

CONSTRUCTING COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND IDENTITY FOR MOBILIZATION

The role of the Hindu-nationalist BJP in the Ayodhya Dispute.

BA Thesis Conflict Studies

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Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

<i>Bharat</i>	India
<i>BJP</i>	Bharatiya Janata Party, political face of Sangh Parivar
<i>Hindu Rashtra</i>	The Hindu nation
<i>Hindutva</i>	Hinduness
<i>Kar Seva</i>	Religious act of volunteering
<i>Kar Sevak</i>	In this context volunteer at the Ram Temple construction in Ayodhya
<i>Masjid</i>	Mosque
<i>Lok Sabha</i>	'House of the People', the Lower House of the Parliament
<i>Ram Shila Pujan</i>	The cult of the bricks with which the Ram Temple at Ayodhya was to be built (also used as a means of fund-raising)
<i>Ram janmabhoomi</i>	'birthplace of Ram', movement for Hindu Ram Temple on the site of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya
<i>RSS</i>	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, right-wing Hindu Nationalist Paramilitary Group of Volunteers
<i>Sangh Parivar</i>	Umbrella term for the RSS organisations, includes the BJP
<i>Swayamsevak</i>	A RSS Volunteer
<i>Shiv Sena</i>	Far-right Hindu Nationalist Political Party in India
<i>VHP</i>	Vishwa Hindu Parishad, religious Hindu Right-wing Organisation, affiliated to the BJP
<i>Yatra</i>	Hindu Pilgrimage



figure 1. India and Uttar Pradesh

Introduction

At the end of August 2013 clashes between Hindu and Muslim communities in Muzaffarnagar, a district in Uttar Pradesh, rocketed in India. It started with a small dispute, but ended claiming more than 50 lives and leaving 50,000 people homeless. Some argued that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a Hindu-nationalist political party, was responsible, as they benefited from polarisation along religious lines in the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections for the Lower House (Rediff News, 19 September 2013). It wouldn't be the first time that the BJP would resort to this sort of tactics.

More than 20 years earlier, in December 1992, widespread riots occurred in the whole country after the demolition of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya, North-central India. Most of these riots took place in Bombay, a thousand miles away from Ayodhya, but also in other parts of the country. This resulted in more than 2000 mostly Muslim deaths. The site of the sixteenth-century Babri Mosque was claimed to be the birthplace of the Hindu god, Rama, and was assumed to be the site of a Hindu temple that was destroyed by the general of Mughal emperor Babur to build the mosque. More than 300,000 people gathered on the 6th of December and broke down the mosque within just a few hours.

In 1990 Shri L.K. Advani, the leader of the BJP, had started a campaign to gain attention for the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute, mainly to revive its lost political popularity. Together with a movement of several political, religious and cultural Hindu-nationalist organizations they called for the erection of a Hindu temple for Rama (HRW report 1996). For their own political gain, political figures from the elite of the Hindu nationalist movement in India not only exploited, but also actively and purposefully constructed a collective identity and instrumentalised a specific Hindu-nationalist discourse to create a rationale to mobilize their followers for action.

As several sources show us (HRW report 1996; Liberhan report 2009), the demolition of the mosque and the subsequent riots in Mumbai were in fact orchestrated events; people actively and purposefully designed these, and they were able to mobilize the masses by using particular appealing discourses. Therefore the research question of this thesis is stated as the following:

How could the BJP and affiliated Sangh Parivar organisations successfully mobilise the mobs that caused the demolition of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya by making use of Hindu nationalist discourse, while this mainly served the political interests of BJP-elite?

The attack on the Babri Mosque has been immense in its impact on India's political landscape and according to Martha Nussbaum (2008) the Hindu nationalist pogroms have created a profound crisis in India's democracy. This Hindu-nationalism, based on violence and hate speech, has emerged out of the

'longest, most sustained, and most successful trajectory of democracy anywhere in the postcolonial world' while following the procedures of a parliamentary democracy (Hansen 1999:5). Therefore it seriously challenges our notions of the universality of liberal democracy. The case of Ayodhya is seen as a 'window on world of conflict that developed inside nationalism' (Ludden 1996:1), and it symbolizes Hindu-Muslim conflict in a broader sense.

Anand (2005:203) argues that communal violence should be understood in the larger context of the struggles over secularism of the postcolonial Indian state. After partition from Pakistan, that chooses to be an Islamic Republic, India chooses to be secular democracy. This partition was accompanied by a lot of bloodshed between the Muslim and Hindu groups. After independence the Indian National Congress has been the single major party in Indian politics till the rise of the BJP in the 1990s. However, the Hindu-nationalist Movement has been in existence for a much longer period, and it has become a pervasive cultural and political force in Indian society, based on the ideology of Hindutva (Hinduness). This Hindu-nationalist Ideology is held up by several groupings and affiliations. It is led by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a paramilitary volunteer Hindu Nationalist Group that is seen as the ideological core of the Hindu nationalist movement (Menon 2010). The RSS created several organizations as way of ideological expansion, all working together but with their own specific purpose (Katju 2005:177). All these different organizations are united in the Sangh Parivar, which represents the Hindu-nationalist Movement. They are all mass political movements, built on active mass support in society. The BJP is the political wing of the RSS, something that is being denied by the leadership of the BJP as well as that of the RSS (Liberhan report 2009: 879) and is now one of the two major political parties in the country. Those Hindu-nationalist are since associated with anti-Muslim rhetoric and violence.

Hanna Arendt taught us that "Violence is by nature instrumental" (1970:51), and the anthropologist Paul Richards (2005) once stated: "War does not break out because conditions happen to be 'right,' but because it is organized." Often the primordialist concept of 'ancient hatreds' is used to explain the so-called communal violence in India. Amongst others the New York Times reported that "the hatreds of India emerged in the 1980's from "Hindu memory scarred by centuries of sometimes despotic Islamic rule" (New York Times December 11, 1992).¹ Also in the Liberhan report (2009: 64), made up after a 17-year investigation into the destruction of the mosque, is stated that "the constant bitterness between the two communities is an historically accepted and recorded fact". This violence is labeled as communal, because it involves communities based on religious affiliation. However, Basu (1996:56) points out that the notion

¹ Other examples of this primordialist view: Newsweek (December 21, 1992) stated that "battle over a mosque refuels the ancient conflict between Hindus and Muslims"; and the Washington Post (January 29, 1993) explained the causes of the violence as "centuries-old religious hatreds and modern-day economic deprivation."

that the Hindu-nationalist movement was simply responding to longstanding grievances is ahistorical, because it doesn't explain why it happened at that point in time, and not earlier. Engineer (1991) describes communal riots as having behind them 'either an electoral battle or some political, religio-political, economic, cultural or linguistic, demand.' In other words, there is always more at play than just the grievances of people. The word riot suggests disorganized destruction, but if we look closer we can see that this is concealing what really happened, and that is a purposefully organized series of events.

