is our glory. We are the ones who say “yat pinde tat brahmande”, such a wise thought that ‘Whatever is in the universe is in every living being’. We were the proponents of such human values. We are the people who have seen the welfare of the world; we have been on the path of collective good and individual good, not only for our people but the whole world by believing in “sarve bhavantu sukhinah, sarve santu nirāmayāḥ”. It is ingrained in our values that we will pray that may all be prosperous and happy, may all be free from illness, may all see what is auspicious, and may no one suffer. It is our heritage to care for the happiness and good health of all.”</i> (Modi, 2022, Speech)</p> <p><i>“Love jihad. They have a tradition of jihad, if nothing they do love jihad. Even if they love, they do jihad in that..We (Hindus) too love but we love God, a sanyasi (hermit) loves his God.”</i> (Thakur, Speech, 2022)</p>
Advancing India’s Saffronisation	There are calls to fulfil goals associated with creating a Hindu <i>Rashtra</i> like promoting Hindi as the national language, reconverting people to Hinduism, shutting slaughter houses, removing Mughals from history textbooks, and creating heroes out of Hindutva leaders.	<p><i>“We have completely stopped illegal slaughterhouses. I promise that we will not let ‘Gaumata’ (Mother Cow or Sacred Cow) be slaughtered”</i> (Adityanath, 2022, Speech)</p> <p><i>“Hindi is our official language. Respecting our official language or respecting anything which represents our country is our responsibility..So if Hindi also comes with English, it will be a good initiative. Bapu also said... Hindi desh ki bindi hai. Hindi is our country's beauty. It will be good.”</i> (Adityanath, 2019, Interview)</p> <p><i>“(About Veer Savarkar being conferred the Bharat Ratna) There are very few people like Savarkar who are patriots and very few families like the Savarkar family who sacrifice for the nation. There is no person in the country who in one life was given two life</i></p>

		<p><i>sentences...who was tortured in jail and forced to extract coconut oil from coir. There is no other family in the country in which 2 brothers stayed in jail for 12 years and did not see each other for those 12 years...whose wealth was snatched by the British multiple times. People who are arguing with the legacy of Savarkar are playing with the history of the country. They are committing the sin of not letting people take inspiration from Savarkar.”</i> (Shah, 2019, Interview)<sup>20</sup></p>
<p>Encouraging Hindu Vigilantism</p>	<p>There is an emphasis on retaliating against and harming those who protest against the government or harm Hindus and Hinduism.</p>	<p><i>“But if we start responding, they have seen what happened. When they lit the train, and the people unleashed their rage, there were consequences that I hope Khader knows. In case he (Khader) has forgotten, let him recall what happened. You are burning all places because the majority here is patient. But if they rise up, if the walls of their patience and tolerance break, you’ll have to look back and see what such times have led to! The majority is capable of repeating it. Just don’t test our patience. Our patience is not our weakness.. If the majority takes to the streets, imagine what your situation will be. Don’t test the patience of the majority”</i> (Ravi, Interview, 2019)</p> <p><i>“So answer those involved in Love Jihad the same way. Protect your girls...Keep weapons in your homes. If nothing else, at least keep the knives used to cut vegetables sharp... Don't know what situation will arise when. And if the sharp knives will cut the vegetables properly, then it will undoubtedly chop our enemies’ heads and mouths effectively. Everyone has the right to self-protection.”</i> (Thakur, Speech, 2022)</p>

<sup>20</sup> Vinayak Savarkar (later termed *Veer* or *Brave*) was a Hindu nationalist who developed the ideology of Hindutva and whose legacy has completely been rewritten by the Sangh Parivar. While he was initially arrested for advocating for India’s independence, he wrote multiple mercy petitions to the British and did not participate in the freedom struggle upon release. Moreover, he collaborated with the British colonial government, endorsed the idea of a Hindu *rashtra* and a Sikhistan (a Hindu and Sikh nation respectively), and supported the partition of India into two nations (the BJP and its supporters widely blame the Congress for this partition) that derailed the freedom movement and deepened sectarian divides (Kulkarni, 2022).

## Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form

### Participant Information Sheet: Exploring the Psychology of Hindu Nationalism

Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor: Dr Jennifer Sheehy-Skeffington, Associate Professor of Social Psychology  
Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science, London School of Economics and  
Political Science

Thank you so much for considering participating in this study which will take place on a day between the 15th of April to the 30th of April. This detailed information sheet outlines the purpose of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant, if you agree to take part.

#### 1. What is the research project about?

The study aims to socio-psychologically examine how BJP supporters understand, experience, and accept Hindu nationalism in India through focus groups. Such a psychological study on the dynamics of Hindu nationalism has never been done before and is theoretically and practically important because it contributes to an in-depth understanding of the associations between the psychological, social, and political aspects of religious nationalism, national identity, and intergroup relations.

#### 2. What type of data are being collected?

I am collecting data using focus group discussions. A focus group is simply a group discussion 'focused' on a particular topic or theme - in this instance, Hindu nationalism and support for the BJP. One of the purposes of focus groups is to closely replicate how we express views and form opinions in real life and I would like the focus group to be a lively discussion. This means that you will be expected to express your views and opinions on the topic, talk to each other, as well as to the moderator, and to indicate when you agree and disagree with each other. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions you will be asked to discuss. The demographic data collected from you before or after the focus group will be used by me to gain a sense of who is taking part in the research.

#### 3. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. You do not have to take part if you do not want to. However, if you do decide to take part, I will ask you to sign a consent form which you can sign and return in advance of the focus group. Moreover, please note that you can withdraw from this study without having to give a reason and without any negative consequences. If you decide you want to withdraw from the research *after* participating in the focus group – please contact me via email (\_\_\_@lse.ac.uk). However, please note that there is a certain point beyond which it will be impossible to withdraw from the research which is why you can contact me *within 2 weeks* of participation if you wish to withdraw your data.

#### 4. What will my participation in the focus group entail?

The focus group will involve around 4-8 participants and one moderator, and will be audio-recorded. It would last approximately 1.5 to 2 hours. In the group, you will be asked questions relating to your perspectives on Hindu nationalism, support for the BJP, Indian national identity, Indian culture, traditions, and history, and social hierarchy. You will also be asked to discuss your views in relation to certain quotes taken from different BJP leaders' speeches. Please note that there will be other BJP supporters who you might know in the focus group but

confidentiality of the research data will be maintained. No participant will be allowed to repeat what is said in the focus group to others and participants' privacy will be respected.

### **5. What will happen on the day?**

Once everyone has arrived, I will ask you to read and sign the consent form in case you haven't done so already. You will be given a copy of the consent form signed by me. I will discuss what is going to happen in the group and you will be given an opportunity to ask any questions that you might have. I will then ask everyone to agree on some ground rules for the group (e.g., avoiding speaking over other people, being respectful and considerate of other people's feelings). Once everyone is happy for the discussion to begin, I will switch on the recording devices and ask the first question! You will be given another opportunity to ask questions at the end of the group.

### **6. What are the benefits of taking part?**

You will get the opportunity to participate in a research project and experience the research process in general, and focus groups in particular, from 'the inside'. Participating in studies is one of the most valuable ways to learn about research and you will also get the opportunity to participate in a (hopefully) lively and interesting discussion on Indian politics and society, and to share and develop your views on an important social issue.

### **7. Are there any risks involved?**

There are no particular significant risks involved in this project, and I do not anticipate that it will cause anyone physical, psychological, emotional and professional distress or harm. There is no deception involved in this project. The *general* 'risks' of participating in focus groups on any topic centre on the potential to become upset by a particular question or topic (e.g., if a question reminds you of a distressing personal experience), or by another participant's comments or behaviour. If any questions during the focus group make you feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer them and if you feel distressed as a result of participating in the focus group, please contact me and we can discuss further options. If you have any complaints about the way this research has been conducted, you may write to [research.ethics@lse.ac.uk](mailto:research.ethics@lse.ac.uk).

### **8. Ethical Considerations and Access to Data**

All information collected for this study will be kept as confidential as possible. Only I will have access to the raw data. It will not be possible to identify you or any other participant in the final report. The focus group will be transcribed by me, and I will make sure the transcript is anonymised so that any personally identifying information (i.e., any information that can identify you – people's names, places, organization details etc.) has been changed or removed. Once anonymised, the data will be analysed for my research, and anonymised extracts from the data may be quoted in any final reports and presentations arising from the research (your name will not be used in any reports resulting from the study). The demographic information you have provided will also be treated confidentially and will be kept separately from the focus group data. Data will be stored in a secure place [LSE OneDrive] and all files will be destroyed once the project is submitted and graded.

### **9. What if I have a question or complaint?**

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher: \_\_\_\_\_, Postgraduate Student, Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science, London School of Economics and Political Science, Email: \_\_\_\_\_@lse.ac.uk.

If you are happy to take part in this study, please sign the consent sheet attached/below.

*This research project has gone through ethical review and been approved by LSE's Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science.*

### CONSENT FORM

**Title:** Exploring the Psychology of Hindu Nationalism

**Name of the Researcher:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### **PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY IS VOLUNTARY**

I agree to take part in this focus group study.	YES/NO
I have read and understood the information sheet provided for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask any questions about the study.	YES/NO
I understand that I can refuse to answer questions and that I can withdraw from the study without having to give a reason and without any penalty. My decision whether or not to participate in this research study will have no negative impact on me either personally or professionally.	YES/NO
I agree to the focus group being audio recorded.	YES/NO
I agree to maintain the confidentiality of the focus group discussions. I will respect the privacy of my fellow participants and not repeat information discussed by all participants and the researcher during the focus group session to others.	YES/NO
I understand that all audio files and anonymised data will be destroyed securely at the end of the study when they are no longer needed.	YES/NO
I understand that the information I provide will be used for _____'s PB410 MSc Dissertation and that any personal information that can identify me will be anonymised, kept confidential, and not shared with anyone other than the researcher.	YES/NO
I agree that the anonymised data that I provide can be quoted in research outputs.	YES/NO

*Please retain a copy of this consent form.*

Participant name:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_/04/2023\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher name:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_/04/2023\_\_\_\_\_

For more information, please contact the researcher, at \_\_\_\_\_@lse.ac.uk

#### Appendix 4: Topic Guide for Focus Groups (Study II)

Topic	Questions	Prompts/ Probes
<b>Beginning/ Introduction</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Moderator introduction, thanking participants, and brief research overview</li> <li>2. Going over informed consent and asking for any concerns/ queries</li> <li>3. FG participant introductions</li> </ol>	
<b>Warming up</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. As a BJP supporter, could you describe in detail your relation with the BJP?</li> <li>2. According to you, what does “Hindutva” or “Hindu nationalism” mean?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1a. When did you become BJP supporters?</li> <li>1b. Why do you support the BJP?</li> <li>1c. How would you say the BJP has positively impacted our country?</li> </ol>
<b>Social Identity Politics and Hindutva</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How would you define the Indian national identity?</li> <li>2. How do you think your identities as an Indian and as a Hindu are related or not related? (If so, what is it? If not, why so?)</li> <li>3. How would you describe the values, ideas, customs, traditions, and practices of being an Indian?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1a. Who do you think cannot be classified as an Indian?</li> <li>3a. How do you think these traditions, practices, and customs are similar or different from those of a Hindu?</li> </ol>
<b>Reactions to BJP Discourse</b>	<p>[Referring to Muslims as the “Taliban”] <i>“The people who did not want the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, who are against Article 370 ending in Kashmir, when are these people happy? When there are riots in Muzaffarnagar. When there is an exodus in Kairana, and when the Taliban is established in Afghanistan, that’s when their slogans ring out. But we will not allow the Taliban to be established, and whoever supports the Taliban, the government will stop it with strength”</i> (Yogi Adityanath, 2021)</p> <p><i>“ Muslims, Christians (are) sons of Ram, those who don't believe it should leave India....It is you who must decide whether the government in Delhi will be run by the sons of Rama (raamzaade) or by bastards (haraamzaade)”</i> (Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti, 2014)</p> <p>After reading these extracts said by BJP leaders, what are your initial reactions to it? How much do you agree/ disagree with it? Why so?</p>	

