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The Rising Hindutva Ideology in India and Its Impact on Minorities

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India's constitutional identity is that of a secular nation, where, regardless of their political or religious affiliations, all citizens are, in principle, entitled to equal rights. Following the Partition of India, various hostile actions—such as communal riots—were directed against Muslims by certain Hindu elements. To an extent, these actions could be viewed as a temporary, limited, and isolated reaction to the Partition. However, social injustices against Muslims gradually escalated, eventually evolving into organized riots. K. L. Gauba documented this grim history of religious violence in his book titled 'Passive Voices'.[2] These riots were typically instigated by, or carried out under the patronage of, extremist Hindu organizations. While there are instances where state institutions turned a blind eye to these riots, evidence of direct state patronage—though limited—does exist.

The Babri Masjid: A Turning Point in India's Secular Identity

The Babri Masjid serves as the most prominent example in this regard. According to historical records and documents, prayers were held there continuously from 1528 until 1949—a span of approximately 421 years. This practice came to an end on the morning of December 23, 1949, when idols were discovered inside the mosque. Citing law and order concerns, the district administration locked the main entrance of the mosque. This occurred during the tenure of the Congress party. Subsequently, with the exception of a brief two-year interval (1977–1979), the Congress remained in power in India; yet, no serious, sincere efforts were made to resolve the dispute equitably. Eventually, in the 1990s, Hindu extremist organizations demolished the Babri Masjid—an event that took place while the ostensibly secular Congress party was in power. The Congress government could have intervened to prevent this, but instead, it allowed the act to be carried out to completion, effectively establishing the demolition of the Babri Masjid as a permanent fixture in national politics. Ultimately, during the tenure of the current BJP government, a controversial 2019 Supreme Court verdict led to the permanent erasure of the historic Babri Masjid, though an alternative site was provided in its stead.

Increasing Restrictions on Muslim Religious Sites

The current situation in India is such that bringing the historical status of mosques into question—and subjecting them to institutional and judicial processes—in order to convert them into temples or demolish them has become a routine occurrence. Where this is not possible, imposing a ban

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2 K. L. Gauba, Passive Voices: A Penetrating Study of Muslims in India (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1973), 22–23, 324 ff.

on the performance of prayers (salah) is a simple and commonplace measure. This trend has already begun in several Indian cities. For instance, in September 2026 alone, a number of mosques were either completely or partially demolished; in fact, over a 45-day period in 2026, at least 23 Muslim religious sites—including mosques, madrasas (seminaries), and shrines—were targeted. [Muslim TV Network]

In recent months, the central government has initiated efforts to remove or evacuate two historic mosques in Delhi. The central government submitted a status report to the Delhi High Court regarding the 'Qadeemi Masjid' located in the Krishi Bhawan complex. According to the report, removing this over-100-year-old mosque is deemed necessary for the large-scale 'Central Vista' infrastructure project on the grounds that the land belongs to the government and was under temporary occupancy.

Similarly, an old historic mosque located in the Race Course area, near the Prime Minister's official residence, has been targeted. It was issued a notice to vacate the premises within 6 days. As part of the eviction process, its electricity and water connections were cut off starting October 7. The dispute is now in court, where its demolition has been put on hold in accordance with a stay order. While various reports estimate it to be around 120 years old, the application filed by the Delhi Waqf Board in court claims this mosque to be more than 300 years old.

Demolitions and Displacement: Recent Developments in Indian States

Serious incidents and conflicts involving the demolition, razing, and targeting of mosques have also been reported in Assam and Bihar during October and November 2026. In Assam, the BJP government launched a massive bulldozer drive under the guise of 'removing encroachments from government and forest lands,' targeting mosques in the process. On October 17 and 18, 2026, more than 10 mosques, including a Jama Masjid, were demolished during the drive in Assam's Nagaon, Hojai, and Golaghat districts. As a result of this action, over 1,100 Muslim families (mostly Bengali-speaking) were also displaced.

On November 1, 2026, a major operation involving more than 50 bulldozers was carried out in the Alamganj area of Assam's Dhubri district. Local mosques were demolished during this operation as well, and videos surfaced on social and international media showing Muslim women crying and praying inside a mosque. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma defended these actions, describing them as part of a development campaign.

Undermining Islamic Religious Institutions and Seminaries

Alongside the locking or demolition of mosques, a strategy is also underway to undermine their legal status and induce economic collapse upon them. As an initial step in the northern Indian state of Uttarakhand, the Muslim Madrasa Board was abolished and replaced by a new government-controlled board; this state body is now responsible for the registration of religious seminaries (madrasas). The Muslim community complied with this change. It is worth noting that, much like in several other countries, religious seminaries in India receive government aid. In Uttarakhand, 200 out of 500 madrasas previously received state grants—funding that has now been discontinued. The Muslim community accepted this as well, shifting to operating their seminaries through 'zakat' (obligatory alms), 'khairat' (charity), and voluntary donations. Furthermore, these seminaries and their curricula were subjected to stringent government oversight, with authorities demanding a meticulous accounting of every single penny. Despite fulfilling all the requirements mandated by the new state law, the authorities have now—for reasons that remain unclear—begun the process of sealing these madrasas.

The cases described above have been selected from a span of just a few weeks, yet they offer a clear insight into the rising trends in India. However, there are exceptions as

well. Occasional positive instances can also be observed. In the city of Roorkee, Uttarakhand, when government officials arrived to seal a 'madrasa' (Islamic seminary), the action—carried out under the official patronage of the BJP—proved unacceptable even to ordinary Hindus of the area. Consequently, the local BJP political leadership joined the Muslims in protest, alongside the general population, transcending religious divides. Yet, such a unique form of protest is rarely seen in India. Given the firm grip that extremist Hindutva ideology has established over the minds of the general Hindu population, it is difficult to predict—under the current Modi administration—when India might recover, or when the nation might once again be in a position to hold its head high within the international community.

The Targeting of Other Religious Minorities

It is not only Muslims who are being targeted; the BJP government, led by Narendra Modi, is subjecting other religious minorities to similar treatment. In the eastern Indian state of Nagaland, Christians make up 88 percent of the population. The difficulties they have faced in practicing their faith have led organized groups within the state to declare their separation from India on several occasions.

For instance, according to a report from last week, an inauguration ceremony for a church was taking place in a city in West Bengal. Pastors and women—both local and from outside the city—were in attendance. As soon as the event began, members of the extremist Hindu organization Bajrang Dal, along with individuals associated with the ruling party, the BJP, attacked the gathering. They even assaulted the women and completely disrupted the proceedings. There is, however, a subtle difference in the state's treatment of the Christian and Muslim communities: when a mosque is demolished or attacked, the police often refuse to register an FIR (First Information Report). In the case of a church, an FIR is usually registered after some back-and-forth. Yet, in both instances, the police take no action regarding the arrest of the accused or the conduct of an investigation. In this regard, Muslims and other religious minorities find themselves in a state of equal helplessness.

Since the Partition, the societal fabric of India has embodied a multifaceted composite of diverse minority populations and varied cultural expressions. However, under the BJP government led by Modi, society has transitioned into a highly contested and polarized socio-political landscape. In contemporary India, the inhumane treatment of religious minorities—particularly Muslims—is on the rise. Unlike in the past, this is now occurring under the direct patronage of state governments, government officials, and extremist political activists. Although a significant portion of the general population remains uninvolved in these unjust actions, religious minorities are enduring a distressing existence within an India gripped by the Hindutva' ideology of Modi and the BJP.