Collective action theory tries to account for how individuals organise and work together in pursuing common goals. Participation in movements and mobilization for the cause of violence depend on the processes of framing. Framing is part of the construction of identity and is done by the use of a specific discourse with references to historical narratives; to examine why this Hindu-nationalist discourse is so successful in these framing processes I want to link these bodies of theory to create an analytical framework for this thesis.

The concept of framing deals with how reality is perceived and communicated by people and framing processes are therefore a central dynamic in understanding the character and course of social movements. The struggle over the production of mobilizing ideas and meanings is being problematized and the role of actors is highlighted as 'signifying agents actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning' (Benford and Snow 2000:613). Benford and Snow (2000: 615-618) have identified three core framing-tasks: diagnostic (problem identification and attribution), prognostic and motivational framing, that all need to be pursued for mobilization. The first two are about facilitating agreement; the latter is about moving people for action. I want to argue that those framing-tasks go along with processes of identity construction. For collective action a 'collective' needs to be formed, and these processes of group formation and identification are based on the identification of the culpable of their injustice in creating an antagonism between Self and Other, by use of collective memory. By connecting the bodies of knowledge about framing and identity I hope to contribute to the larger debate about collective action.

Taking an instrumentalist approach as the starting point for this thesis does not mean I do not recognize the wider structural forces that played a role in the rise of Hindu-nationalist violence. Kinnvall (2002:81) rightfully points out the limitations of an instrumentalist approach that focuses on the manipulation by elites as they fail to explain other reasons for identification with a group. Brass (2011:32) tells us that the causes of Hindu-Muslim riots are a combination of underlying factors of demography and economics on the one hand, and human agency focussed on electoral competition; a combination of 'objective' and 'intentional' factors, comprising both chaos and organisation. However, since the research question is a *how*, and not a *why* question the focus is on the intentional production of this Hindu-Muslim antagonism in order to gain political benefits.

While often the fact that Hindu-nationalist leaders delivered ‘provocative speeches’ is mentioned (Liberhan report 2009:346), there are very few transcripts of those freely available. As organisations working within a democracy they have to move between the boundaries of the law (or at least try to make it look like that), so they won’t show evidence that they did not. However, there are other textual accounts they present themselves showing those mobilization processes, such as election manifestos. In those documents things might be stated not as clear and overt as they would have in speeches held for their frenzied publics, but they still hold valuable information when looking closer. For this research I have selected a few of those accounts of the BJP and other Hindu-nationalist organisations like the VHP that are closely related to the BJP for analysis on different aspects of collective identity. Using these accounts this thesis will provide insights in how the processes of identity formation and framing are used to rally people around their cause. These sources will be complemented with newspaper articles and investigation reports.

In the first chapter I show how the identity formation processes were used and triggered to create a collective Hindu nationalist identity. In the second chapter I will focus on the identification of the Muslim as threat by the using historical narratives. This will also show how the Ayodhya dispute became so significant in the struggle for a Hindu-State. The last chapter will deal with the political benefits of communal conflict and violence, and how this corresponds to the interests of the following masses.

Chapter 1. Collective Identity Formation in the *Ramjanbhoomi* Movement

Overcoming Internal Cleavages by Connecting Religion and Nationalism

The Hindu-nationalist movement proved successful in constructing a strong collective identity. This is important because identity plays a critical role in mobilizing and sustaining participation. The framing tasks identified by Snow and Benford (2000) closely relate to the processes of identity construction. To look closer at how these processes have been used and promoted the following question will be answered in this chapter: *What makes the Hindu-nationalist discourse particularly successful in creating a strong sense of belonging to a collective identity?*

Diagnostic framing is about identifying the cause of problems; identifying the people that should be blamed. The diagnose will be based on already created divides in society, as well as endorse and reaffirm these antagonistic divides between Self and Other. For participation it is important people feel included in the group. To do so I will look at how internal differences within the group of Hindu people were overcome by combining the Hindu religion with nationalism, and how the construction of the Muslim as the Other is used to define the Self.

1.1 Collective Identity

Forces of globalization and modernity have facilitated rapid change and social transformation. The resulting uncertainty and anxiety leads to the tendency to reaffirm one's self-identity by drawing closer to any collective that is able to reduce those feelings (Kinnvall 2002:80). On the other hand Polleta and Jasper (2001:291) point out that distinguishing "us" from "them" and depicting antagonists depends rather on human decision makers than on impersonal forces such as urbanization. Collective identity is defined as 'individuals' cognitive, moral and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution' (Polleta and Jasper 2001:285). Identity is not a static entity, but is constructed in intersubjective processes. This implies that Self and Other cannot be seen separately; internalized self-notions are always related to representations of self and other in identity formation (Kinnvall 2002:83). Categorizing and demonizing of the 'other' are therefore important aspects of the processes of identity formation.

Often preexisting collective identities are used for mobilization, but the strategic framing of those identities is critical in recruiting members (Polleta and Jasper 2001:291). To draw strict borders between the different groups, identity is reduced to a few specific cultural characteristics to essentialize the self and other. This results in a 'solitarist' approach of identity; all individuals are reduced to only being Hindu or Muslim, other forms of identity don't matter

anymore (Sen 2007: xii). While the multiple layers of identity of Hindus are still being recognized, Muslims are solely determined by their Muslimness. This is a common practice in the representation of minorities by majoritarian discourses (Anand 2005: 205). Those characteristic practices of identity formation will be visible in all steps of mobilization carried out by the BJP and other Hindu-nationalist organisations.