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Social Representations as an Indian &amp; Hindu</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What symbols (anything in the public sphere ranging from monuments, books, people, places etc.) come to your mind when I mention your national identity? (Key word: national symbols of India)</li> <li>2. Can you describe in detail what you think about the history of India?</li> <li>3. What events do you consider important to your national identity?</li> <li>4. What do you think about the history taught in school and colleges today?</li> <li>5. What role do these Indian symbols, events, and historic past play in your support for the BJP?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1a. How are these symbols similar or dissimilar compared to the ones that come to your mind when I mention your Hindu identity?</li> <li>2a. How do you think the history of India is linked to your national identity?</li> <li>3a. How are these similar or dissimilar to the events you consider significant to your religious identity?</li> <li>4a. How do you think the history in textbooks should or should not be challenged and changed?</li> <li>5a. How do you think these Indian symbols, events, and the historic past are connected to how you view the minority communities in our country?</li> </ol>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Reactions to BJP Discourse</b></p>	<p><i>“India is witnessing a golden historic moment with the blessings of the mighty Lord Bhaskara on the banks of the auspicious river Saryu....Friends, several generations devoted themselves completely during our freedom struggle. There was never a moment during the period of slavery that there was not a movement for freedom. There was not a place in our country where sacrifices were not made for freedom. 15th August is the embodiment of sacrifices of the lakhs of people and a deep yearning for independence. Similarly, several generations have made selfless sacrifices for several centuries for the construction of the Ram Temple. Today marks the culmination of that centuries-old penance, sacrifices and resolve....Shree Ram Temple would be the modern symbol of our culture and I am intentionally using the word ‘modern’. It will symbolize our eternal hope. It will epitomize our national feeling. This temple will be the emblem of the collective will power of millions of people. This shrine would inspire hope, devotion and determination in the minds of future generations. Today’s historical moment would be recounted across the globe for ages and bring laurels to our country. This day is the proof of the honesty of the millions of determined devotees of Shree Ram.” (PM Modi, 2020)</i></p> <p><i>“I urge the Prime Minister to immediately demolish the Taj Mahal and Qutub Minar. In place of these two monuments, the world's most beautiful temples should be built. The architecture of those two temples should be such that no other monuments could be even closer to them” &amp; “We need to remove the topic of Mughals from our country. Taj Mahal is not the symbol of love. Shah Jahan built the Taj Mahal in memory of his 4th wife, Mumtaz. If he loved Mumtaz, then why did he marry three more times after her death. In the year 1526, Mughals came to India, and later made the Taj Mahal in 1632- after 104 years. If they didn't go back for 104 years, how did the Mughals get the money? Obviously, they looted money from Hindu Kings using violence and dacoity to build the Taj Mahal. Before the Mughals, Hindu kings and Hindu people built the Jagganath temple, Kailasa temple, Kedarnath Temple, and Somnath Temple. If we had the capacity to build such temples before the Mughals came, then obviously we had the capacity to build grand temples at the places where the Taj Mahal and Qutub Minar currently stand....Shah Jahan married seven wives and Jahangir married twenty times. This is not the knowledge that we should be giving to the future</i></p>	

	<p><i>generations. This is why we need the NCERT syllabus change that removes the Mughals as a topic of study.” (Rupjyoti Kurmi, 2023)</i></p> <p>After reading these extracts said by BJP leaders, what are your initial reactions to it? How much do you agree/ disagree with it? Why so?</p>	
<p><b>Hierarchy of National Belonging</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you think it means to belong to the Indian nation?</li> <li>2. Can I ask your opinion on what you think threatens our nation?</li> <li>3. What do you think about the different communities apart from the Hindus in India-Christians, Sikhs, Muslims, Dalits, Adivasis, north-east Indians, liberals? (Highlight upper-caste Hindu identity)</li> <li>4. Do you think some people belong more or belong more rightfully to our countries than others? How so? Why?</li> </ol>	<p>2a. How do you think this threatens our nation? Why so?</p> <p>3a. What are your views about the national identity of these different communities?</p> <p>3b. How do you think they follow or do not follow the practices, traditions, and customs you associate with being an Indian?</p> <p>4a. According to you, how would you categorize/ rank groups who belong more rightfully to our nation?</p>
<p><b>Reactions to BJP Discourse</b></p>	<p><i>“It’s just a caution for those who are protesting against the CAA. We are 80% and you (Muslims) are 18%. Imagine what will happen if we take charge. Beware of the majority when you live in this country. This is our country. If you want to live here, you will have to, like the Australian Prime Minister said, follow the country’s traditions. If you wish, you can go to Pakistan. We don’t have any issues. Intentionally, we would not send you.” (Somashekara Reddy, 2020)</i></p> <p><i>“People who are protesting (against the CAA) are anti-democratic and against the constitution. People with the mentality of U.T. Khader did the acts in Godhra (train burning incident). People with his mentality burnt the karsevaks in Godhra. But if we start responding, they have seen what happened. In case he (Khader) has forgotten, let him recall what happened. The majority community is being patient. This does not mean that you can provoke people. We will not be scared of their threats. Are we the Congress high command to be scared of their threats?.... We are prepared to do that also but it should become ‘Akhand Bharat’ first. Then we will give citizenship to everyone. Khader’s citizenship will remain intact but if he brings his relatives from Pakistan, we will not give them citizenship. He may have the view that this country should be made Pakistan but we will not allow India to become Pakistan. If the majority takes to the streets, imagine what your situation will be. Don’t test the patience of the majority” (C.T Ravi, 2019)</i></p> <p>After reading these statements said by BJP leaders, what are your initial reactions to it? How much do you agree/ disagree with it? Why so?</p>	
<p><b>End/ Cool-down</b></p>	<p>Is there anything you would like to talk about that has not been addressed?</p> <p>Is there anything you want to ask me?</p>	

## Appendix 5: Focus Group Details and Participant Demographics (Study II)

### Focus Group 1:

#### The First Focus Group

**Date and time:** ...20th April, 2023 at 4pm.....

**Duration:** .....1 hour 53 minutes.....

**Place:** ....A private, secluded drawing room at the researcher's relatives' house....

**Note:** Since all participants were friends or acquaintances of the researcher's relatives, this place was thought to be the most appropriate.

**Number present:** ...6.....

**Type of group:** Homogeneous in terms of all participants being upper-caste BJP supporters who resided in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh but heterogenous in terms of age, gender, education and occupation.

**Method of recruitment:** Participants were recruited through Purposive Snowball and Convenience Sampling where the researcher's relative's friend (Participant 4) organized for all the female participants to join and the researcher's relative's acquaintance (Participant 5) brought along another male participant

#### Contextual notes:

- The focus group was conducted in Hindi. However, Participant 5 spoke some English with limited proficiency which has been corrected in the final quotes for comprehension.
- Participant 4 and 5 were in a rush when they entered and mentioned that they had to leave quickly because of an appointment. However, they remained for 1 hour and 41 minutes.
- As they had to leave after that, the recording was stopped and all the participants were debriefed and thanked.
- As there remained 2-3 unasked questions from the end of the topic guide, the researcher asked permission from the four participants and continued the discussion for an additional 12 minutes. Light refreshments were also provided during that time.
- Much of the conversation was dominated by Participant 5 probably because he was the oldest and had to be respected. Therefore, interruptions by him were quite common and no one contradicted him.

#### Focus Group 1 Participants

Name	Gender	Age	Education Level	Occupation	Caste <sup>21</sup>
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<sup>21</sup> Participants were asked to describe their caste in their own terms. General (or Forward) caste means that their castes are not listed in the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, or Other Backward Classes lists and that they are socially, educationally, and economically advanced.

Participant 1	Female	42	M.A	NGO Worker affiliated with the RSS	General
Participant 2	Female	49	M.A	Social Worker	General
Participant 3	Female	51	M.A	School Teacher	<i>Kshatriya</i>
Participant 4	Female	40	M.B.A	School Teacher	General
Participant 5	Male	75	No details	Retired Bank Employee	<i>Vaishya</i>
Participant 6	Male	51	M.A. in Political Science	Insurance Advisor	<i>Vaishya</i>

### Focus Group 2:

#### The Second Focus Group

**Date and time:** ...27th April at 2:30 pm.....

**Duration:** .....1 hour 30 minutes.....

**Place:** ...A conference room located in the office of Participant 2.....

**Note:** Since all participants were family members or friends of Participant 2, this place was thought to be the most appropriate.

**Number present:** ...5.....

**Type of group:** Homogeneous in terms of all participants being upper-caste, male BJP supporters who resided in Kolkata, West Bengal but heterogenous in terms of age, education and occupation.

**Method of recruitment:** Participants were recruited through Purposive Snowball and Convenience Sampling where the researcher's acquaintance (Participant 2) organized for all the other participants to join.

#### Contextual notes:

- The focus group was conducted primarily in English. However, Participant 2's English language proficiency was intermediate and has been corrected in the final transcript and quotes for comprehension.
- Participant 3, 4, and 5 were recruited by Participant 2 on the day of the focus group due to three potential participants suddenly being unable to make it.
- Participant 5 left after staying for 40 minutes because he had to go somewhere. Participant 4 left around the 1 hour 10 minute mark because he was required to visit someone in the hospital.

- The focus group carried on as usual and the remaining 3 participants were thanked and debriefed while the two participants who had left were thanked and debriefed later via email.
- Much of the conversation was dominated by Participant 2 probably because he was the oldest after Participant 5 left. Therefore, interruptions by him were quite common.

<b>Focus Group 2 Participants</b>					
<b>Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Education Level</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Caste</b>
Participant 1	Male	46	MBA	Businessman	General
Participant 2	Male	69	B.A in Commerce	Real Estate Developer	General
Participant 3	Male	40	Bachelor of Engineering	Real Estate Developer	General
Participant 4	Male	45	BBA in Business Management	Real Estate developer	General
Participant 5	Male	73	MSc	Retired Bank Employee, Volunteer Worker	General

## Appendix 6: Focus Group Transcript (Kolkata, West Bengal)

### Key:

.. = short pause

.... = longer pause

-- = statement cut off

( ) = word added to make the sentence grammatically correct and coherent

**Moderator:** So my first question is, as a BJP supporter, could you tell me a little about your support for the BJP? In terms of when did you become BJP supporters, what initially drew you to become BJP supporters, what is the main reason you continue to support the BJP, or how would you say the BJP has positively impacted the country? It could be any one of these and anyone could start.

**Participant 1:** I have been a BJP supporter since..since the days of Mr. Vajpayee. But I have become an ardent supporter after Mr. Modi has come.

**Participant 2:** Basically, you're questioning why I am supporting. Actually, this country, India, was ruled by Britishers. And they left this country in 1947. But they left with huge problems. Huge problems of poverty..then entire our thinking process..our thought process. So that slavery ideology was continuing. And I've seen that BJP is a nationalist party. This party, they want to bring the actual history of this country which was destroyed by Britishers. And the Congress government, they continued with the wrong histories imposed on us, the glorious past of India, India was ahead, our great scientists, our great heroes. So we (have) all forgotten our heroes, our great ancestors. So I was very attracted that this is the party which can bring the real history, the glorious past and then lots of problems has come in the political arena. Most politicians were corrupt. They are not concerned about the common man. They are not concerned about the development of masses. The last man of the villages. And after Mr. Modi came to power, I became more and more ardent supporter because he is a very honest man and he is taking entire government schemes directly to villages, transferring each money into direct account of the villages. Entire, direct benefit is being transferred. So this is a great change. One rupee, starting from Delhi, is going to one rupee in the hands of villagers. No cut. So all these schemes, then, there are many things. You see, the Aadhaar card was made. About 50 crores bank accounts were opened. These villages have never seen banks. They were hesitating to enter the bank. So 50 crores bank accounts were opened. Very systematically everything was done. First bank account was opened..Aadhaar card was done, and you will be surprised..as soon as Aadhaar and bank account was attached, so many false beneficiaries to the tune of 7-8 crores who were enjoying all these benefits. They never born..all disappeared. Lakhs and lakhs of crores rupees being invested every year on them. So he's a very honest man. And that is why you see I'm an ardent supporter of the BJP.

**Moderator** (directed at the next person on the table): Would you like to, would you like to answer?

**Participant 3:** Yeah, uh, So how I started initially and uh, and why I started initially, I'm not very clear about that.. Right...But, there was a lot of..there were a lot of distortions in..our life as in the education that we got was very, very, let's say not honest and not truthful in terms of history. Right? Some of that is what he (referring to Participant 2) has already said. And what I see right now as by design is that..because there is RSS associated with BJP and it's a cadre-based and it's sort of, uh, inspires you to be a volunteer organization. And the idea of the *pracharak* who is leaving home. And dedicating his life to the country. Right? So there's no

strings attached. Right? The idea of someone like that being and having such a network and a cadre-based background automatically sets it up for getting people who are less corrupt. Right? And, uh, more dedicated towards..sort of what is right for the country. And the Congress had a warped idea of what education should be and things like that.

