

Golwalkar and Hindu Rashtra: A Veracious Idea or A Malevolent Agenda?

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ABSTRACT

The character of Golwalkar is still shrouded in deep controversies as it is constantly being portrayed one way or another in political or historical discussions. While many argue that his ideological roots always stayed in touch with true findings through a proper assessment and the myth of Golwalkar being a mere Hindu propagandist in both social and political fields, emerged as a result of the misinterpretations of his teachings or limiting it to one particular ideological or racial connotation by a group of people, others point out the unilateral approach and lack of diversity which in turn converted him into a belligerent hardliner who developed a pugnacious feeling towards anything other than Hindutva? Is Golwalkar's idea of Hindu Rashtra an enlightened nationalism which was grossly misjudged and thus created a myth of his vilified character based on vague generalisation? Or is it a circumscribed theory, clung to racial supremacy and therefore truly reflects his intentions? The aforementioned doubts led to numerous portrayals of the leader and gave birth of a myriad of interpretations. Whether he was a preacher of true findings or a propagandist built on an apocryphal sense of ideological reintervention, remains a matter of speculation. The queries around him seek answers and this paper puts an effort to present them.

An ideologue and the second "Sarsanghchalak" or chief of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar was a man with many shades and had a distinguished leadership trait. Popularly known as 'Guruji' inside the "Sangh Pariwar", he took control of the former organization after the death of Keshav Baliram Hedgewar and remained in position till his death in 1973. Generally every cult or organisation quintessentially carries forward the legacy of its founder as the foundation itself is deeply embedded within the ideological roots of that person. It is very rare for those who build upon that legacy to exercise the same influence, let alone exceed it. The ideological line that any typical organisation follows always remains on the same pitch with its founding father, creating an ideological hegemony within the organization itself in the process. However, the ideological orientation of Sangh experienced a gradual transition and was heavily impressed by Golwalkar till his demise. He remoulded Sangh's political outlook and furnished with a new Hindutva touch. Though the recent Sanghchalak asserted that RSS has abandoned most of Golwalkar's thoughts and declared that his book "A bunch of Thoughts" cannot be eternally valid" in changing times, the core ideology of an extreme rightist inclination is still intact even today well and truly.¹ It was also profoundly claimed by the recent chief that Sangh is not a "dogmatized organisation" and follows the policy of flexibility in adapting itself in different atmospheres, as opined by their founder Dr. Hedgewar.² But Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh has never been a typical organisation like any other frontline

political party in India and in regard to the versatile ideological progress; it certainly stands out from the rest. Instead of having more volatile and flexible orientations, they have quite a reputation for yielding more of a rigid ideology mainly fixed at a singular approach. Needless to say, this ideological proclivity of RSS towards a certain caste engendered massive controversies in Indian political sphere. The ideological difference between Hedgewar and Golwalkar was very much evident from the fact that while the latter was a pragmatic thinker and emphasized on the technological development of the nation, the former was keen to uphold the ancient glorious heritage with an ideological reinvention in this process. Albeit of these ideological imbalances, Sangh did not tear apart into pieces, prevailed as an organisation and kept on rising as a major political entity. Nevertheless, the organisation bears far more emphatic stamps of its successor rather than its founder despite the rejection of Golwalkar's ideas within Sangh. One of the reasons for this is that the mechanism of Sangh was heavily affected by the vehement ideological driving by Golwalkar who reshaped the establishment and provided an identity for it. During its initial days, Sangh was a mere local fraction; primarily functioned as a pressure group. It had a very limited territorial extent to wield its influence, mainly confined within Maharashtra's Vidarbha area. Moreover the assassination of Gandhi by one of Sangh members Nathuram Godse served as an identity crisis as a significant amount of antipathy emerged within the popular masses and led Sangh to fade away into obscurity. In addition to this, it was also blamed for playing an incendiary role in the partition violence. These charges were enough to undermine and denigrate Sangh's claim of reinstalling ancient Indian heritage and tarnish the image as a glorified ideological institution as people began to see their callings as apocryphal and dubious. Notwithstanding all the turbulences that RSS had to undergo, it didn't crumble under pressure rather it was believed that the association went through a new philosophical bathing under Golwalkar's

¹ "RSS has discarded chunks of Golwalkar's thoughts: Mohan Bhagwat". Times of India, 20 September, 2018. Retrieved 18 December, 2018. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/rss-has-discarded-chunks-of-golwalkars-thoughts-mohan-bhagwat/articleshow/65879084.cms>