1.2 Internal Differences in Hinduism

Major internal differences in Hinduism made an active attempt to overcoming those cleavages necessary. It was only in the late 20th century that Hindu-nationalism started to rise, despite Hindu's being the majority of the Indian population for centuries. This can be explained by those internal cleavages. Although Hinduism is usually seen as a single religion, in reality it is plural in structure. It is not only divided in castes, but also in schools of thought and major differences exist between different regions. There is no, unanimously agreed upon, central text like the Bible or Quran, which is able to serve as a common reference, superior to other sources. The term Hindu was for a long time used to refer to location or country instead of to a homogeneous religious belief; to use it as a religion is only a recent development. Amartya Sen (1993:7-8) even sees this plurality as an internal characteristic of Hinduism as a religion. Also Jaffrelot (1996:1) points out that the phenomenon of militant Hindu-nationalism is a challenging one for academics, as the essential characteristics of Hinduism on first sight do not seem to lend themselves very well to a closed and monolithic radicalism. The rise of a Hindu-nationalist movement in India was thus not as logic or inevitable as one might think. Shaila Seshia (1998:1038) argues that:

In the case of the BJP, the problem of collective action is one of mobilizing individuals who belong to a large religious group to support a party that proposes to advance the interests of both the group and the individuals in it. The sheer size of the Hindu population and the presence of cross-cutting cleavages undercut the existence of a collective, [...] Cultivating a politically unified Hindu constituency is at odds with the logic of cross-pressures.

These cleavages within the Hindu community had to be overcome in order to create a group that could be mobilized for action. Jaffrelot (1991: 76) says that this extreme differentiation of castes and sects in Hinduism contributed to the feelings of vulnerability that caused a minority complex amongst Hindus.

The notion of a single Hindu culture, that does not go along with Islamic or western ideas is imposed by Orientalism and has been promulgated, organised and reformulated by Hindu-nationalists (Hansen 1999: 11). The BJP sees itself as committed to the concept of "One Nation, One People and One Culture" (BJP manifesto 1998). This focus on oneness, on unity amongst all (Hindu) people, is showing us exactly the attempt to overcome these internal

cleavages resulting from different schools of thought, regional differences and the caste system. In his speech at the National Council in 1995 Advani quoted Gandhi, saying that India was already one nation before the English came, stating that the Constitution of India was not the creation of the nation, but the recognition of an ancient nation that has existed for thousands of years. While all historical evidence says otherwise, they keep repeating the ancientness of the Hindu nation as a form of legitimation of their cause.

1.3 Hindutva as a Binding Force

By connecting Hinduism to Nationalism the movement was able to create an inclusive identity that welcomes all Hindus across all castes and thus overcome the separation by the class system (Engineer 2002:4). Hindutva (Hinduness) is the ideological component that posits the unity of all Hindus, irrespective of differences between castes and sects. With this call for 'unity in diversity', the founding fathers of Hindu nationalism suppressed the caste conflicts at that time. Also the BJP describes Hindutva as a 'unifying principle' (Hindutva, lkadvani.in). They see it as the force that made them cooperate in the struggle for freedom: "It was this very same vision which inspired millions upon millions of freedom-loving Indians of all castes, communities and regions to give their all for the liberation of Mother India from the yoke of British colonial rule" (Our Vision, Our Will, Our Way, bjp.org).

The movement as well as the idea of Hindutva goes back to the colonial period, but it was turned into a mass phenomenon by the RSS after independence. The notion of Hindutva is not only appealing because it's a religious subtext, but because it is connected to 'everyday anxieties of security, a sense of disorder, and the ambivalence of modern life' (Hansen 1991:11). Hindutva presents a solution, a new order that will solve contemporary problems. However, in the period after this inclusivism of the early Hindu nationalism changed into an exclusive stance towards minorities in India (Eckert 2009: 176). Brass (2011:7) tells us that while the ideology of Hindutva, and thus of Hindu nationalism, is not necessarily about Hindu-Muslim antagonisms, in practice it only works when that opposition is present.

Advani proclaimed: "When cow protection was incorporated in the Constitution as one of the Directive Principles, it was the acknowledgement of the cultural nationalism which sustains the life of this nation" (Speech National Council, 1995). The holiness of cows is of course a specific aspect of Hinduism, and not necessarily of the other religions that India comprises. In this statement he thus refers to India as a Hindu nation. Anand (2005: 205) stated that Hindutva is as much about representing the Hindu nation as it is about fabricating one. By repeatedly asserting that India is a Hindu nation, the idea becomes more and more entrenched. Anand (2005: 204) also talks about a 'schizophrenic shuttling' between the notion of a pre-existing monolithic Hindu nation, and the idea that

the Hindu nation yet needs to be awakened. This paradoxal attitude is typical for the Hindu-nationalist movement.

Hindu is seen as defining Indian culture, while Indian Islam is portrayed as foreign and deviant, alien to India. With the separation of British India, Pakistan and India were created; on the one hand an Islamic country with a Muslim majority and on the other a country with a Hindu majority. Although India is secular in nature and still holds the second-largest group of Muslims (after Indonesia), this separation meant a shift to a situation with the two religions on both sides of the borders separating hostile states (Ludden 1996:5). “The BJP shares, embodies and energizes the vision of every patriotic Indian to see our beloved country emerge as a strong prosperous and confident nation, occupying her rightful place in the international community” (Our Vision, Our Will, Our Way, bjp.org).

1.4 Connecting Religion and Nationalism

Another important aspect of the previously quoted statement of the BJP about ‘oneness’, is the connection that is made between nationalism and culture. The nation is equalled to the people and the culture, pretending there are only one people and one culture in India. This connection of Hinduism to the idea of nationalism is important, as it is an attempt to overcome the internal differences in Hinduism.

In the BJP manifesto it is written that:

Our nationalist vision is not merely bound by the geographical or political identity of Bharat but it is referred by our timeless cultural heritage. This cultural heritage, which is central to all regions, religions and languages, is a civilizational identity and constitutes the cultural nationalism, which is the core of Hindutva. This is what we believe is the identity of our ancient nation “Bharatvarsha (BJP manifesto 1998).

Kinvall (2004:742) shows us that the religious-nationalist discourse is particularly appealing to people as both its two components, religion and nationalism, are strong identity-signifiers and therefore provide a powerful rationale for participation. The inclusion of people in this group identity is the first step towards the process of mobilizing them for action. Both religion and nationalism provide a sense of unity, security and inclusiveness that is very appealing, and the Hindu-nationalist Movement has been successful in monopolizing both sources of self and identity (Kinvall 2004:762).

By subsuming religious sentiments and public rituals into a larger discourse of national culture (Bharatiya culture) and the Hindu Rashtra (the Hindu nation) the Hindu nationalist movement successfully created an understandable political ‘package’ of Hindu symbols (Hansen 1991:10). By taking up religious issues the BJP becomes a party that is not just having a specific political agenda, but it becomes a party that is fighting for all Hindus.