**Moderator:** Yeah, actually that's a brilliant point and I'll come back to the history in the next section because it's a very important part of a psychological framework. But thank you for bringing up that point. Uh, would you like to go next?

**Participant 4:** Most of the things have been said. I also..you know, since I've had a political opinion, I've, it has always been with the BJP. You know, my personal belief is that, you know, any kind of culture that flows in any kind of political party or any type of..let's say country actually comes from the top. And somehow, you know, Congress, have never been able to, you know, come up with leaders who have been either nationalist or growth oriented for the country or growth oriented for, you know, forward looking I would say, just maybe a couple of their people were. And what, what it did was it put India back.. You know, every year we were going back.. on where the others, the entire world was developing. And, BJP, if you see all the.. all their top leaderships, they've always been as clean as possible. You know, and all have been very, very growth oriented. And all have been true nationalists, I would say. So..so again.. and after Modi ji's coming, you know, he's actually set a precedent of how hardworking a person can be, how clean a person can be, and how much growth oriented a person can be in every sector. For that matter, it's religion, work, social service, any, any, any. And,..that's why I feel, it's the best alternative.

**Participant 5:** I was not inclined to any political..feeling or political thought. I was working in a public sector bank. I was secretary to the board of directors. So when the directors used to come, I often found they were carrying credit proposals. That means they were utilizing their appointment as a director for their own benefit. So that was the time when I started thinking about what these political leaders are doing for the country. I had read a lot of things, but it did not come to the surface. So when I saw these people, I started thinking there should be some change in the system. Now when I came across some of my friends who were from the state of Gujarat. They narrated (to) me what their chief minister was doing. Before becoming prime minister, he visited Kolkata. I was in a group to meet him..before the election. And in the discussion, it was very, very clear that his view is totally different from the view of the government that was ruling the country. So, I started following him, what he says, what he was doing, and slowly and slowly, I became his supporter. Because I found that he is a man who is thinking for the country. So, this is how I became a supporter.

**Moderator:** I can see similar themes running all across, which is nice. So, my next question, and I'm going to start rushing a bit right now. So, according to you, what does *Hindutva* or Hindu nationalism mean? Very briefly, like, maybe in just three or four lines, and then I'll move on to the next section. So, anyone can start.

**Participant 2:** Hindu nationalism is a very interesting concept. You see, unlike many other countries where each country has got some kind of religion. Hindu nationalism is not connected with any religion as such. India has got so many religions, hundreds of religions, hundreds of gods, and you can choose as per your choice. There are a variety of gods here. So, Hindu nationalism is, you see, in India, India is a very ancient civilization. And it was a very rich country. That is why, you see, all Mughals, then Britishers, (came) just to loot this country, they attack this country. And somehow, because of our very high culture, old civilization, this country was divided among small, small kings. And the time came when they were not together and these foreigners, they succeeded in making a slave. They rule for, in our country, in some, some parts. So, Hinduism is a, Hindu nationalism is not connected with any religion. Because,

as per the Hindu concept, everybody has got his own ideas. And we are not against any, anybody's thought process. This is Hinduism. We call that, Ultimate God is One, but everybody has got (the) right to choose his thought(s), think about God, and choose his way. So, what happened (is) that during these last hundreds of years, our culture was being attacked, attacked and attacked. And,..when Britishers came, they also tried to convert people. They brought church with them. Lots of people who are so poor, having malaria, just for a tablet, the poor man was converted to Christianity. Then, people were destroying our temples, converting them to mosques. So, this was going on. But,..and after Congress came, the country was partitioned on the basis of religion.

Muslims demanded a separate country. Many Muslims lived here. They didn't go to the country allotted to them. In spite of that, we kept them happily. In spite of that also, you see, our political..politicians and the intelligentsia, they continued that anything which is Hindu, which is of this country's civilization,..that is inferior. They always tried to, you see, (to) support them (Minority or Muslims) for getting votes. They were dividing the Hindus on caste, on language, on small, small religions. And to get votes of Muslims who remain in the country, they were giving them some, in Hindi we call *Pushti Karan*, appeasement, appeasement of Muslims. So we Hindus were looking at all this situation in (the) last 70 years and slowly, slowly,..even the *Ram Temple*, where *Ram* was born, even, you see, you can't change the birthplace. How do you change the birthplace, it is not a dispute of a land. Even after Independence also, for the last 600-700 years we are fighting to build a temple there. And after Independence also, Muslims were opposed to the construction of the *Ram Temple* there. So this entire nationalism started growing slowly, slowly, slowly. And it was really surprising that in this country, *Ram's Temple* is not allowed. So this nationality..Hindu nationality is a nationality which Hindus feel that let..everybody should prosper. All countries should prosper. We respect all religions. But we have also got our past, our glory, you are suppressing our glories. Our rishis were great scientists. The zero was given, decimal was given. The astronomy was so great. Even you, you see the doctor's chambers. The picture there is that of an Indian scientist doing the surgery. So, slowly, slowly, this Hinduism, nationalism started getting. Slowly, awakening was there and now, the Hindus have started feeling that being Hindu we are proud now. All these years they were telling that you are inferior, you are inferior.. So this nationalism is now at the height and now Hindus are much more united and not at the cost of our own identity, we are not going to support anyone.

**Moderator:** Okay, that's perfect. I think you summed it up really nicely, but is there anyone who would like to add to it? Yes, please go ahead.

**Participant 5:** Your name itself is an evidence of what is Hindu Nationalism (smiles).

**Moderator:** (laughs)

**Participant 5:** You may agree, you may not but your name is \_\_\_right. Yes, this is related to *Vedas*. So, when you realize that I belong to a religion, I belong to a country which I must appreciate and honor, such decisions have taken place. Okay?

**Moderator:** Is there anything else you would like to add?

**Participant 5:** No, there are others. Let me be brief.

**Moderator:** Okay. Is there anyone who would like to add to what Hindutva or Hindu nationalism means to you or should I move on?

**Participant 1:** (Moves a bit)

**Moderator:** Would you like to go ahead?

**Participant 1:** For me, any nation is basically an idea, like, within a set of people which is common. They are basically bounded and binded and feel as one because of that idea. That idea may be a language, it may be a..a thinking like communism, it may be a religion like Islam that builds a nation. But with us, it is Hinduism as an idea, which is an open architecture, which allows everybody to come and do what they want, which has created this civilizational continuity of 5,000 years. That is the binding factor of our nation. And that is from where springs this Hindu nationalism, which we are beginning to realize and recognize now, which is beginning to reawaken now.

**Moderator:** Okay. To follow up, this is actually an open question for everyone, because I conducted a focus group in—

**Participant 2:** --one more thing, I (inaudible), a nation, you see when the Indian army or when Churchill used to address his army in Britain..before the war, he used to address about the glory of (the) British. Similarly, (the) Indian Army, they will warm up only when the glorious heroes of India...you tell the soldiers about that. So, you see those who rule this country, who destroyed this country, they can't be our heroes. In India, the problem is the Muslims, because of the religion, those who attacked this country, destroyed temples, raped girls, looted everything, still you see they are proud of them. So if suppose there are two heroes: one is *Aurangzeb* and one is *Shivaji* and *Maharana Pratap* or *Subhash Chandra Bose*. (The) Indian Army will warm up when you talk about *Shivaji*, *Rana Pratap*, and *Subhash Chandra Bose*. Being a Christian, you can't support Britishers against Subhash Chandra Bose. So, a nation and the nation's population must have the same heroes. If somebody is supporting *Subhash Chandra Bose* and somebody is supporting Britishers, the Army will not fight. If I talk about the glory of Britishers. If you talk about *Bhagat Singh*, if I talk about Sardar Patel, if I talk about Subhash Chandra Bose, then only the warriors will fight. So, those who are nationalists, they will be proud of the heroes of this country. But what happened in the last 70 years, this Congress government..they were, they brought all the people who attacked this country as heroes. So this is a very bad thing they've done.

**Moderator:** Hmm. And I will return to that in the next section. I will, again, be brief about it because most of the points have been covered.

**Participant 3:** I have a point about.. what is the meaning of the word Hindu. And some of it is connected with what others have said, some of it may be different. I feel that it is a word which loosely talks about everything that goes on in this country. And, the word Hindu is used to describe the culture, it is used to describe the religion, it's also used to describe the spiritual traditions in the country. So, it's actually very different from how any other religion anywhere else is defined, because...it talks of the culture (which) is also Hindu, the spirituality is also Hindu, and there's some sub-versions of that also. And then there are religious sort of and it is not the same as a religion, as an Abrahamic religion but it's, the religious part is also named as Hindu. So, ideally, I would actually like it to be described with a different word. Like say *Bharatiya Sanskriti* (Indian Culture). Okay? Disconnect it from that thing because you are using the same word to describe things that mean many things. So, like you say *Savarkar*, *Savarkar* had different beliefs of religion but he was a Hindu because in the Hindu domain it is really just a body of knowledge that has, that has been built upon continually and continually over thousands of years. And that has come from this geography. So the word Hindu is tied to this geography. It cannot be connected to any other geography. It is connected to the area around the Sindhu river and that is how it is defined.

**Moderator:** I'm actually glad that you brought that up because my next question was about how to define an Indian nation. But I'm going to skip that now.

**Participant 3:** Right. So, lots of things about us are culturally Hindu and that is the same. That should be and that is the same for many people who are following other religions. So they should actually be called, like a Hindu Christian. Okay, right? But no, that doesn't make sense. So, if I would prefer that verb to be a different word, and he (referring to Participant 1) will not think the same way. But I wish they were a different word to describe the culture and ethos of what it means to be *Bharatiya*, rather than the Hindu religion. That sort of sums up everything I would like to say about this.

**Moderator:** Would anyone like to say something about that?

**Participant 4:** No, I think Hindu nationalism as a terminology has been only Christened in the last 5-10 years. I don't remember when I was young, when I was, you know, younger that there was something called Hindu nationalism. It was only about nationalism. And frankly, whatever has been put across, all the points of Hindu nationalism come due to appeasement, basically. And the idea of, you know, all these new, all these political parties, you know, by any step..all the steps that were taken in terms of, you know, in terms of social development, were shown in, projected in such a manner that majorities are a taboo, in some format, you know. So, because we are, let's say, a Hindu majoritarian country. So, we should, we should be basically getting lesser and lesser of the pie and they should be getting more and more of the pie and that's why.. and any policy was also being driven by that concept. And somehow in the Hindu people, they were forgetting about what exactly Hindu nationalism is. And so, this entire idea of what, what the RSS and the BJP is doing is actually, is actually making everybody else realize what our past was actually. And we may agree to give equal resources to them and not take most of the resources of.. of let's say any kind of policy decision but the idea of appeasement has to go away at some point in time. It's like saying if you're in business, a businessman is always a thief. Right? So if you're a majoritarian, you know, you are, you are the bad..you are the bad person out there, you know, we want to cut off, cut that and try and grow the people.. the people who are working for me. It's, it's, it's not exactly the same comparison, but ultimately that's what the analogy is all about.

**Moderator:** Yes. Okay, I'm going to move on to the next section, which is, what do you think it means to be an Indian and who do you think cannot be classified as an Indian?

**Participant 2:** I think you see Indian is not, should not be connected with any religion because basically India..Indian concept is also like that we are not one book, one God community. So our society is, you see, if there is a Hindu area where (a) hundred houses are Hindu, one Muslim feels very safe there. He will stay. A good Muslim will want to purchase (a) flat there because we are very broad minded. We..we feel that Indian means in our concept anybody who worships...who is proud of the heroes of this country, who..for whom this mother, this country is their motherland, and (is)proud of their history.