² Ibid.

leadership. Though he was unable to establish Sangh as a legitimate political organisation for its past records, a number of foresighted policies and ideological vestiges of so-called 'Guruji', gradually turned this socio-political institution into a kingpin in Indian politics. Golwalkar formally instructed the organisation to have laid out its written constitution. It also began to expand beyond its local branches and evolved into a "front organisation" like "Jana Sangh" in politics, "Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad" as a student wing, "Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh" among working class and "Vishva Hindu Parishad" in religious matter. In a way, the organisation emerged even stronger from the turmoil and established its roots in Indian political dimension. The ideological settings of Sangh, laid out by Golwalkar himself, encountered political modulation and therefore went on to work in a politico-ideological framework.

However this journey wasn't a walk in the park from Golwalkar's part as his tenure was laden with innumerable controversies. Sangh witnessed many tumultuous affairs under his leadership due to a number of vexed decision makings. His pristine ideological approach and Hindu persuasion generated much heat in Indian political scenario and still remains a major subject of conjecture between political theorists. Therefore the question remains, is it because of his extremist philosophy or an idea of creating a structure based on self sufficient population? A group of his ardent admirers believe that numerous portrayals of Golwalkar emerged as a political necessity to gain political favouritism. He is certainly not a widely celebrated figure as many of his oppositions object his ideas for having an extreme and at times trivial nationalistic approach which had the potential to be combustible in a secular country. But with that being said, does India really have a pragmatic secular approach? Or this mere portrayal is a dissonance in a state of chaos and cacophony? India is a constitutionally secular country but in an actual day to day scenario, the diversified unity is vastly missing and it certainly establishes the fact that any particular ideological stand can be detrimental for an already palpable maligned relation among different religions and castes. Hence this philosophy of Hindu Rashtra created quite dejection and is subjected to wide contestations in many occasions. The idea gained divided opinions but mostly seen by many as an aggressive scheme based on racial superiority and manifests a complete ignorance towards minority by gainsaying the effects of a despicable caste system, deeply entrenched in our daily lives. The opposition parties such as congress and the communists regard him as an extremist and compare his ideas to Hitler's racial supremacy theory. While oppositions abominate his philosophies as bunch mere obscurities in an age of enlightened democracy, his followers believe that an analytical study will throw ample amount of light on his doctrines and reveal the true connotation behind the Hindu Rashtra theory. They proclaim that the theory does not contain an aggressive nationalistic approach but is rather proved to be an enlightened one. They also expostulate any racial tone denoted to his ideology and maintain that it is replenished with a "genuine and unvarnished religious assessment"; henceforth making it a 'Dharmocracy' rather than a 'Theocracy'. It's an ideology, mainly emphasizes on dharma-centricity of Indian cultural

ethos.³ It was an effort to regain the lost Indian cultural heritage which was so rich and diversified in many respects. As mentioned, Golwalkar nourished his thoughts on a more intellectual level unlike the pragmatic side of Hedgewar. He emphasised on Indian idealism over western materialism. The latter wanted to educate the mass with a philosophical understanding of society, culture, state and nation. According to him, State has politics and is administered by it on a daily basis but nation has no such obligation. State, therefore is a political unit against nation being a socio-cultural one. In many ways, the state and nation have to have a natural agreement in which communities live in an organised way. Golwalkar urged to go deep at the roots of the philosophical understanding of a nation's socio-cultural phenomenon, relying heavily on its ancient basis. He was keen on developing a very strong nation state but at the same time wanted to stay away from political power. In regard to Hinduism, Golwalkar talked about the reestablishment of the ancient Hindu society. This certainly seems to be a narrow perspective and is burdened with many limitations in a secular country like India. But his admirers claim that he didn't notice Hindu as a singular unit but an amalgamation of different culture, custom, belief and ethos to form a unified national identity. There is no speculation that he intended the establishment of a Hindu Rashtra within India's territorial extents. According to many rightists, it is quite unlikely that he approached a Hindu dominated Rashtra with other races and minorities being completely out-listed and disregarded. He was in a mission to reinvent the glorified ancient Hindu culture, their philosophy, mentality and moral ethos. But in pursuit of doing that, he was not against the annihilation of existing cultures and their prolonged heritage. He wanted India to be a big cosmopolitan ground with different elements living in a standard and harmonic procedure. 'Indian Council of Philosophical Research' (ICPR) defended Golwalkar's idea of Hindu Rashtra in a seminar called, "The concept of nation and nationalism in the thought of M S Golwalkar". ICPR cited the term Hindu Rashtra is taken in narrow sense to minimize broader perspective behind it. It was also cited on the seminar that Hinduism is not a mere philosophy, cult or creed but a mode of thinking and a way of living. Therefore Hinduism should not be adopted but embraced because it goes with one's thinking and living.⁴ Though the concept of nation and nationalism was debated fiercely and is unfortunately understood narrowly in terms of western perspective, in India, "these concepts do not have