1.5 Categorizing the Self; Demonizing the Other

Hindus have only been identified as a category because of the creation of the other category of the Muslim. As Fearon and Laitin (2000: 846) notice, often violence with members of an out-group is provoked in case of internal conflicts. By identifying everybody that is not part of your group, the in-group is being defined. 'The process of identity-building crystallised in a reaction to a Hindu sense of inferiority or vulnerability which was directly related to stereotypes of the Others (the Muslims and the British)' (Jaffrelot 1996:24). The British had introduced many of those stereotypes; in 1912 the Intelligence Bureau wrote that 'The Muhammedan is always a potential fanatic' while the Hindus was 'in a deplorable state of physical weakness' (cited in Jaffrelot 1996: 25). Those two descriptions form a strong antagonist, which has been internalized by the Hindu. One of the main foundational Hindu-nationalist works, 'Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?' written by Savarkar, is a basic text about Hindu-nationalism and 'It perfectly illustrates the mechanisms of Hindu-nationalist identity-building through the stigmatisation and emulation of 'threatening Others' (Jaffrelot 1996: 25). They depend on identification of the Muslim for the creation of the Hindu identity.

Parmod Mahajan, who helped Advani organizing the Rath Yatra, asked in a speech: "Are you the children of Babar or Ram, Akbar or Rana Partap, Aurangzeb or Shiva Ji?"² (Liberhan report 2009: 346). By saying this, an absolute dichotomy between on the one hand Hindu and on the other Muslim, no other categories are available anymore. However, in this distinction a Hindu god known for his good governance is representing the Hindu community, while a foreign invader represents the Muslim. Thus, the real choice is between being Hindu or being foreign, not Indian. In other words, there is no place for Muslims in India.

The ideas of Hindu-nationalism about democracy are based on a 'majoritarian principle'; because Hindus form the majority of the population of India, their rights should be promoted by the Indian state. Therefore they critic the state for being 'pseudo-secular', because of its policies of so-called appeasement of minorities (Anand 2005:204). Hindutva is seen as a counterforce for the appeasement of sectional interests (BJP manifesto 1998).

Advani called his Rath Yatra to Ayodhya a crusade against 'pseudo-secularism' and minorityism'. He stated: "I want a uniform civil code. I want Article 370 to be abrogated.³ I want cow protection. I want the minorities

² When Mughal emperor Akbar attacked the Indian Rana Partap resisted. Aurangzeb, another Mughal emperor was fought by the Indian king Shiva Ji.

³ Article 370 is a law that grants special autonomous status to Jammu and Kashmir. Some Muslim Kashmiris demand greater autonomy or even independence from India, but of course the Hindu-nationalists are against this.

commission to be replaced by a human rights commission' (The Times of India, 19 November 1991). By stating his demands on rights for Hindus and abolition of minority rights Advani defined Hindutva. On the one hand he wants to change the way secularism is enacted in India; he doesn't want to differentiate between the different religions. On the other it is clear that this, in his eyes, should not lead to separation of state and religion, but to a Hindu dominance.

Kanchan Gupta, assistant of Advani and Vajpayee, said: "look back at India's wretched history of secular politics and consider the terrible price the nation has paid at the altar of appeasement," when talking about Kashmir (friends of BJP). 'Giving the Muslim's what they want' is seen as an embarrassment. In 1985 the case of Shah Bano became the representation of Muslim appeasement by the government. In short, it was accepted that a Muslim man didn't pay alimony to his ex-wife, because of their religion. By focusing on this case the question was raised why there were different civil codes for different religions, a practise that was seen as favouring particular minorities, specifically the Muslim minority.

Another issue that causes consternation among Hindu-nationalists is the image of the 'overpopulating Muslim.' A study circulated by the RSS in the aftermath of the 1991 census read that "the fact remained as prominent as ever that the rate of population growth of Muslims is much higher than that of the Hindus, particularly in some areas where the majority is on the verge of being reduced into minority" (Foreword, bjp.org). Only contributing to those images is the perceived problem of 'illegal infiltration' by Muslim people from Bangladesh (BJP manifesto 1998). Fear for this abstract and generalized "Muslim" has been an important part of the Hindu-nationalist discourse. These ideas about the Other have acquired a certain "truth" that is independent of social experiences or physical proximities (Hansen 1991:12). The idea that the Muslim population will soon outnumber the Hindu people cannot be based on any research, but are so powerful that they are perceived as a real threat. In this irrational fear we can again also see the 'majority with a minority complex' that Jaffrelot observed (1999:76). While being the large majority of the country, they Hindu-nationalists act as if the Hindus are a threatened minority group.

Conclusion

The Hindu-Nationalist movement is able to construct an appealing collective identity by making use of the two strong identity-signifiers religion and nationalism. The ideology of Hindutva is used as a binding force and by doing so they were able to overcome the characteristic internal cleavages of Hinduism. They also made actively use of a demonized Other, the Muslim, which functioned as an out-group defining and distinguishing the boundaries of the Hindu collective. The Ramjanbhoomi movement incorporated the collective Hindu

identity and framed it in a sense that it became a singular dominant identity people were feeling closely related to.

CHAPTER 2. Creating the Muslim Threat

Constructing the Muslim as a Threatening Other by Creating a Collective Memory

In the former chapter the construction of the Muslim as the Other has already been showed, as this is inseparable of the construction of the Self. However, Muslims are not only alienated and dehumanized in Hindu-nationalist discourse; they are also presented as threat to the security of the Self. The problem is diagnosed and the solution is proposed. In defining the Muslim they draw extensively on historical accounts, and therefore the question that will be answered in this chapter is stated as the following: *How are historical narratives used as a cultural resource to provide a rationale for collective action?* In this chapter I will focus on how historical narratives are used to construct the Muslim as the Other and present him as a threat against which the Hindu should defend themselves and explain why the Ayodhya dispute became so important in this struggle.

2.1 The Indian History of Islamic Dominance

Katju (2005:178) argues that history is interpreted in a particular way to advance communal politics. In the BJP manifesto of 1998 Indian-nationalism is connected to the heritage of ancient Indian civilization: 'The Bharatiya Janata Party is a proud inheritor of this tradition while all other political parties have branded everything associated with this great tradition as sectarian, unworthy of being followed.' In this manifesto they clearly show how historical awareness is deemed extremely important: 'The post-independence tendency to reject all ancient Indian wisdom in political life' is described with disapproval: 'The BJP rejects this attitude and idea of disconnecting from the past' (BJP manifesto 1998). Presenting the Hindu identity as the inheritor of an ancient Indian civilization makes it seem as if it is primordial, possibly even natural or at least prior to any particular political mobilization (Calhoun 1993:214). The sources of this identity become beyond questioning, what serves as an important justification for their cause. This way the BJP is able to present itself as the 'natural, inevitable, completely unpolitical reaction of ordinary, pious Hindus against a culturally insensitive, westernized, and corrupted state' (Hansen 1991: 10).