I'll give you a very small example. One delegation of Japanese came to India. One journalist asked a young boy of 15 years old, from where you have come? He told, I have come from Japan. So why have you come to India? But I have come for a pilgrimage. For what pilgrimage? Because our God, Lord Buddha,..he was born in India. So all of us have come for pilgrimage. Then the journalist asked, is it your religious place then? Well, yes. If India attacks Japan, whom will you support? He started laughing. Well, what a question you've asked? Of course, he said, I will support my country. Then the journalist asked, if suppose (the) Indian army is led by Lord Buddha, then the boy told, I will bring out my pistol and shoot him. So, our concept of Hindu nationalism is also there. We are not after any God. The same question that I asked one Muslim. Because we were on a morning walk, I asked him. He told me. This is very nice. I asked him... Then I just asked him, if suppose, if an Arabian country attacks India. And *Muhammad Saab*, he leads the Muslim..Arabian army. What will you do? He told,

we all will join him and make him win. I said, just now you were telling (me) that Japanese are very good. Now you are telling (me) that you will join them. He told, no, no. He was a very simple man just walking with me. He told you see, their Religion is like that. Our religion is not like that. We don't believe in this. So, Hindu. So, Indian means, I think, a person, for him, India is first. Nation is first. Say, if you ask me, for me, my country is first. Religion is not first. Yes. Even *Lord Ram* also comes to attack this country or any Hindu leader from any other country will attack our country, we will give him a good fight.

**Moderator:** That's actually a good point and I would actually like to phrase another question to everyone because you were talking about Hinduism in a way that was a way of life rather than a religion. So my next question would be how would you describe the values, ideas, customs and traditions associated with being an Indian?

**Participant 1:** India as a country came into existence in the year 1947, but Bharat as a civilization has been existing for 5000 years. So, India as a country, if you are talking about (an) Indian as a citizen of India..a citizen of India will be defined as per the Constitution of the country, which the government of the day must follow. And whatever rights are there to the citizens of the country, and whoever is a citizen as per the Constitution is an Indian. But a Bhartiya, I would define,..all the values and cultures and customs and traditions which have sprouted from this civilizational continuity of Bharat over the last 5,000 years, which is the open architecture I was talking about, which absorbs and assimilates and synthesizes and sprouts, everything else that can come from it. Those are the things I would associate.

**Moderator:** Got it. Okay.

**Participant 5** (Addressing the moderator): You have to allow me to leave. Okay?

(Moderator pauses discussion to understand the reason and gives the demographic form to be filled out)

**Moderator:** Thank you so much. So, my next question is that how do you think the identities of an Indian and a Hindu are linked or are not linked?

**Participant 3:** So that actually comes from the first point that I've made. So if you, if you're distinguished between the definition of God, kind of part of Hinduism away. Then the idea of being a Hindu and an Indian, very similar where a lot of things are about the ethos and culture and the open architecture. So I feel that, uh, that part of, uh, Hinduism is very much connected with what an Indian is. Like it is what the idea of India should be. The open architecture, which, and now, now the world is talking about free speech and democracy right now, but that is very originally Indian.

**Moderator** (Addressing Participant 4): Would you like to add something to that?

**Participant 4:** So I, I didn't get the question.

**Moderator:** So basically, how do you think the identities of an Indian and a Hindu are related or not related?

**Participant 4:** So, so personally, an identity of a Hindu person and an Indian, I would actually consider them the same. Because, for me Hinduism is again not a religion. It's, it's, it's where you basically live your life. So, any person, and I agree with the, you know, definition of RSS in this. Anybody who is living in India is actually a Hindu. The way of life is Hindu. If you, if you, if you leave the religion out of it, if you leave the entire religion out of it and the way everybody is living, if you, if you put each and everyone in the same attire, you'll actually not come to a come to know who, who is what..(you) will obviously have to shave everybody and all..everybody has to look the same. And then you, the differences are extremely, extremely

limited. It's like Europe, right? If you go to one country, if you go from one city to the other city, there's hardly any difference. Technically, other than the..what do you call, let's say income disparity. If, if you see people from, if you see people from at, at a certain strata, other than (that) the food or let's say language, everything that what they believe in is mostly similar. Religion is religion. For me, religion is like a godly figure, right? You've created a religion because you...that is a different debate altogether.

**Moderator:** Oh, okay. So I'm going to distribute some extracts by some BJP leaders. The first two are the ones that I'm going to focus on for this section. These are a little controversial and some are the themes that I'm trying to study. So I would just ask you to read the first two quotations and,... I'll ask the question later.

(Pause for 30 seconds as the moderator waits for everyone to look up)

**Moderator:** Yeah, so my question is that after reading these extracts, what are your initial reactions to this? What do you think the speakers mean? And, after reading this extract, are you more or less likely to support the BJP? The first and the second one both. So, the first is by CM Adityanath, and the second one is by some minister called Sadhvi Niranjana.

**Participant 2:** My reaction that I already told you, any Indian, if he is not proud of, he may not believe *Ram* is God. This is not a.. this is not a problem. But after all, *Ram* was born here. They are all the..their ancestors were also *Ram*. They have not come from outside. So they should be proud of having the *Ram* temple. If anybody who is opposing (the) *Ram* temple, this is not good, this is not acceptable. Then Article 370, Article 370 was very wrongly done. In one country, there (are) two prime ministers. They got different rights. How, how can it be there? If suppose London has got a different right, apart from London there is a different Prime Minister, they will not accept it. Different law, they can purchase, Kashmiris can purchase land in Delhi, anywhere, but other parts of India cannot purchase land in Kashmir. So, this is not acceptable.

**Participant 5:** Sorry to everybody. Because I have to leave. (Leaves at the 40 minute mark)

(Moderator interrupts discussion to thank Participant 5)

**Participant 2:** So, these are the things where you see everybody should be one. Like, in Kairana you are right, their Muslim population was large and the Hindus became (a) minority. Exodus was there. So, no one will support. Even in Hindu area, if Muslims are thrown away, it is also not good. We will never do this. Hindus will never throw, if they are a hundred Hindu families and if there are five Muslims, they are always safe. You will never find in history that they are being attacked. Even Hindus take care of them. Like what happened in Kairana, this is not fair..or all these riots, we don't support these riots. You will never find that..any riot on Eid, have you ever heard? Any, any riot on any Muslim festival, you have never heard. You only see (it) when there is a *Ram Navami Yatra*, or some Hindu celebrations, or some *Durga Puja*, or some *Saraswati Puja*. Being Hindu majority here, Hindu festivals are being attacked. So we never support all these things. We are not anything (like) that..that we should create any riot over Muslims or what happened in Muzaffarnagar and other places. Like Hindus were attacked. This is not good. Both communities should live peacefully. They are also Hindus only. Muslims...we don't believe that Muslims are not Hindus.

**Moderator** (Addressing the next participant): Would you like to say something about the quotations?

**Participant 3:** I actually.. yes, go head

**Participant 2:** And one more thing, I will say. Here you have said that we will not allow Taliban. You see, Hindu culture, we are totally opposed to the Taliban type of thing. How can

we allow here Taliban? The girls are not allowed to dress properly. They are not allowed to educate themselves. Not allowed to work in the offices. And they have to cover their entire body. So, we don't accept Talibani, whatever the head of a priest, if he declares and every, ..Hinduism is not an organized religion. We don't believe in say, if one *Shankaracharya* dictates and everybody will follow him. This is not our concept. So we don't accept this kind of..that religious authorities, they control the masses. And, they will dictate what you should eat, what you should dress, whether females are not allowed to go to offices, or go to theatres. So this, we are, I'm supporting Yogi Adityanath on all these things.

**Participant 3:** I, I am okay with the speech one, but I don't believe in, I don't believe it is useful to talk like the speech two of topic one. It is..it is not helpful. Because,..and topic 2?

**Moderator:** Topic 2 I'll come to later, yeah. But would you like to say something or should I move on to the next section?

**Participant 4:** So again, I completely agree with them. In the sense, again, everything is.. everything boils down to the appeasement process where out of the 10, 000 temples that were broken, Hindus were only asking for 4 or 6 temples. Which were extremely, extremely,..what do you call,..religious to them. And, you know,..so I think,.. and all these article 370, all these were basically laws which you bought to hide corruption in some form or the manner. And, yeah, I would say if you are, if you, if you do a survey of anybody who, who would agree to be, other than people who are gaining financially out of that Article 370, which is a different topic altogether, but anyone who was not a part of the financial gain would support the Article 370 or for that matter might support the *Ram Mandir* as well.

**Participant 2:** But I don't like the language used by Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti.

**Moderator:** Actually, the second line in that extract was more about the government. I was more focused on the first line itself.

**Participant 4:** I think in the first line also, those who don't believe it should leave India is not appropriate. Yeah, some people will leave later and Muslims and Christians being sons of Rama, it's science. It's the genes. So they're the same genes, but telling them that you don't belong to team India or..I don't, I'm not supportive of that language or that kind of communication. Things are not perfect.

**Participant 2:** This is not the civilized way of talking.

**Participant 1:** But there is one thing. When any nation or any civilization has gone through thousand years of suppression, of basic denial, of total whitewashing, of all the atrocities done on them, then when it gets its moment in the sun, there is going to be an overreaction for some time. There are going to be some people who are going to overdo stuff and say stuff which is not palatable, which is a little bit of (a) no, but our basic DNA, the Hindu DNA is one of tolerance, is one of respect, is one of assimilation, right? Gradually, we are all going to come back to our default setting, which is this. So, for a moment there are going to be some people who are going to say a lot of stuff which is going to sound very, like, overreactive, but ultimately we're all going to come back to our default setting. So, I'm not very worried with these people as they're not going to be able to do much damage in either way. They're not going to do anything.

**Participant 2:** Sometimes this kind of language is required also to bring them in line, you see.

**Moderator:** Okay. So my next question is, what symbols, and this could be anything in the public sphere, from monuments, books, people, places, what symbols come to your mind when I mention your national identity? And I'm not talking about, like, the national symbols that children learn about in schools. I'm talking more broadly in terms of..yeah, anything, books,

monuments, people, places, anything that comes to your mind when I mention your Indian national identity.

**Participant 1:** For me, it would be someone like *Sri Ram*, who our civilization has produced. Symbol *Om*. These kinds of things are products of our civilization, which are universal... And, which, like, should, like, bind all of us together as a nation. Ultimately, I would see, I mean, I would want these symbols to, like, bind our nation.

**Participant 3:** I mean, you see,...the existing national symbols are fine, I think.

**Moderator:** Would you like to elaborate on that a bit?

**Participant 3:** No, the *stambh*, the *chakra* And the flag.. But I actually see eventually we get to a stage where when we understand these symbols, other people also start understanding these symbols. They can become national symbols. But I'm not in a hurry to sort of get there.

**Participant 1:** There is one point we always tend to use the word state and nation interchangeably. These are two different things. For a state, you can have a symbol of a national flag and a national anthem and et cetera, etcetera. But a nation is not the same thing as a state. A nation is an idea which binds people. A state is a geographical entity which is governed by a constitution and by a government of the day. They can change things as per the constitution. But a nation is a much broader idea. So when you ask the question, like what are the national symbols of the nation and they are to be something which are coming from the civilizational history of the nation. Not from products of 1947.

**Moderator:** Yes, and this can purely be your opinion.

**Participant 2:** Like you see, I can tell you like the birthplace of Lord *Krishna*, birthplace of Lord *Rama*, the great temple of *Kashi Vishwanath*, *Buddha* temples, *Jain* temples, then all, you see the historical temples, which have been, like he said, for thousands of years those temples are there. Written in our books in *Ramayan*, in *Mahabharata*, in *Vedas* all are being described. The rivers of this country, the mountains of this country. So you see we worship them. We are nature worshippers also. We worship trees. We worship rivers. We worship cows. Because we are an obliged society. We worship (the) sun because it gives us light. Cow gives us milk like mother. So we worship cows. So similarly, the old temples of *Badrinath*, *Kedarnath*, *Jagannath*, *Rameshwaram*..There's four different..in four corners of India. All these are many things, many old temples. They are built, like you say, thousands of years back. They are part of our, you see, symbols which we like to visit, we respect.

**Moderator:** Would you like to add something to it?

**Participant 4:** So I agree with..most of it has been put out.

**Moderator:** Okay. So my next question is, again, ranging..and there is like, going in the same line of thought, what symbols come to your mind when I mention your Hindu identity?

**Participant 2:** Symbols?

**Moderator:** Yeah. Hindu identity though.

**Participant 2:** Hindu identity is basically...there many symbols are there. You see Hindus have got variety of symbols and in one family you will find everybody has got different respect for different symbols. Like *Swastika* is there. *Om* is there. Then *tulsi* plant is there..most of the India, you, you see people worship that plant. It's a sacred plant. Cows. worshipping cows. We have got a respect for all these symbols, like temples, ancient temples. Even we, you see in India, Indians respect the churches and mosques also. Even many Hindus, they will donate for construction of mosque also. I, I personally give. So, basically the *om*, *swastika*, like the saffron

colour. Saffron colour is also a symbol of sacrifice, symbol of purity, and so all these things are there.