³ "The concept of Nation and Nationalism in the thoughts of Shri M.S. Golwalkar". (A note forwarded by ICPR member secretary). <http://icpr.in/M.S.Golwalkar.pdf>....."Golwalkar's conception can be regarded as enlightened nationalism when he talks of "Hindu Rashtra". It is not theocracy. Rather it can be branded as Dharmocracy. He emphasizes the Dharma-centricity of Indian cultural ethos. Dharma is a very comprehensive concept enriched by several ideas and ideals, customs, traditions and practices which are beneficial to individual, society and world at large."

⁴"The Concept of Nation and Nationalism in the thoughts of Shri M.S.Golwalkar". <http://icpr.in/M.S.Golwalkar.pdf>..... "Shri Golwalkar was pained to find how the concept of Hindu Rashtra was misconstrued and maligned. He was destroyed to see how our glorious heritage is distorted by our own people".....He therefore tried to rectify the situation.....He insisted that every citizen of Hindustan is a Hindu and Hinduism is a way of life"

territorial confinements and narrow sectarian circumscription”, they have cultural overtone as well”.⁵ This seminar, backed by government body although receives backlashes from certain oppositions for providing spurious and delusional arguments. ICPR on the other hand put emphasis on the needs of discussing Golwalkar in order to understand him in modern context and clear the misconceptions around him. They found their supports for organizing such seminars in many academics also. Prasanjit Biswas, a faculty from North Eastern Hill University found nothing wrong with the organisation of the seminar. He said, “There is an ideological block that has come to power. They want to bring their ideology to public discussion. Politically Golwalkar’s ideology may be about Hindu rights. But it has strong philosophical reasoning, making it a critical discussion”.⁶ Critics though questioned the very reasoning in his philosophies and the true intention to discuss them critically rather than providing a handful of praises. In this context it should also be worth mentioning that the contrast of ideas being East and West led to different sets of opinions. West being the self bona fide superior, often brands our culture as derogatory, disparaging, communalist and stagnant. East, in pursuit of becoming just like west, follows their culture, custom and creed in a ruthless fashion. Golwalkar argument lies in this blind imitation of west. He urged to uphold our own culture and make it work in a beneficial way. But the method that he preached the nation to embrace, derived from a complete ignorance towards non-Hindus, given that Indian culture is not a Vedic or Hindu culture alone rather a blend of different unique elements drawn from multiple cultures and religions. Consequently Golwalkar established himself as a figure who was against history as evident from a number of his views. William Dalrymple reflected Golwalkar’s desertion from certain conventional historical thoughts such as Indo-Aryan migration.⁷ Several scholars presented their own perspectives on the theory to prove the notion of Aryans being the foreign elements who assimilated into Indian culture in due time. Max Muller’s theory of Aryans migrating from Central Asia to India is widely acknowledged and accepted in historical studies. Golwalkar however believed that the Aryan ancestors of the Hindus were indigenous to India as opposed to Indian Muslims who observed Mecca as their centre of faith and invaded India for personal gains. He believed that Hindus being the originals and true Indians have the responsibilities to preserve the ancient Indian heritage and educate the mass in accordance to their ideological lines.

So, the preservation of ancient customs as advocated by Golwalkar necessitates the urgency of addressing the issue of caste system and his eagerness to maintain it with certain modifications. He was bombarded with severe condemnations due to his ideological limitation. Many of his oppositions call

⁵Ibid.