The neo-orientalist stance that Hindu-Muslim violence is natural because of the conflicting nature of the primordial categories of Hindus and Muslims is not only seen in simplistic media coverage, it is also the common belief of Hindutva preachers. Calhoun argues that to translate ethnicity into nationalism,

cultural traditions of everyday life need to be transformed into historical claims (Calhoun 1993:224). Therefore the pre-existence of the Indian Nation needs to be affirmed, and it is presented as only being disrupted by the Muslim conquest, British rule and the division of the country, for which the Muslims are of course mostly held responsible. In histories of Indian civilization Hindu, Muslim and British periods are treated separately and are defined in ethno-religious terms. The 'Hindu period', is named like that, despite the fact that it gave rise to other important religions like Buddhism, and seen as period of glorious achievements. On the other hand the Muslim period is portrayed as a period of conquest, destruction and decay of the Hindu civilization. It is the goal of the BJP to bring the glory of the Hindu period back: "Lastly, it is a vision to see India, the world's oldest cradle of civilization, transform itself yet again into a benign global power"(BJP election manifesto 1998). Brass (2011: 35-46) argues that this historical consciousness, in which the Muslim only represents an obstacle for India to achieve its rightful place in the world framed Hindu-Muslim relations. The core characteristics of Indian culture are taken to be Hindu, while Indian Islam is portrayed as a foreign element, alien to India (Ludden 1996: 4-5). This is clearly visible in the way Indian history is described in Hindu-nationalist narratives, namely as a history of Islamic dominance. Those representations of collective pasts contribute to the persistence of the riots and at the same time justify collective violence (Brass 2011: 28).

2.2 Chosen Trauma of Islamic Suppression

In this perspective the Babri Masjid seems to be a remnant of foreign domination, while in fact the Empire of Babar was primarily located in what is now known as India. Ludden (1996:5) therefore argues that Islam is just as important for cultural history in India as it is in Pakistan and Bangladesh. However, the idea that Islam is foreign to India is predominant in India, and is actively held up by Hindu-nationalists trying to make India a Hindu only state. Ludden (1996:6) points out that India has never been what it is today in a geographical, demographic or cultural sense before independence; the territory that is now used to describe the roots of Indian civilization was only politically defined by the British. However, in most of the Hindu-nationalist accounts is referred to an 'ancient Indian civilization' (BJP manifesto 1998), as if something like that has always existed until it was interrupted by foreign invaders.

In the Hindu-nationalist project of presenting Islam as alien and external to India they actively make use of history. However, the historical narratives that are being told are based on religious prejudice not on an objective view. "Religion and religious conflict are placed central, and their role is exaggerated to the point that all issues are seen through a religious-sectarian prism" (Katju 2005:178). While claims to the truth are explicitly made: "All evidence is displayed here as it is," the historical narratives on the VHP website are focusing

explicitly on Islamic invasion: “It is a fact of history that the Mughal invaders attempted to humiliate Hindus and tried to superimpose Islam on them” (Preface, Legend of Ayodhya, vhp.org). In this ‘humiliation’ the minority complex of the Hindus is visible again. The specific portrayal of Muslims in historical accounts leads to the image of a dehumanized and threatening Other:

It is an historic fact that after its birth, the Islam spread not through the basis of intellectualism; but through the mental aberation sen in them on account of their victories. Islam entered Bharat as the aggressor. Islami aggressors had spread their Majhab after defeating Hindu armies, looting their properties and massacring innocent people. They also displayed their bestiality by targetting Hindu temples and destroying idols of Hindu deities. The power-drunk Muslims destroyed at least some places of worship totally and erected mosques at thousands of places. It has become very difficult to search for their history also. But Hindu society is unable to erase the memory of history, their glorious chapters and their recognition of the temples at Ayodhya, Mathura, Kashi and Somanath, inspite of the fact that they were demolished and mosques were built upon those very spots. (Shriram Janmabhumi Mukti Andolan, vhp.org)

Once an event becomes a ‘chosen trauma’ for other generations the historical truth of the narrative is no longer an important issue; it is the bond it creates between members of the group by sharing this chosen trauma that matters. This becomes an ‘identity marker’ the people descending from the original victimizers symbolically represent the original victimizers (Volkan 2006:155). The Muslim population of India is equalled with the historical invaders of the Mughal Empire and held accountable for their actions. In the quoted accounts a clear image of the Muslim is presented; the Muslim is an invader, an aggressor, and a brutal killer. The Muslims are power-drunk, determined to convert Hindus to Islam. Their behaviour is described as bestial or inhuman. In those presentations of history the Muslim is clearly categorized as ‘the threatening other’. The Muslim discursively produced as a source of insecurity against which the Self needs to be secured (Anand 2005: 206).

On the other hand the Hindu is victimized: its armies are defeated, their property is looted, its innocent people are massacred and their temples are the targets of Muslim bestiality. This victimization is emphasised by the focus on the destruction of Hindu temples: “They demolished thousands of Hindu Temples including the four at important sacred places, viz., Somnath, Ayodhya, Mathura and Kashi – and tried to build Mosque-like structures on most of them” (Legend of Ayodhya, vhp.org). It is also at this point where Ayodhya becomes important: “Muslim rulers had destroyed Shriram Mandir, Treta Ka Thakur Mandir and Swarga-Dwar Mandir in Ayodhya. The latter two temples were forgotten by Hindu society and Ramanand Sampradaya. But Hindu Samaj could not forget the fact of destruction of Shri Ram Janmabhumi Temple” (Shriram Janmabhumi Mukti Andolan, vhp.org). Those mosques, allegedly built on the ruins of destroyed Hindu temples, are ‘signifying of the violence done by Muslims to the

Hindu body' (Brass 2011: 37). In the white paper the BJP released after they disagreed about what was stated in the government white paper on Ayodhya they say that the mosque in 1934 was repaired on orders of the British government and that the costs were covered by imposing a punitive fine on Hindus (white paper BJP). Again, this shows the victimized position the Hindu-nationalists allocate to the Hindu.