**Moderator** Would you like to add?

**Participant 4:** I think it's so diverse, India is so diverse, so there's no, I won't, I cannot come up with one symbol that, you know, would describe our nation. So there's so many things..maybe we should actually work towards it (laughs). And the closest would be the *Bhagavad Gita*. But otherwise, we, like, they say that *do kos mein paani badal jata hai aur chaar kose mein vaani badal jaata hai*.<sup>22</sup> So, it is so diverse. We actually don't have, if you ask, I don't know if you ask anybody what is one symbol, I, I can't think of one symbol which is

**Moderator:** But this is just your personal opinion..in terms of the Hindu religious identity, I'm like not concerned about the nation.

**Participant 4:** No, this is my personal. I would, I would, I would consider this saffron flag.

**Moderator:** Okay. Would you like to add something to this? (Participant 1 shakes head) No. You agree with us? (Participant nods). Okay. So actually I'm going to skip this question because Participant 2, I felt, described the history of India really well. But my next question would be, what do you think is the relationship between the key historical events that you've (Participant 2) gone over and your national identity. The key historical events, according to you, could be anything.

**Participant 2:** Historical events, you see, there are many. You see, they were, you see, all wrong histories are being taught to us. India was never..fully won by any outsider. Certainly, they looted, they won certain part of the country, they ruled. But always they continued, fight was there. People never accepted them. So, you will see that many number of wars and fights. It was a continuing affair.

Even Akbar came, Rana Pratap, the *Haldi Ghati*. He continued to give a tough fight. And he, Akbar could not win over him. So, actually he was just ruling over Agra and Delhi area. You will never find any Muslim or Mughal, he captured the entire country. They, they used to go to one place and then...they are moving to other place, that place is free. So, there are many wars you will find when the great heroes of this country, they fought, they won, they gave a tough fight. Shivaji was there. He captured almost a major portion of central and southern part. Then the southern kings were there. They gave a good fight. They never allowed Mughals to enter in that area So many, so many fights are there.

**Moderator:** Would..is there anyone who would like to add to the historical events that are important to you?

**Participant 2:** Much of the history was not properly taught to us, right? Actually, it is all so much hidden.

**Moderator:** Yes. That is actually my next question. So what do you think about the history that is being taught in schools and colleges right now?

**Participant 2:** Yes, you see..There are many wrong things. You see, we had warriors like Rana Pratap, Rana Sangram Singh, Guru Gobind Singh. You will find thousands of them in the country. And saints also, Mirabai, Surdas, Tulsidas. It is a big chain. In every state you will find the saints came to save the society from invaders. It was a continuing affair, you see. It was never controlled by them. Even these Christians ruled. The Britishers ruled. They could not convert India. They tried their best. The Mughals, they, you see the entire world, wherever

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<sup>22</sup> A Hindu saying that literally translates to 'the taste of water changes every 2 miles, and the language changes every 4 miles' which points towards the diversity in the nation.

they go on, they finish the local civilization. You see Iran, all Parsis are out. The Parsis only came to India. We only provided them temples and gave them a place. Even the Israelis, after independence, they've written, that India is the only place where they allowed us to construct our temples and respect in this country, Everywhere the *Yahudis* went, the Jews went, they were tortured. So, our history is like that. And we are proud of our history.

**Moderator:** Following that, like how do you think the history that is written in these textbooks should be changed or not changed? Like what do you think should be added, removed?

**Participant 1:** You have to understand what is the purpose of history, of teaching history to like children. If the purpose of, the first thing is history should be true, as true as possible. If there is controversy, you tell both sides of the controversy and then let them make up their mind. And, to that extent it should be true. And the second thing is it should instil some sort of pride in the nation. When you read about your history, if you read the history books of any nation across the world, it tries to instil pride in the nation. If you, if it makes you feel inferior. If it makes you feel as if we are a nation which has always been invaded and dominated and controlled and we've never resisted and fought back, we are not a like, like we're a people who've always been conquered, then you, then you feel inferior. And that is the reason, why we have this complex, inferiority complex when we look at others and we feel that, no, there's something wrong with us. So in that sense, all the history books need to be changed to instil that sort of thing and to tell the truth as much as possible. Truth is the best medicine.

**Participant 2:** I agree with him. If somebody has got a very inferior past, bad history, it is better that history subject should not be added there. They should get rid of this subject (laughs). But if, if some country's history is so full of pride, where great warriors were born, they had a golden time. So they should know about the heroes. Actually speaking, we don't know about our heroes. Our entire history, what Britishers wrote, and this Congress government, they made a secular history. They made history also secular. Because those Muslims who (were) left in India after partition, they wanted that...to get their votes, all the Mughals who had attacked this country, we know more about Akbar, Babar, Aurangzeb, Shah Jahan, Taj Mahal, Qutub Minar, and very little bit we know about our own history.

**Moderator:** Which is actually, so yeah, that's my question, that exactly, we don't learn about the ancient history in schools. Like, I personally only learnt about it when I went to college and did a minor in History. So is that something that you would like to be add in the history?

**Participant 2:** Yes, we will. We will strongly like that. Number one: if what Participant 1 told, I agree. If, if there is a bad part of..in our history, they should also be told so that we can take a lesson from that. But being a country whose past was so heroic. I will certainly like (that) the entire history books, should be written correctly and honestly, and all facts should be brought before the students so that they feel proud of their glorious past. And they take good lessons from them. It should be totally rewritten. They should throw all these books into dustbin and draft a new history.

**Moderator:** I see the mentality that you've been talking about, it's called the colonial mentality, that we feel very inferior. That's why we move towards the west rather than being proud of our culture.

**Participant 2:** Yes

**Moderator:** So, would you like to add anything to the history aspect?

**Participant 4:** So I think the history that is being taught is utterly rubbish. You know, just the fact that they call Ramayana and Mahabharata a mythology, you know, that's what they say it's myth. But there's historical proof that the Mahabharata and Ramayana are actually, you know,

it's because of these cartoons, and it's because of the serial, otherwise, V.H Chopra's serial on the Mahabharata serial...otherwise, you know, nobody would know so much about them the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. It's only because these two serials that we now know. And now so many cartoons are being made, is the reason why we know about the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. Otherwise, in the history books, very small amount of coverage has happened about the Mahabharata and Ramayana as well. And then there was a very glorified Chola empire. Okay, which we you know, it's a one paragraph, Chola empire was 10 times more, what you call..richer, 10 times more powerful than the Mughal Empire, which is actually 70% of the history book that you are taught right now. I'm saying we've had we have had a super glorious past. You know, in the south, there used to be three tribes, tribe or empire, whatever, ... Cholas and, you know, there were two or three more who were extremely..., there's so many things that are not put in the history, they only put about Babar or Aurangzeb did this or that. They were fighting warriors..

**Participant 2:** They were looters actually.

**Participant 4:** So, see, India's history is completely warped up and only focused on the last 400 years and forgotten everything about Indian history.

**Participant 2:** And one more thing is the most surprising thing..in the last 100 years, even during British time, until late... lots of this archaeological surveys have been conducted and you will be surprised nothing is written in the books. Those archaeological surveys are telling a different story. And those are not included in our history books. So, what we believe that as per the findings of our archaeological surveys, as per our books available, Indian historical books available, we should, in the right perspective, we should rewrite the Indian history and bring before the world

**Participant 4:** But the Indian..the Mahabharata where people are actually flying it's not people.. people weren't flying. At that time India had that technology.. some reason it's got lost but it will seem by people right so India had the technology. You can call it a UFO or you can call it any flying object, basically. All of these..India was technologically very advanced, we just don't have it covered properly.

**Participant 2:** And one more thing about the monuments, about the architects, Indian architects, you will be surprised if you go to South, if you go to interiors, you will find wonderful, wonderful temples and big, big *quilas*. So, like in the history books, they just show Taj Mahal or Qutub Minar and those old places were also actually originally Hindus.. Hindu temples. You see the Mughals came from the countries, no architecture is there. You can't see any architecture.. good architecture there. How can they bring that architecture here. Indian temples you go? You go to Rajasthan you go to South..most of the northern part, the Mughals have destroyed but you go to southern country you go to *Rameshwaram* temple or you go to Madurai temple. Thousands of temples and you will be surprised how so much big stones were carried on the hills, how such a good carving was done.

**Participant 4:** Actually the Taj Mahal is nothing

**Participant 2:** You will find the Taj Mahal is nothing in front of them.

**Moderator:** Actually I have the quotation. So the third ...(cut off)

**Participant 2:** Just to please Shah Jahan, just to please the Mughals, the Muslims, they've only... they're talking about two-three places, Dilli Quila, Taj Mahal and Qutub Minar, even you see Qutub Minar that entire area was a Hindu temple, Hindu temple, Jainism centre was there. And all astronomy centres were there. Now in this archaeology it is all found there. They are not allowing to dig but even 10 feet they will dig..they will find everything.

**Participant 4:** I actually have to leave. I have to go to the hospital.

(Moderator converses with the participant to clarify situation and gives the demographic form to be filled out)

**Participant 3:** I actually think that it is not completely clear whether what event was historical or not. But that, again, as he said that it should be put before the people. And I don't say that Mughal history should not be taught. But then I remember clearly, very clearly from my history book that there was one full, long chapter for everything. So the amount of.. number of words dedicated to the Mughal period was disproportionately larger than anything else. So I'm not saying it should not be there. I'm not saying there's the.. there is no single contribution made by that King or that period. But firstly, the negative should not be dusted under the carpet. They should be brought out and proportionate amount of time should be given to other periods and other rulers like we don't know anything about the Cholas..Vijaynagar. Like there was this movie *Ponniyin Selvan*, Tamil movie directed by Mani Ratnam. I want to go watch it, I have not been able to watch it, but we don't know anything about it. So through that, South-North (India) integration will also become better. We should be doing things like that.

**Moderator:** Okay, so I'm going to head to the last section after you guys can react to the two quotes. Again, these two quotes ..so my question remains the same, like what are your reactions to it? What do you think the people are trying to say? And are you more or less likely to support the BJP after reading the two extracts?

**Participant 1:** So I totally agree with what Mr. Modi ..PM Modi is saying in the first quote.. absolutely 100% agree with that. I don't agree with what the MLA Rupjyoti Kurmi is saying, because I feel as I said that, our culture should allow all sorts of things to come ...the Taj Mahal and Qutub Minar also should be there. And the Mughal history also should be there, but it should be given proportionate importance...should not be given disproportionate importance that is not our...the only thing that is there. Everything should be given proportional representation, right. So that is my thing on this.

**Moderator:** Is there anything anyone would like to add?

**Participant 3:** Yeah, same. I agree with the first one fully and the second one..All right, there are a few things that are correct that the money was earned here only. But it should not be removed..it should not be an extreme reaction.

**Participant 1:** But you're going to get certain people, as I said earlier that after 1000 years, when you have your moment in the sun, you're going to get a few people who are going to go to the other side totally (laughs). But they're going to be balanced ultimately. Our DNA is such that it will bring it back to the (inaudible).

(Participant 2 submits demographic form, is thanked, and leaves around 1 hour 10 minutes)

**Moderator:** Okay, so my next question is, is there anything that you think threatens our nation? And how do you think that threatens our Indian nation as a whole? I'm almost at the end, just last two, three questions and then I'll wrap up Yeah. So yeah, is there anything that you think threatens our nation and how do you think that it threatens our nation..could be anything?

**Participant 2:** Actually, we are...in India, there is no problem with the different religions. Our threat is only this if suppose you are living in India then you should be proud of India, Indian team wins, you should enjoy it, you should have joy...that is what want we want and all these in India, you see lots of infiltration is being undertaken. Land infiltration, because people in Pakistan and Bangladesh, they look like us, you can't differentiate you see our eating habits, our talking, our language, our looks ...all same. So, CAA was brought that...those who are of-

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**Participant 3:** --The question is different. Is there anything that is a threat to the nation?