⁶ “Push to idolise Modi’s mentor Golwalkar” The Telegraph. May 7, 2017. Retrieved December 18, 2018. <https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/push-to-idolise-modi-mentor-golwalkar/cid/1520838>

⁷ William, Dalrymple (2005). *India: The War over History*. New York Review of Books. (The phrase was retrieved from M. S. Golwalkar’s *We or, Our Nationhood Defined* (1939). Bharat Publications).

him a regressive agent who wanted to work out his personal agendas in a broader level. But this theory was also contested on certain grounds too by copious amounts of his believers. Preservation of caste system is not a philosophy of RSS at least if the statement of the recent Sarsanghchhalak is taken into account. Mohan Bhagwat claimed that everyone in India is free to practice his or her religion of choice and to the dismay of some members; he also welcomed the idea of building a country without caste system and religious biases.⁸ V. D. Savarkar, although not directly linked with RSS but widely regarded as a father figure for Hindu revivalism, projected his extreme contempt against caste system and wanted a complete annihilation of this social bondage. The founder Hedgewar or his immediate successor Golwalkar, however wanted caste system to remain intact in its position. Golwalkar particularly did not see it in an oppressive way. He rather perceived caste system as an “employment scheme” without state intervention especially for the traditional lower caste population due to its functional specialization. But he, at the same time was keen to abolish the rigidity and master slave relation within this system. He longed for a caste structure without domination and sought to enforce it for the overall betterment of the entire population irrespective of class, race and gender. It is also believed by his acolytes that in spite of his advocacy for the preservation of caste system, he ought to eradicate the rigidity and squash the staunch domination of certain upper castes from it. However, a very little he did to erase the aforementioned social evils. Efforts speak better than the words and unfortunately his practical measurements were minimal as this very system is deeply ensconced in societal roots even today. Any independent reader with a neutral standpoint cannot come to terms with the redundant approach of this theory. Humanistic notions defy the essentiality of caste system in any and all circumstances. Amelioration of lower-class people can also be accomplished by the abolition of this divisional ancient custom. The primary condition to cut short economic and social inequalities should be directed at putting this very system at rest. Every individual is born to be free and it is this abominable tradition that obstructs the simple philosophy of individual emancipation in all possible respects. Historian Ramachandra Guha argued that Golwalkar wanted caste system to remain in its place because it kept Hindus united and organised down the centuries.⁹ Thus caste system will prove to be a unifying force and a subsequent Hindu awakening as a way of life. Guha Pointed out Golwalkar’s objective of a state, guided by Hindus (be it a culture or a way of life) is a utopian idea given that “ancient rhetorical and grandiloquent affairs are not applicable in today’s broken state”. “While Golwalkar urged the revival of Hindu Rashtra as a weapon against the fallen principles and damaged ideas, it

⁸ “Mohan Bhagwat’s views on removing caste and religion from politics are welcomed”. Hindustan Times. January 28, 2018. Retrieved December 18, 2018. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/editorials/mohan-bhagwat-s-views-on-removing-caste-and-religion-from-politics-are-welcome/story-dsEgDW67rKnpP6PAqdiNMJ.html>

⁹ “A Question of Sources, The unholy holy of the RSS by politics and play”. The Telegraph. September 17, 2016. Retrieved October 18, 2018. <https://www.telegraphindia.com/opinion/a-question-of-sources/cid/1453219>

rather acted as the source of fallen principles and damaged ideas for the continuously deteriorating state”,¹⁰ Guha argued.

One of the most fascinating aspects of Golwalkar’s idea of Hindu Rashtra is the debate of whether or not it is related to racial supremacy and ethnic cleansing? His call for a Hindu Rashtra and his subsequent support of caste system is believed to have derived from a personal agenda which was related to racial supremacy and minority domination. He dreamt of a delusional and misguided mechanism in reinventing ancient cultural heritage through a ‘reformed’ caste system without even realising for once that this system is the root cause for social inequality and the practice of untouchability. Caste discrimination still remains as the sole repository of certain percentage of higher caste population in our country and they don’t want to disrupt the social equilibrium which has long been in practice since later Vedic period. This technique of domination and submission strained India’s credibility as a secular state too. Recent far-right activities might reflect this picture altogether. Minorities are petrified due to the despicable atrocities committed against them accompanied by a simultaneous flow of an intelligible sense of communalism and dissonance in India these days. The killing of numerous activists is indicating us a future of racial warfare as a terrifying outcome of this ongoing hatred politics. These extreme reactionary conducts rightly justify Golwalkar’s inability to grasp the idea of India as a heterogeneous state. Former RSS chief openly advocated his strong penchant towards India being a more Hindu state than anything else. However his supporting fractions believe that he viewed Hindu ideology as a ‘way of life’ not as a supreme class and this proves the idea of racial supremacy kind of fragile in this context. Member of Parliament from Rajya Sabha and Delhi University’s lecturer, Rakesh Sinha commented that Guruji does not use the term Hindu as a classical religious context; He cited Bipin Chandra Pal’s view that Hindu culture is the very soul and essence of what we now understand as nationalism.¹¹ He also commented that Hindu Rashtra is analogous to other Semitic state because of their religious bigotry and other perceived misconceptions and those who claim that Golwalkar was heavily influenced by Hitler’s racial ideology, Sinha argued, should know that he strongly depreciated German race spirit as destructive.¹² He also explained Guruji’s view on non communal state and the