2.3 Significance of Ayodhya as a 'Hot Place'

The history of Ram Janmabhoomi, the place that Hindu's proclaimed to be the birthplace of Rama, is an important Hindu narrative. However, interpretations and worship for Ram are not uniform in all sections of Hindu community. Amartya Sen points out that in certain parts of the country Rama is identified with divinity, but in others he is merely seen as a good king in a influential epic (1993:8). The deity of Ram has never been accepted as a symbol of Indian-nationalism in the struggle for independence, what shows us that his importance was not that universal amongst Hindus (Liberhan report 2009: 216). However, the BJP states: "Shri Ram lies at the core of Indian consciousness" (BJP manifesto 1998), and ascribes it a central place in the Hindu religion.

The Ram Lila processions in celebration of the God Ram which occur every year in most Hindu communities in the north of India have often led to violence between Hindus and Muslims and have deliberately been used to provoke the Muslim people. To mobilize groups for nationalist purposes, religious processions and celebrations have often been taken over by political leaders, first to fight against British rule, later to provoke Muslims (Brass 2011: 365). Now the God Ram has been turned into the logo of the RSS and Ram processions are turned into provocative displays. Of course the Rath Yatra of Advani of the BJP is the ultimate example. On 25 September 1990, BJP President, Lal Krishna Advani, embarked on his Rath Yatra from Somnath to Ayodhya, a journey of 10,000km, to mobilize support for the construction of the Ram Janaambhoomi Temple. Advani travelled in a mini-bus with the appearance of a chariot, decorated with flowers. On his journey Advani gathered a massive following of Hindus and left a trail of rioting by in the cities through which he passed.

When political mobilization is focussed on religious symbols this will contribute to the strengthening of the movements (Brass 2011: 34). It was only in the late 1980's that the BJP and L.K. Advani brought the Ran Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid issue to national politics. The right-wing Hindu organisation VHP started with 'Ramshila Pujan' processions, for the purpose of which bricks were carried to Ayodhya for the construction of a temple on the site of the Babri Mosque. Everywhere in the country these processions were followed by riots (Brass 2011:26). The BJP saw possibilities for political mobilization and joined the bandwagon by passing a resolution at Palampur in 1989, to support the

movement for the construction of a Hindu Temple at the disputed site. Together with the VHP they started organizing large protests in Ayodhya and around the country. It was admitted that the important leaders were already supporting the claim and other programmes associated with the construction of the temple. The VHP was the frontal organization and the face of the movement. All the supporters of the construction of the temple at the disputed site collectively came to be known as the Sangh Parivar (Liberhan 2009: 78).

The BJP, and Advani in particular, played the role of a 'conversion specialist'; turning a local incident or issue affecting the two communities into a riot by inciting a crowd and giving orders to let loose the trained Kar Sevaks (Brass 211:33). While it is clear that the Ayodhya issue only gained attention in ... The BJP claims that Hindus have been trying to reacquire access to the site and to reconstruct a Hindu temple for a long period. They present the Ramajanmabhoomi Movement that was set up in 1986 as a 'continuum of unbroken activism for centuries' (BJP White Paper, 1993).

It was no coincidence that Advani started his Rath in Somnath. Somnath is a holy site for Hindus, the temple built in Somnath, dedicated to the God Shiva, has also been destroyed by Muslim invaders, but has since been restored after the partition. On Advani's website this choice is substantiated by appointing Somnath, the first chapter and the liberation of Ram Janmabhumi, the second chapter in the journey to, "preserve the old symbols of unity, communal amity and cultural oneness". By implicitly comparing these situations, Advani argued that the Ayodhya temple should also be rebuilt. Of course, the difference was that the temple of Somnath was ruined, and should not be built on the site of an already existing mosque.

On October 23 1990 Advani was arrested on the command of Lalu Prasad Yadav, Chief Minister of Bihar. Anxious that the Hindu sentiments aroused by Advani's Rath would cause large-scale violence heavy security was enforced to keep Karsevaks from arriving on the 30th the day that Karseva, construction of the temple, was planned. The mosque was not destroyed, but still damaged by the people who did manage to enter the site, while the police tried to fight the crowd.

In November 1990, a new government was installed, led by Chandra Shekhar Singh who tried to solve the Ayodhya dispute by initiating discussions between Hindu and Muslim representatives. However, in March 1991, the Congress withdrew its support, new elections were announced and were won by the Congress led by P.V. Narasimha Rao. In this election the BJP won its first state poll in Uttar Pradesh, this enabled them to have power in the state of Ayodhya and gave the party a huge influence over what would happen in this state. It did not take long before the state government acquired the area in front of the Babri Masjid, so that it could be used for Hindu religious ceremonies.

"The BJP said that a Shri Ram Temple should be built at Ayodhya by 'relocating' the disputed mosque to redeem the national honour and undo the

hurt caused to the Hindu psyche by “vandalism of history” (The Daily, 12 November 1991). The mosque in Ayodhya was turned into a symbol of the victimization of the Hindu majority and the threat that was posed by the Muslim population. The VHP states that “Virtually the history of Ayodhya has been the history of Bharat” (Shriram Janmabhumi Mukti Andolan, vhp.org). Also the BJP itself acknowledges that the Ayodhya movement was not just a plea for a temple on the site of the Babri Masjid, but that it became the symbol for something bigger. The BJP state that this reflected the quest for recapturing the national identity (BJP white paper 1993). The president of the Ram Janambhoomi, Mukti Yagna Samaj, once said at a gathering of the VHP that ‘after Independence, the Hindus should feel free’, implying that they were not free, at that time. He also said that ‘if symbols of dependence were removed, Hindu-Muslim unity would increase’ (cited in Verghese 2010:372). In these statements the existence of the Babri Masjid is presented as a ‘burden of historical guilt’ on all Indian Muslims, for the acts of Mughal emperors 500 years ago. This issue is thus not only seen in terms of religious sentiment, but also linked to national honour. “When the BJP struggles for the construction of a Rama Temple in Ayodhya, it is with a view to strengthening these cultural foundations, the ultimate aim being to raise a magnificent Rashtra Mandir of Bharat Mata” (Speech Advani, National Council, 1995). The BJP sees the construction of a temple in Ayodhya in the context of its struggle for a Hindu nation, and thus this religious issue is turned into a political issue.