**Participant 2:** This threat is there, you see the infiltration from neighbouring countries which was separated in 47 (1947). They are illegally infiltrating and due to corruption, they get Aadhar card, they get voter card. So, it is a threat to this country, we feel threatened...because they will be voting, they will be electing government. And secondly, in the border areas, when they are residing they are capturing border area, so that is a threat to the country, because they will support enemy's army and they will support international forces. And one more threat is there the *madrasa*... the Muslims running *madrasas*, we are not in support of that, because we want the Muslim children should also get modern education. They are also like us, those children, they should be doctors, they should be engineers, they should be software engineers, and the kind of education is being imparted to them which is totally obsolete that is not required in this modern times. And making them more you see what you call communal, making them (believe) that religion is everything. So that is a kind of threat we feel that if their population increases to a large level, it will create a disturbance in the society.

**Moderator:** Is there anything you two would like to add to that?

**Participant 1:** So every nation at every point of time always faces some threats. So our nation also has a lot of fault lines. And you always have certain forces who are trying to break the nation by focusing on those fault lines, either in terms of focusing in terms of the religion, in terms of the caste, in terms of the region, language, we use these kinds of fault lines and you try and break the country, divide the country, create all sorts of, you know, create all these disturbances, but again, I feel that ultimately because of our civilizational continuity. And this unity that is now springing up. Gradually, people are beginning to realize the unity of the nation, as one nation, one country...all of this is like, like gradually seeping in. Now we'll be able to overcome the situation that was there 10 years back and the situation that is there now is a sea change.

**Participant 2:** Similar, the threat to the country was from China. But fortunately...you see, once upon a time, when Nehru was prime minister, a large part of Himalaya was being captured, including Tibet and a major part of Kashmir is being acquired by... captured by China. And the Congress government agreed also for that partition, that aggression of them taking over our land. And because of Tibet, now China has come nearer to us. That is a threat, of course, to the nation. But we are proud that after Modi came, the Indian defence is now very modern. And I'm very sure that now we can give a good reply to (the) Chinese for any action that they take.

**Moderator:** So actually, I'm going to shift gears to BJP support and because all of you are BJP supporters, I want to ask about the rationale. So in 2019, after the general elections look mediated, Lokniti did like a post-poll survey, and they found that 44% of all Hindu voters voted for the BJP, compared to 11% of all Christian and Sikh voters and 8% of all Muslim voters. So you can see that there's 44%, 11%. and then 8%. And when asked if the government ..if the BJP government should stay in power, Hindus..over half Hindus answered yes, two-thirds of Muslims and over half of Christians and Sikhs answered no. So why do you think..I mean, according to you, how would you explain this divide in the support for the BJP? Why are there more Hindus who support the BJP.

**Participant 2:** It is all because of the rumours and misinformation spread by the Congress and other opposition parties. That once BJP comes to power, their interest will be hampered. But PM Modi. His slogan is this if he's building house..houses for poor, it is all same whether he is a Christian, whether he is Hindu, within he is Muslim, all poor will get. Rather you will find that in percentage wise, Muslims have got much more so because of this rumour that Muslims

and Christians will be hampered if PM Modi again comes, the vote percentage is less. But I think slowly and gradually, they are also realizing that Mr. Modi is not partial.. for the nation building, everybody has to work and everybody should be equally rewarded. You can't differentiate..Hindus never believe that a poor in Hindu and a poor in Muslim should be distinguished..both should be taken care of equally.

**Participant 3:** So I have a friend and he's ...I wouldn't call him a BJP supporter. He likes what Narendra Modi has been doing and but he's also critical of many things he is doing. But he's doing infrastructural projects in many states. And his very objective opinion was there is absolutely no distinction between provision of materials and services, whether it is to any religious or any caste or that. So he's seen it for himself because he's providing those, there is no directive from any BJP government. That we want this like that, that like this, first give it in this district, give it there first, give it here first. If it's a rollout for the state, it's a rollout for the state. And maybe like certain cities that are being covered first because they need to be covered first.. our budgets are limited. So within that particular geography that is being covered, there is no narrative. And that is sort of the evidence coming from many places. So why they are voting against is also just...it will take more time..for them to understand.

**Moderator:** But going back to what you were saying about that example with the Japanese delegation, and then you asked the question to a Muslim. So my next question is: do you think there are some people who belong or do not belong or rightfully to our nation?

**Participant 2:** You see, it is because of wrong leadership and wrong education. When you see more education will go to them and impartial education..pure education goes to them, then they will start understanding the importance of heroes and nation and same history, same heroes. Till then, this problem will be always there, you see, when some *maulvis* and *mullahs* are ruling and but in Christian community, this is much lesser. Now if you talk to a Christian, he will not support the British government and he will not be anti-Subhash Chandra Bose. This is not in Christians. This is only in you know, Muslims, because their education and their leadership is totally in the hands of uneducated and very communal minded people.

**Participant 1:** I will just answer...see that BJP as a party has very openly been supporting the construction of *Ram Mandir*, Article 370, banning conversions, all of that since the last 30-40 years. All of these have been perceived by the average Muslim as anti-Muslim..ban on conversions is perceived by the average Christians as anti-Christian. So naturally, there is going to be a set of people who are going to feel that their religion is being threatened when this party comes to power. Whereas all of these are actually historical wrongs which are being corrected by the BJP and by this government.

**Moderator:** But you personally do not think that there is any group that belongs more rightfully, like, you wouldn't say that Hindus belong more rightfully to our nation, compared to the Muslims,

**Participant 1:** So that goes against the ethos of the Hindu open architecture, everybody belongs, that is the ethos of architecture. There is no one who doesn't belong.

**Moderator:** Okay. So, the last thing would be for you to read the fifth and the sixth codes and these are again, both these codes are extreme, but then the same question remains.

**Participant 3:** So the CAA is wrongly perceived, because of all the misinformation, misinformation created by other political parties. In any case, those people had already applied for citizenship, as a course of asylum, and being persecuted religious minorities in the neighbouring countries, they are just expediting their citizenship by a few years, right? Those people who have already come. So it is not like sort of discriminating against other minorities. It includes every minority of the neighbouring country. Whether neighbouring country might

have Christians, Jain, Buddhist, Sikh whoever..Hindu. So the first quote is fundamentally..largely okay. But he says if you wish, you can go to Pakistan, if you're not satisfied.

**Moderator:** Do you agree with that, or do you disagree?

**Participant 3:** He said intentionally we will not send you.

**Moderator:** Yeah. So you're okay with that basically?

**Participant 3:** I mean, it's, again, when you said in that kind of spirit. And second, also few things are okay, but few things are a little.. said, in sort of spirited way..too aggressive way.

**Participant 2:** You see what is CAA. CAA is British..British when leaving this country, they demarcated a line, right? So beyond that line is Pakistan within this line, India is there. So in Pakistan because of the Islamic people, they wanted Islamic country. How can we invite Muslims back to this country? Here they are protesting invite Muslims also. So how can we invite Muslims? We are inviting say, persecuted minorities like Christians, Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs and Hindus, so called Hindus. Those who are...their temples, churches are destroyed. The girls are being forcibly taken away. So this law is brought because those who are persecuted there, they are unsafe there, they came back here. Those who migrated from there already here. They should be given all rights. How can we give those rights to illegal infiltrators, who have illegally entered. Because Muslims already the country is given. So we fully support CAA.

**Moderator:** And yeah, would you like--

**Participant 1:** --I'm not willing to discuss the merits and demerits of CAA, regarding these two statements, I feel anybody who is a citizen of this country, should be protected by the Constitution of this country. And within the law of the country, he is allowed to protest as much as he wants, he is allowed to say whatever he's allowed to within the Constitution, and if he's within that, and if he even overdoes, that he will be punished as per the Constitution, as per the laws of the country. Nobody can tell him to leave the country. He should be punished as per the laws of the country. So I don't agree with anybody telling anybody that if I don't agree with you, you leave the country and go to Pakistan. I totally disagree with any of that.

**Moderator:** But the larger points that come like before it—

**Participant 1:** --Like in terms of the merits of CAA?

**Moderator:** Not in terms of the merits of CAA but like supposing him saying, if you want to live here, you need to follow the country's traditions and things like that.

**Participant 1:** No, if a person is living here and not following the country's traditions, he's not breaking any law. So he's not..what is our country's tradition is also that you don't believe anything, I don't believe anything. That's part of our tradition. That's the open architecture we come from, you're allowed to do what the hell you want, it's fine. It's okay. As long as you're not harming anybody, you're not abusing anybody, you're not hurting anybody, you do what you want.

**Participant 2:** But, if he brings his relatives back from Pakistan, that will not be allowed, that will never be allowed. How can we allow those who migrated and taken a separate country, again, they want to come here also?

**Participant 3:** They are not simply in the letter and spirit of the law, they are not minorities in that country. This law is for persecuted minorities of the neighbouring countries. U.T Khader's relatives are not persecuted minorities

**Participant 1:** This law is only for the Hindus of other countries whose-

**Participant 3:** --Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Jains

**Participant 2:** Otherwise, you see the condition of Pakistan. There is no bread to eat, the entire country will migrate here. It's not for them. This is not for them. This law is only for the minorities who are persecuted there

**Participant 1:** Yes, where will they go?

**Participant 3:** And CAA is not for recent migration. CAA's time limit..when the law was passed, then a year before that, whosoever came a year or two before that, this law is for their accelerated citizenship.

**Participant 2:** Even I am in support that even those who have left also there like say recently in Afghanistan, a few hundred Sikhs are only left. They are Afghans, they are original Afghani Sikhs but they're not allowed to worship in *Gurudwaras*. Basically, they came with the *Guru Granth Sahab*. So where will they go? Only India is the only country who will take them. If Britain will agree, we don't mind (Smiles).

**Moderator:** (laughs) What do you think about the phrase *Akhand Bharat*, which is mentioned by CT Ravi, he's another MLA and the national secretary of the BJP..in the second extract.

**Participant 2:** You see, we are in favour of *Akhand Bharat* but I don't want a political *Akhand Bharat*. Let the boundaries remain what the boundaries are already created. If we make entire one country, all these boundaries are removed, again the problems will start. *Akhand Bharat* means that let them be part of same kind of thinking.. for co-operating with each other like we are all brothers sisters of same...race. And if both work for each country's prosperity, not sending terrorists from Pakistan to Kashmir in India. So if there is a friendliness, if there is a...friendly relation, let it be real India, we don't mind. We'll like that.

**Participant 3:** I think *Akhand Bharat* is a fantasy right now. It's a waste of time to do that.

**Participant 2:** I don't believe in that kind of *Akhand Bharat* where we break the wall and they all march here.

**Moderator:** So my last question actually is that after reading all these quotes. There are 6 quotes in total taken from different BJP leaders, so are you more or less likely to support the BJP? And I want to pose the question especially to you because you had certain issues with certain things that people had said.

**Participant 1:** But as I said that, individual people who are having overreactions are not going to affect my larger agenda of supporting the BJP and Mr. Modi because they are doing right for the country and for the nation. So individual people saying a little here and there really doesn't matter. It doesn't matter...if Mr. Modi comes and says something really harmful or if the top leadership comes and says something which I really don't agree with then I'll rethink. But small people here and there saying something...how does it matter?

**Participant 3:** And we start taking action, wrongful action..then can be but nothing will be perfect. There will be imperfections.

**Participant 1:** (Hums in approval)

**Participant 2:** The Western media and the Congress media..leftist media highlight more these two-three people who give these kinds of statements. They are more highlighted to give a bad name to BJP. But in fact, if you talk to the entire BJP community, they don't think like that.

**Moderator:** (Pauses) Yeah, I think I'm done. Thank you so much everyone for taking the time to participate in this. (Recording stopped)

## Appendix 7: Thematic Codebook for Study II

Overarching Theme 1: Necessity of BJP and <i>Hindutva</i>		
<i>Theme 1: Past Injustices</i>		
Grievances of Hindus	The perception that the ancient culture and civilization of India was attacked and suppressed by the cruel British and Mughal invaders.	<p>“2: India is a very ancient civilization. And it was a very rich country.. That is why you see all Mughals, then Britishers, just to loot this country, they attack this country. And somehow, because of our very high culture, old civilization, this country was divided among small, small kings. And the time came when they were not together and these foreigners, they succeeded in making a slave ...So, what happened that during this last hundreds of years, our culture was being attacked, attacked and attacked. And, when Britishers came, they also tried to convert people. They brought church with them. Lots of people who are so poor, having malaria, just for a tablet, the poor man was converted to Christianity. Then, people were destroying our temples, converting them to mosques.” (FG 2)</p> <p>“1:The biggest thing is that they ruled over us for 200 years, they cruelly ruled over us, and even after that, if we are Hindu then it is because of our ancestors</p> <p>4: Our Somnath temple was destroyed 17 times by them... 17 times they attacked.” (FG 1)</p>
Blaming Congress	Congress was not nationalistic and majorly harmed the country by inferiorizing Hinduism and Hindu culture, dividing the Hindus, promoting corruption, and regressing India.	<p>“5: You know, my personal belief is that, you know, any kind of culture that flows in any kind of political party or any type of let's say country actually comes from the top. And somehow, you know, Congress, have never been able to, you know, come up with leaders who, who have been, either nationalist or growth oriented for the country or growth oriented, ..forward looking. I would say just maybe a couple of their people were. And what, what it did was it put India back.. You know, every year we were going back where the others.. the entire world was developing.” (FG 1)</p> <p>“5: We talk about Hinduism with the understanding that we should look at our old rituals. We used to study in the 6th, 7th, and 8th (grades), what rituals our forefathers sowed on this earth, what they told us about our way of life. Don't know how it happened but another political regime came, they stopped all these books.” (FG 1)</p>
Relative Deprivation	Anger at Congress appeasing the Muslims which ensured that Muslims received favourable treatment on account of their religion and always received more compared to the Hindus.	<p>“4: Whatever has been put across, all the points of Hindu nationalism come due to appeasement, basically. And the idea of all these political parties...all the steps that were taken in terms of social development, were, were shown in, projected in such a manner that majorities are a taboo, in some format. So, because we are, let's say, a Hindu majoritarian country, we should be basically getting lesser and lesser of the pie and they should be getting more and more of the pie and any policy was also being driven by that concept.” (FG 2)</p> <p>“2: And the main point, if we do this, then it's because we believe in Hinduism but if you do the same, then its alright. It shouldn't be like this.</p>

		<p>1: <i>There's a way of organizing everything and everyone must accept that...And this, we will have to accept and the other will also have to accept"</i> (FG 1)</p> <p>"2: <i>Our entire history, what Britishers wrote, and this Congress government, they made a secular history. They made history also secular. Because those Muslims who (were) left in India after partition, they wanted that... to get their votes."</i> (FG 2)</p>
<b>Theme 2: Superiority of BJP</b>		
Amending Indian History	BJP is working to shed light the glorious history of India.	"2: <i>And I've seen that BJP is a nationalist party. This party, they want to bring the actual history of this country, which was destroyed by Britishers...So I was very attracted that this is the party which can bring the real history, the glorious past. And so, this entire idea of what, what the RSS and the BJP is doing is actually, is actually making everybody else realize what our past was actually."</i> (FG 2)
Reviving Indian Culture	BJP as the only party working to restore the suppressed and attacked Hindu culture and civilization	<p>"6: <i>I think Bharatiya Janata Party is the only party which talks about the nation and nationalism and talks about Indian culture. Because of this, our attraction remains towards the BJP and especially after the arrival of Modi, the whole world has seen how day by day nationalism and Indian culture is advancing."</i> (FG 1)</p> <p>"1: <i>Today, they are gradually promoting our culture which was completely extinct, which was becoming completely extinct. That's why we are getting attached to it (the BJP)."</i> (FG1)</p>
Advancing India	BJP's work seen as facilitating growth and development, improving foreign policy and bilateral relations, promoting self-reliance, working for the common man, and empowering women.	<p>"3: <i>We are also of the view that it is true that he has promoted women empowerment. His foreign policy is also very good. He has taken our country forward so much that we were striving to be progressive. He has made us completely self-reliant."</i> (FG 1)</p> <p>"2: <i>BJP has especially thought for the advancement of women, for their safety, to make them self-reliant and ... now everyone has accepted that their foreign policy has been the most powerful and when we go abroad, our import and export will be in contact and if there is a harmony, then our country will automatically move upwards. If our country grows, then naturally we believe that our development is certain."</i> (FG 1)</p>
Ideal Political Leaders	BJP leaders, especially Modi, are seen as embodying exceptional qualities as they are against corruption, are honest, and their ideology and work embodies what is right and beneficial for the country.	<p>"4: <i>And, BJP, if you see all the..all their top leaderships, they've always been as clean as possible. You know, and all have been very, very growth oriented. And all have been true nationalists, I would say."</i> (FG 2)</p> <p>"4: <i>So, and after Modiji's coming, you know, he's actually set a precedent of how hardworking a person can be, how clean a person can be, and how much growth oriented a person can be in every sector. For that matter, it's religion, work, social service, any, any, any.."</i> (FG 2)</p> <p>"5: <i>But for the common man, it was very important when Modi said neither will I eat (money) nor will I let anyone eat (money).</i> 4: <i>Watchman...Nation's Watchman (Chowkidar..Desh ka chowkidar)"</i> (FG 1)</p>
<b>Overarching Theme 2: Dilemmatic Representations of Hindutva</b>		
<b>Theme 3: Conflicting Comparisons of Indians as Hindus</b>		

Territorial Identity	Belief that everyone living in India is a Hindu as the term Hindu is linked to a geographic region on one side of the river 'Sindhu'.	<p>" 4: India has many names. Bharat, Hindustan...Because of Bharat, we say Bharatiya. If we correlate one word Hindu with Hindustan, then every person living in India is a Hindu. Don't connect it with religion. If every person living in Bharat is a Bharatiya, then similarly everyone living in Hindustan is a Hindu. It has nothing to do with caste and religion..." (FG 1)</p> <p>" 5: Wherefrom the word Hindu derived...from where. On the banks of the Sindhu (Indus) River which is now located in Pakistan. The people that were living there, so it was because of the British or their pronunciation that s became h, then Sindhu is related to Hindu, we have read this in history as well." (FG 1)</p>
Cultural Identity	Everyone living in India can be termed a Hindu because Hinduism is a way of life encompassing ancient ideologies, cultural practices, values, and ethics that can be adopted by anyone.	<p>"4: So personally, an identity of a Hindu person and an Indian, I would actually consider them the same. Because, for me Hinduism is again not a religion. It's where you basically live your life. So, uh, any person, and I agree with the, you know, definition of RSS in this. Anybody who is living in India is actually a Hindu. The way of life is Hindu." (FG 2)</p> <p>"5: It was once said that Hinduism is a way of life. It is a way of living, it is a way of rituals, it is not a religion. Hinduism is not a religion. Hinduism is an ideology, system of worship. 1: It talks of a disciplined way of life" (FG 1)</p>
Religious Identity	Religious Hindu identity is seen as inseparable from Indian identity and religious Hindu symbols are treated as Indian national symbols.	<p>"1: For me, it would be someone like Sri Ram, who our civilization has produced. Symbol Om. These kind of things are products of our civilization, which are universally... And, which like, should like bind all of us together as a nation. Ultimately, I would see, I mean, I would want these symbols to, like, bind our nation." (FG 2)</p> <p>"5: If there is any auspicious work in our country, we worship Lord Ganesha..so why can't this be our emblem? Our national emblem. Lord Ganesha is not anti-national." (FG 1)</p>
<i>Theme 4: Paradoxical Reality of India</i>		
India as a Secular Democracy	The idea of India is that of a secular, liberal democracy grounded in Hinduism and the republic's Constitution that promotes diversity, unity, pluralism, freedom of thought, freedom of worship, acceptance and tolerance.	<p>"4: What they want, only that should happen is not possible. We are humans and our thoughts could be different but it does not mean that we are their enemies. We won't adopt any wrong methods that we will forcefully try to prove ourselves right by presenting them as wrong or we do something to them so that they get scared or under pressure, they accept that things. This mindset is not there in India. In India, 'sab ka saath, sab ka vikas.' ('Together with all, development for all')<sup>23</sup> 2: And everyone has the freedom to practice their religions in their own way." (FG 1)</p> <p>"5: We have never taught the opposition of any religion on this earth. We have only taught 'may everybody be happy, may everybody be free from disease'. We pray for the welfare of the entire planet and in terms of the entire world, we believe 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the whole world is</p>

<sup>23</sup> A key slogan popularized during Modi's election campaign.

		<p><i>one or my family). That the people inhabiting entire world are our family. So this is very broad-minded.” (FG 1)</i></p> <p><i>“4: India has multiple states and each state has its own speciality, a different language. Despite all this, there is not much difference created in such matters in India because people have accepted one another” (FG 1)</i></p>
India as a Hindu Rashtra	Muslim rights are questioned and they are treated as second-class citizens in comparison to Hindus who are believed to be the true citizens of the country	<p><i>“4: That is the thing, who are you to believe in or not believe in our things? We came her first...our origins are here. We are from here.</i></p> <p><i>2: This is our country</i></p> <p><i>5: We didn't come first. We are from here itself. We don't know where you, who speak such things, have come from? We don't know but we are from here only and this you also believe and this earth also believes.” (FG 1)</i></p> <p><i>“(About rightful belongingness to the nation) 2: Listen, only those whose roots are attached should have the right. Primary right should be given to those who have proof of their roots. Since the ancient period..(laughs) who has been proving this since the ancient period. Now if you destroy the mosques, then temples are emerging.” (FG 1)</i></p>
<i>Theme 5: Clashing Perspectives towards BJP Discourse</i>		
Issues with Extremism	The extremist discourse of BJP leaders is perceived to be problematic as it is not believed to align with the ethos of India and Hinduism.	<p><i>“3: I think in the first line also, those who don't believe it should leave India is not appropriate. Yeah. Some people will leave later and Muslims and Christians being sons of Rama, it's science. It's the genes.. but telling them that you don't belong to team India or..I don't, I'm not supportive of that language or... that kind of communication.” (FG 2)</i></p> <p><i>“1:No, no. We shouldn't destroy anything...we can rename though</i></p> <p><i>5: You can rename. But we should be careful of one thing, even if you rename, you can't change the contents of history. The child will question who made it? Then what will be your answer...that's why I say that we should not become so excessive that we become ashamed of ourselves.” (FG 1)</i></p> <p><i>“2: But I don't like the language used by Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti...This is not the civilized way of talking.” (FG 2)</i></p>
Rationalizing Extremism	The extremist discourse of BJP leaders is rationalized as being necessary, having some truth in it, being propounded by only some politicians, being a natural reaction in response to years of cultural suppression, or as something that would not be an	<p><i>“1: When any nation or any civilization has gone through thousand years of suppression, of basic denial, of total whitewashing, of all the atrocities done on them, then when it gets its moment in the sun, there is going to be an overreaction for some time. There are going to be some people who are going to overdo stuff and say stuff which is not palatable, which is a little bit of no, but our basic DNA, the Hindu DNA is one of tolerance, is one of respect, is one of assimilation, right? Gradually we are all going to come back to our default setting, which is this...</i></p> <p><i>2: Sometimes this kind of language is required also to bring them in line, you see.” (FG 2)</i></p> <p><i>“4: Listen, if we go really back in the past, this country-Bharat- was only inhabited by Hindus before. (Everyone hums in agreement). Then after that, Mughals attacked, 200 years they attacked us and started living amongst us,</i></p>

	issue in the long-term.	<i>and having attacked us, their children that were birthed by our women, don't they have Hindu blood in them? So if the blood is there, then they are Hindu only even though their religion might have been changed due to fear, threats, or force.” (FG 1 )</i>
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**Theme 6: Contradictory Representations of BJP**

BJP for All	BJP perceived as working for everyone equally with minorities only being threatened because of BJP correcting historical wrongs and promoting Hindu culture	<p><i>“2: But PM Modi. His slogan is this if he's building houses for poor, it is all same whether he is a Christian, whether the Hindu, within the Muslim all poor will get. Rather you will find that in percentage wise, Muslims have got much more. So because of this rumour that Muslims and Christians will be hampered if PM Modi again comes the vote percentage is less. But I think slowly and gradually, they are also realizing that Mr. Modi is not partial.” (FG 2)</i></p> <p><i>“1: BJP as a party has very openly been supporting the construction of Ram Mandir, Article 370, banning conversions...all of these have been perceived by the average Muslim as anti-Muslim ..ban on conversions is perceived by the average Christians as anti-Christian. So naturally, there is going to be a set of people who are going to feel that their religion is being threatened when this party comes to power. Whereas all of these are actually historical wrongs which are being corrected by the BJP and by this government.” (FG 2)</i></p> <p><i>“5: The government's policy is for everyone, and is benefitting everyone equally. It's just that they don't like that we are trying to keep our old traditions and culture alive now, and that's why they don't vote for the government.” (FG 1)</i></p>
BJP for Hindus	BJP is supported because it is seen as promoting Hindus and Hinduism and its fundamental ideology is viewed as matching the way of life and values of Hindus.	<p><i>“6: Our lifestyle matches the ideology of the BJP. This is the reason why more Hindus support the BJP.</i></p> <p><i>5: No, BJP's ideology matches with our lifestyle.” (FG 1)</i></p>