Volkan uses the term ‘hot place’ to describe a physical location that induces feelings of ‘sadness, rage, and victimizations, a desire for revenge, and other emotions associated with complicated grief or mourning’ among the members of an ethnic or other large group (2006:137). The Babri mosque in Ayodhya, clearly became such a spot invoking the chosen trauma of Islamic aggression. And when a chosen trauma is being reactivated, it can inflame conflict (Volkan 2006:155). The VHP stated that they did not seek restoration of the 3700 other Hindu shrines that were changed into mosques, but only the three most significant ones. In the eyes of Hindu-nationalists these mosques had no religious significance, but were only symbols of victory for the Muslims, and therefore symbols of humiliation and shame for Hindus: “On the other hand, the structure which Mir Baqi put up on the orders of Babur never had any special significance from a religious point of view. It was purely and simply a symbol not of devotion and of religion but of conquest. Correspondingly, quite apart from its being an obstacle, preventing Hindus from worshipping the birthplace of their idol, Sri Rama, it was for the country the symbol of its subjugation” (BJP white paper, 1993).

Conclusion

Indian history is interpreted in a particular way, focusing on religion and religious conflict, to show the ancientness of the Hindu nation and to show the Muslim as an outsider and an enemy. By doing so a collective memory is created that underpins the collective identity and provides a legitimation and justification. Islam is portrayed as a foreign force, and therefore the Babri Masjid is labeled as a remnant of foreign domination. Sharing this history as a chosen trauma is further enhancing the consolidation of the Hindu collective, and the Ayodhya dispute becomes a symbol for Hindu victimization. As long as the mosque will be there on that spot the Hindu nation cannot be truly free. The Muslim is thus not only created as for the construction of the collective Hindu identity, but is also presented as a treat to the security of this Hindu Self. By identifying the cause of problems the solution is already given; the Muslims need to be controlled and the mosque needs to be destroyed to make room for a Hindu temple.

Chapter 3. Benefits of Collective Violent Action

The Benefits for both Elite and Masses of Consolidating the Community

Judge Liberhan (2009:18) quotes Robert H. Bork in his report on Ayodhya: *“Nothing matters beyond political desirable results, however achieved.”* People are prepared to resort to violent means when this will benefit their political cause.. Political parties, in a democracy, act with certain goals in mind; they require votes to enable them to have power. When these political parties resort to violence it is with this goal in mind. But what made all those thousands of ordinary people join in their movement as Kar Sevaks? To research these issues the following question will be answered: *What are the aimed political benefits of the identity politics and its resulting violence as played out by the BJP and how do they correspond to the interests of their followers?* To answer this question the benefits for both the ‘organising elites’ as well as the ‘joining masses’ are analysed in this last chapter.

3.1 Deliberate Intention of Violence

A political party like the BJP would only choose to play a role in orchestrating and organising violent events if this contributed to their cause. Not to say they were the only group responsible, but it makes sense to assume that the choice to actively join in the Ram Janamboomi Movement was the result of rational calculus. As several first-hand sources show us the events were planned months in advance. Judge Liberhan found that while the top leaders might not have approved of the demolition, their arguments about their innocence still remain suspect (Liberhan report 2009:20). Former Intelligence Bureau Joint Director, Maloy Krishna Dhar (2005), revealed in detail that the blue print for destruction of the mosque was drawn during a meeting, held ten months earlier in February 1992, by the top leaders of several extreme Hindu-nationalist Groups. While the BJP often denies that the actual destruction of the mosque was not their aim, Vajpayee told the masses in a speech the day before that before they could start the ceremony they needed to prepare the site: *“There were sharp stones that came out, no one can sit there (cheers from the crowd), the ground has to be leveled (cheers again), it has to be made fit for sitting”* (Outlook India, 7 December 2009). The remark that ‘the ground has to be leveled,’ is of course a clear reference to breaking down the mosque.

Another clear indicator that the violence was intended was the refusal of the Hindu-nationalists to come to a compromise with the Muslims. While some people of the Babri Mosque offered the option to share the site with a Ram Mandir, the VHP kept insisting on building the temple exactly on the spot of the Masjid, because it was believed to mark the precise site of Ram’s birth. After the demolition of the Mosque, Advani often said he regretted what happened, but

when he held a speech at the Foundation Day celebration in New Delhi 20 years after the destruction of the Mosque, Advani said: "I believe if you say the right thing, the world will accept it. Don't hesitate... don't develop an inferiority complex. If we believe in Ayodhya and carried out an 'andolan' for it, don't be apologetic about it... never... we should take pride in it" (Times of India, 6 April 2013).

3.2 Electoral Benefits for the Elite

Brass (2011:6-7) argues that the riots in India led to concrete benefits for particular political organisations like the BJP as well as had greater political uses. Opposition and tension between Hindus and Muslims provides justification and strength for those organisations that are linked to the RSS. The consolidation of Hindu-nationalist sentiment brought the BJP to the centre of power and also caused a visible shift to the right in Indian politics as whole. Anand (2005:205) argues that Hindutva gained respectability and influence through participation in the government and accessing of the resources of the state. People who were portrayed as 'firebrand ideologues' are now respectable government members. Politicians sometimes exploit minor disputes and sometimes political movements themselves are the cause of violence, as was the case in the Ayodhya dispute (Engineer in Brass 2011:26).

Also the BJP openly admitted that they thought they would profit from the construction of a Ram temple. Chief Minister Kalyan Singh of Uttar Pradesh claimed that "the temple will be made before we reach the centre. But within two or three days of the construction we will be in Delhi" (The Independent, 9 november 1991). Advani said: "People say that BJP and Bharatiya Jana Sangh achieved this position by raising issues like Ayodhya and Ram temple. I feel proud in admitting this and say that ours is not just a political movement but also a cultural movement" (Zeenews, 5 April 2013). Nanaji Deshmukh, one of the founding members of Bharatiya Jana Sangh, said in an interview with Times of India, October 6, 1999: "Mr. L.K.Advani's 'Rath Yatra' before demolition of 'Babri Mosque' was undertaken only with an eye on power". He continued: "Lord Ram was not interested in power but the BJP had been exploiting his name to stay in power."

While other organisations of the RSS where stronger in their anti-Muslim sentiments, the BJP played a more moderate role. They quite often stated that they wanted to include other religions in their nation: "This rich tradition comprises not only the Vedas and Upanishads, Jainagamas and Tripitaka, Puranas and Guru Granth Sahib, the Dohas of Kabir, the various social reform movements, saints and seers, warriors and writers, sculptors and artists, but also the Indian traditions of the Muslims, Christians and Parsis" (BJP manifesto 1998). With this more moderate face they were able to attract Hindu's that weren't as radical as well. Of course, the destruction of the Mosque and

especially the following violence were illegitimate acts, thus the BJP denies playing a role in organising those. Justice M.S. Liberhan termed Vajpayee and Advani as pseudo-moderates, pretending to keep a distance from the Ram Janmabhoomi campaign when they were actually aware of the whole conspiracy. This reasonable face was thus more of an image they played out than reality.

3.3 Consolidating the Community by Violent Means

Ethnic violence is provoked by elite groups in order to gain, maintain, or increase their political power. Amartya Sen (2006: xvi) foregrounds how “the illusion of a unique and choiseless identity” and a “fostered sense of identity with one group of people” are used by communitarians as powerful tools to promote interreligious hatred and violence. Brass (2011: 367-368) argues that large-scale communal riots are often staged events, with the effect, or even the deliberate intention, to produce group solidarity that will lead to intensified political competition and electoral advantages. Violence is used to construct group identities in more antagonistic and rigid ways (Fearon and Laitin 2000:846). Violence functions as a means to reproduce and consolidate the group identity, to reinforce group boundaries and to change perceptions of reality in favour of their cause: political gain.

Support for the group will be strengthened by a need for solidarity facing a threatening rival group. The riots are a device to create the sense of being under threat (Brass 2011:30). When one suffers on account of being a member of a community, identification with that community becomes stronger, whether that suffering is real or perceived. Hindu-Muslim riots are a product of actions that are designed to consolidate a community into a cohesive political block. Therefore they often precede elections and can be directly linked to political competition. The riots that are caused by mobilization around religious symbols contribute to the strengthening of the movement and solidification of communal solidarity that will influence the elections (Brass 2011: 33-34).

The demolition of the mosque and the following violence are not only the result of Hindu-nationalist discourse but are part of the process of framing itself. Based on a social constructionist position Anand (2005: 205) argues that the riots in India are not a product of communalism, but exercises in the construction of communities “through mobilization (of the ‘Self’), purification (erasure of commonalities) and definition (through violence of what is the Self and what is the Other).” It is another practice that is enforcing rigid boundaries between the two groups.

3.4 Providing a Sense of Security to the Hindu Community

The interests of the elite, political gains, do therefore not necessarily conflict with the interests of the normal people following. Fearon and Laitin (2000: 846)

point to the possibility that 'followers' do not just follow, but are pursuing their own local or personal agendas. Of course individuals join movements for all sorts of reasons, but those reasons do not necessarily need to be the same as the aims of the leaders. However, the opportunity of riots for individuals to loot, rape or take vengeance might explain why some people are eager to join, but does not yet explain how this violence happens (Brass 2011: 368). Basu (1996: 58) also adds that the BJP gave voice to frustration of people about the state and the Congress Party.

The group solidarity that is produced by riots, often indented as it intensifies political competition, is corresponding to the needs of the following masses. Violence is a way to mark the boundaries of the community and therefore ensures the position of the otherwise marginalized within the group, so this is not only in the interest of the elite (Fearon and Laitin 2000). History is reframed in a way that the lower class Hindus are included in the group identity, what benefits their position. Kinnvall adds that the emotional aspects of belonging and the need for identification and community building are often overlooked (2002: 81). The identity processes that have been stimulated by the political elite served more than instrumental purposes in their own interest. While the political interests of the BJP might not have always corresponded with those of the common Hindus who actually did the dirty work, the processes they where initiating where also beneficial to the masses. The reason religious-nationalist discourse is so successful, is because its components, religion and nationalism, earlier mentioned as 'identity-signifiers', both reaffirm a threatened self-identity. The collective identity offered by the Hindu-nationalist movement provides them with security in times of rapid social change (Kinnvall 2004: 742).

Conclusion

It is clear that the Hindu-nationalist movement deliberately instigated the Ayodhya issue to rally Hindus around the Hindu-nationalist cause. When BJP leaders saw the potential of the Ramjanbhoomi movement for mobilization they joint the bandwagon as a means to create an electoral support base. The demolition of the Babri Masjid, and even the following violence, were not the end in itself, but a means for winning followers. As a right-wing political party the ideas of the BJP do not necessarily always accord with the interests of the poor, but they wouldn't be able to mobilize the masses when their message did not correspond to the sentiments and needs of those people. However, the need for community building is strongly present within those lower classes, as the marking of group boundaries affirms they belong to the group. Belonging to a group provides a sense of security people long for in times of uncertainty and threat, whether real or perceived. Thus, the interests of the ordinary people that the Hindu-nationalist movement touches with its mobilization processes might not only be from a economical perspective, but also have emotional aspects.

Conclusion

Ayodhya became the absolute symbol in the struggle for a Hindu state, a hot spot, which could arouse thousands of people not only to break down the mosque, but also riot and kill. Not due to historical hatreds between two 'naturally hostile' religions, but because of the deliberate organisation of the Hindu-nationalist movement. The research question of this thesis was stated as the following: *How could the BJP and affiliated Sangh Parivar organisations successfully mobilise the mobs that caused the demolition of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya by making use of Hindu nationalist discourse, while this mainly served the political interests of BJP-elite?* For their own political gain, political figures from the elite of the Hindu nationalist movement in India not only exploited, but also actively and purposefully constructed a collective identity, and instrumentalised a specific Hindu-nationalist discourse to create a rationale to mobilize their followers for action.

By connecting religion to nationalism using the Hindutva ideology existing internal cleavages are overcome. The category of the Muslim is presented as the Other, alien and outside to the Hindu nation, and therefore defining the boundaries of the Hindu collective. This particular image of the Muslim is specifically presented in historical narratives, in which the Hindu nation is framed as an ancient civilization and Islamic rulers portrayed as a foreign force attacking the Hindu nation. The Babri Masjid therefore symbolizes this oppression that can only be undone by building the Ram Mandir on the exact same spot. This framing provides both justification and legitimation to the Hindu-nationalist cause, and further entrenches the Hindu identity.

On the one hand those identity formation processes formed the steps necessary for the Hindu-nationalist movement for mobilization to gain support, what the BJP hoped would result in electoral wins. On the other hand they resulted in marked and defined group boundaries, providing a sense of solidarity and security to the following masses. On first sight the interests of the BJP elite and their followers don't seem to correspond, but they both profit from the consolidation of the Hindu identity.

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