**Overarching Theme 3: Validating a Saffronised Public Sphere**

**Theme 7: Delineating National Boundaries**

Othering Muslims	Muslims and the Islamic way of life (e.g.: <i>madrasas</i> ) form the central threat to Indian security, unity, pluralistic and liberal ethos, and peace.	<p><i>“2: Being Hindu majority here, Hindu festivals are being attacked...Or what happened in Muzaffarnagar and other places. Like Hindus were attacked. This is not good.” (FG 2)</i></p> <p><i>“1: They go around with a full proof target. Our kids or our people do not have a target but they are given a target from childhood</i></p> <p><i>4: Actually, in these madrasas, you are being given religious education, but along with that you are also being given a lesson that every Hindu is your enemy. So when you fill a young child's head continuously with this then he would consider every Hindu his enemy and will act accordingly once he grows up.” (FG 1)</i></p>
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<p>Other Significant Threats</p>	<p>Apart from Muslims, certain other internal and external threats are identified in the form of Pakistan, China, illegal immigrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh, Kashmiris, and certain liberal and leftist education institutions.</p>	<p>“2: And the Congress government agreed also for that partition, that aggression of them taking over our land. And because of Tibet, now China has come nearer to us. There is a threat, of course, to the nation.” (FG 2)</p> <p>“2: You see lots of infiltration is being undertaken. Land infiltration, because people in Pakistan and Bangladesh, they look like us, you can't differentiate...this threat is there you see the infiltration from neighbouring countries which was separated in 47. They are illegally infiltrating and.. it is a threat to this country, we feel threatened...because they will be voting they will be electing government. And secondly, in the border areas, when they are residing they are capturing border area, so that is a threat to the country, because they will support enemy's army and they will support international forces.” (FG 2)</p> <p>“4: There is this university which is only promoting them so that our nation breaks up...its name is JNU. 3: There are two...Jamia (Millia Islamia) is also there. 1: Tukde Tukde gang<sup>24</sup> 4: It's there less in Jamia but more in JNU. If anything is happening against Hindus, then they start promoting it and speaking incorrect things against their own country. Doing wrong things, it's as if they have a right to do this and that it's for this that the government is teaching them for free, free of cost... Means whatever facilities are being provided by the government, they are getting for this only. Anti-nationalism is filled inside them, they do not have to support India at all.” (FG 1)</p>
<p><i>Theme: Displaying Collective Narcissism</i></p>		
<p>Inferiorizing Muslims</p>	<p>Hinduism is seen to be superior to Islam in terms of values, education, traditions, practices, and structures</p>	<p>“5: Listen, they (Muslims) believe in a stone, so Hindustan cannot make a stone our symbol...But we have a meaning behind every symbol. 6: For us, the meaning is always hidden. 5: We are not going to bother with their thought process...they believe in a stone...they like dead things which we will never like 2: Those same dead things are believed to be inauspicious by us and we remove it from our homes.” (FG 1)</p> <p>“2: We will never do this. Hindus will never throw, if there are a hundred Hindu families and if there are five Muslims, they are always safe. You will never find in history that they are being attacked. Hindus take care of them...You will never find..any riot on Eid, have you ever heard? Any, any riot on any Muslim festival, you have never heard. You only see when there is a Ram Navami Yatra, or some Hindu celebrations, or some Durga Puja, or some Saraswati Puja.” (FG 2)</p> <p>“ 3: One thing is also that we have never seen blood flowing in our house, if we see then maybe we will be in pain. But they were brought up around the same blood because their festival is also the same so they don't panic too much with that blood...they enjoy it.</p>

<sup>24</sup> *Tukde Tukde* means pieces and *Tukde Tukde gang* is a derogatory catchphrase used by the BJP for their critics who allegedly support sedition and secessionism and who want to divide or break up the country.

		<p>4: <i>And if we keep a pet that passes away, who dies accidentally, then we ourselves are not able to eat food for many days, we cry for it. But they enjoy their festival by rearing a goat for six months and killing it after that..those things are slowly taking them in the wrong direction, this is not humanity, this is not being human in any form.</i>” (FG 1)</p> <p>“4: <i>They named it the symbol of love. What is this? Is it correct to marry 10 more times after someone you loved died?</i> 1: <i>We don't need a symbol of love in India. Our symbol of love is Ram Setu.</i> 3: <i>Yes, there is nothing bigger than that.</i>” (FG 1)</p> <p>“2: <i>You go to Rajasthan, you go to South (India).. you go to Rameshwaram temple or you go to Madurai temple. 1000s of temples and you will be surprised how such big stones were carried on the gates, how such a good carving was done.</i> 4: <i>Actually the Taj Mahal is nothing.</i> 2: <i>You fill find the Taj Mahal is nothing in front of them.</i>” (FG 2)</p>
Overcoming Hindu Victimhood	Muslim domination is overcome symbolically by presenting Mughal structures as being originally Hindu or reclaiming structures seen as being destroyed by Muslims.	<p>“2: <i>So, like in the history books, they just show Taj Mahal or Qutub minar and those old places were also actually originally Hindus.. Hindu temples. You see the Mughals came from the countries (where) no architecture is there. You can't see any architecture.. good architecture there. How can they bring that architecture here?</i>” (FG2)</p> <p>“(About Taj Mahal) 1: <i>There was a Shiv Temple there.</i> 3: <i>Yes, Teju Mahal.</i> 1: <i>So who broke all this?</i> 2: <i>All these things were Indian.</i>” (FG 1)</p> <p>“2: <i>Just to please Shah Jahan, just to please the Mughals, the Muslims, they've only... they're talking about two-three places, Delhi Quila, Taj Mahal and Qutub Minar, even you see Qutub Minar that entire area was a Hindu temple, Hindu temple.. Jainism center was there. And all astronomy centers were there. Now in this archaeology, it is all there. They're also being allowed to dig even 10 feet, they will take.. they will find everything.</i>” (FG 2)</p>
Rewriting Glorious History	Calls for Indian history to be taught properly with a focus on objectivity and instilling pride by giving proportionate importance to all periods of history, focusing on glorious Hindu heroes who resisted Mughal invaders, and by teaching mythological epics	<p>“5: (About Ramayana) <i>The question is not whether it's included or not now. They were excluded that's the issue. Why shouldn't we study it?</i> 1: <i>Bring back whatever was taught</i> 2: <i>Yes, like the Upanishads, Gita. Some portions of the Vedas can also be given.</i>”(FG 1)</p> <p>3: “<i>So the amount of..number of words dedicated to the Mughal period was disproportionately larger, definitely, than anything else. So I'm not saying it should not be there...But the negative should not be dusted under the carpet. They should be brought out and proportionate amount of time should be given to other periods and other rulers like we don't know anything about the Cholas... Vijaynagar.</i>” (FG 2)</p> <p>“4: <i>Mughals should be taught but not glorified.</i> 2: <i>Yes, that shouldn't happen.</i>”</p>

	and ancient Hindu scriptures.	<p>5: <i>You say Akbar the Great. Why is it Akbar, the Great?</i>  1: <i>Convert Akbar, the Great to Maharana Pratap, the Great.</i>  4: <i>Yes, convert it to Maharana Pratap, the Great..</i>  2: <i>You say. Ram is ideal for us so why isn't there anything on him? Teaching him is more necessary for us.</i>  1: <i>What will our kids get out Akbar? What has Akbar done?</i>  4: <i>No, they will get something. Their kids should also learn what Akbar did after coming to our country.</i>" (FG 1)</p>
Establishing Hinduism's Superiority	Hindu traditions and culture are emphasized to be practiced and to be proud of because they are backed by science, are eternal, are unique, and stem from a superior past.	<p>"6: <i>Our religion is eternal.</i>  5: <i>Ever remaining</i>  6: <i>What was right in the past, is right in the present, and will remain right in the future.</i>  4: <i>That which has no beginning or end.</i>" (FG 1)</p> <p>"6: <i>Our religion is even acknowledged by science. Like we say that doing havan (fire ritual) is a good thing, but they say that they won't do havan. But if you do havan, the ingredients used in that help in destroying the germs.</i>" (FG 1)</p> <p>"4: <i>"The Mahabharata where people are actually flying it's not people.. people weren't flying. At that time India had that technology.. some reason it's got lost...You can call it a UFO or you can call it any flying object, basically. All of these, as well as India was technologically very advanced, we just don't have it covered properly.</i>" (FG 2)</p> <p>"2: <i>One more thing which is most important for us is our ethics and moral values (sanskaar). You don't get to see that in any other country.</i>" (FG 1)</p>
<i>Theme: Outlining Belongingness to the Nation</i>		
Invoking Civil Obedience	Only those who follow the laws and rules set by the Indian government and do not violate social norms can rightfully belong to India.	<p>"1: <i>Whosoever follows the rules and regulations according to the constitution...which is in the interest of our country, whoever follows that, only he has the right.</i>" (FG 1)</p> <p>"1: <i>No, if a person is living here and not following the country's traditions, he's not breaking any law...you're allowed to do what the hell you want, it's fine. It's okay. As long as you're not harming anybody, you're not abusing anybody, you're not hurting anybody, you do what you want.</i>" (FG 2)</p>
Invoking Patriotism	Only those who are proud of, genuinely love, and are sincerely loyal to India and their duties over their religions can rightfully belong to the nation.	<p>"2: <i>If suppose, if an Arabian country attacks India. And Mohammad Saab, he leads the Muslim.. Arabian army. What will you do? He told, we all will join him and make him win. I told, just now you were telling that Japanese are very good. Now you are telling that you will join with them... He told you see their religion is like that. Our religion is not like that. So, Indian means, I think, a person, for him, India is first. Nation is first. Say, if you ask me, for me, my country is first. Religion is not first. Even Lord Ram also comes to attack this country or any Hindu leader from any other country will attack our country, we will give him a good fight.</i>" (FG 2)</p> <p>"3: <i>A small point since some of our teachers are Muslims. We are told that you we to teach between these times but they will do their namaz five times a day, even leaving school and class, why is this so? Because if you are</i></p>

		<p>leaving for 15 mins or half an hour, going to the masjid, even leaving the school for it, whatever offices you work in, you leave from there. It means that you give more preference to your religion than your work. So how is this right?" (FG 1)</p> <p>"2: We, we feel that Indian means in our concept anybody who worships...who is proud of the heroes of this country,...for whom this mother, this country is their motherland, and (who are) proud of their history." (FG 2)</p>
Invoking Assimilation	Only those who respect, accept, and adopt Hindu culture can rightfully belong to India.	<p>"2: People of any religion who live in this country, who respect our civilization and culture, follow them, do not oppose them, we think those people are all Hindus. Because our nation is Hindustan, somewhere there is a link. We have a base but if you accept it and foreigners are also coming here, they are adopting it. We have a very big heart so anyone coming from anywhere, if wholeheartedly they are accepting it, then they are Hindus." (FG 1)</p> <p>"1: A citizen of India will be defined as per the Constitution of the country...but a Bhartiya, I would define,..all the values and cultures and customs and traditions which have sprouted from this civilizational continuity of Bharat over the last 5,000 years, which is the open architecture I was talking about, which absorbs and assimilates and synthesizes and sprouts, everything else that can come from it. Those are the things I would associate." (FG 2)</p>
Invoking Uncritical Patriotism	Only those who do not protest or do not agree with other countries in criticizing India can rightfully belong to India	<p>"4: Anyone who stays in India but opposes all these things, they cannot be an Indian.</p> <p>1: Anyone who stays in India but says that Indians are fools-</p> <p>3: -Who eat here, but sing praises of somewhere else-</p> <p>4: Soldiers, army men, if someone is showing them to be wrong, I don't believe such a person can be an Indian. Those who shout anti-national slogans, harm the things of the country, the method of protest can be different, but if we have any problem with you, then we will deal with it in another way, we will not harm you. Then anyone who thinks in this way can't be Indian at all.</p> <p>5: No, he is an Indian, we cannot exclude him from Indianism, but the one who is saying this is can be anti India but non-Indian he cannot be as he stays in India.</p> <p>5: Legally he is an Indian. We cannot say that he is not an Indian but he is anti-India." (FG 1)</p>