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Sinha, Rakesh (2014), *Shri Guruji and Indian Muslim*, Chapter four- “RSS and Islam”.”Guruji does not use the term Hindu as a classical religious concept. His idea is similar to B. C. Pal who points out that Hindu culture is the very soul and essence of what we now understand as nationalism. He too does not equate ‘Hinduism’ with a religious concept. It is a mistaken idea that ‘Hinduism’ is parallel to Islam. Heinrich Von Stietencron rightly says, ‘why is Hinduism so difficult to define? It’s because we always try to see it as one religion. Our problem would vanish if we took Hinduism to denote socio-cultural unit or civilisation which contains a plurality of distinctive religion”.

¹² Ibid. Chapter four- “RSS and Islam”.....Sinha Quoted M S Golwalkar himself in chapter four of his book, “Hindu Rashtra will imperil the existence of other religious groups arises by applying Semitic yardstick to it and imagining that the concept of Hindu Rashtra is analogous to that of the Semitic state notorious for their bigotry and persecutions”.

idea of Hindutva as the ground for everyone and everything.¹³ But Rohan Oberoi’s remarks about Golwalkar however contested aforesaid claims. Oberoi wrote that Golwalkar was heavily inspired by German atrocities committed against Jews and called it a “good lesson for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by”.¹⁴ He went on saying that former RSS chief was only sympathetic about the indigenous population of the country and advocated only two courses for foreign elements. “Either to merge them in the national race and adopt its culture or to live at its mercy so long as the national race may allow them to do so and quit the country at the sweet will of the national race”.¹⁵ Oberoi basically quoted what the ideologue himself wrote in his book entitled, ‘We, or Our Nationhood Defined’. Therefore the place for Hindutva as a common ideological powerhouse for all is widely negated by critics and often seen as an obstruction of peace and transgression of one’s privacy. Rohan Oberoi further said that Golwalkar’s books (‘Bunch of Thoughts’ and ‘We, or Our Nationhood Defined’ respectively) incite “egregiously racist views”. Oberoi gave several opinions to prove Golwalkar’s limitation towards a flexible approach. He not only espoused hatred towards Muslims, Christians and Sikhs but made derogatory remarks about Chinese for their food habit also. According to Golwalkar, “they eat rats, pigs, dogs, serpents, cockroaches and everything. Such men cannot be expected to have human qualities”.¹⁶ This statement clearly identifies his arrogances for Hinduism which itself was evidently drawn from a fallen and misplaced sense of ancient Hindu revivalism to a large extent. Rakesh Sinha however wrote that Guruji did not believe that Muslims should not be solely blamed from their alienation towards Hindus rather he accused British divide and rule policy which Muslims fell prey to.¹⁷ French political scientist Christophe Jaffrelot cited Golwalkar’s extreme right wing views from the same book ‘We, or Our Nationhood Defined’. According to Jaffrelot in his book, ‘The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India’, former RSS chief showered Hitler with praises for setting an example by purging Semitic races to keep up the purity of its own race and culture.¹⁸ But does this, under any context, provide sanctity to

¹³ Ibid. “Introduction”.....”Sri Guruji represents Hindutva which provides immense space and opportunity for sub identities, sub cultures, languages, personal laws, cult and philosophies to endure and flourish provided that the people accede that cultural interactions, assimilation, reconstruction, reforms and critical interpretations of traditions and rituals as necessary tools for human evolution and preserving civilisational – cultural identity of the nation”.

¹⁴ “Welcome to BJP (Bharatiya Janata Pustakalaya)”. Outlook India. May 23, 2001. Retrieved December 18, 2018. <https://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/welcome-to-the-bjp-bharatiya-janata-pustakalaya/211728>

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Sinha, Rakesh (2014). *Sri Guruji and Indian Muslims*. Chapter four: “RSS and Islam”.”The process of their integration with the national life, which was in vogue, however intermittently, says Guruji was disrupted by British colonialism by applying divide and rule”.

¹⁸ Jaffrelot, Christophe (1996). *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*. Columbia University Press. p.55.

any sort of genocidal activities? Though Golwalkar's philosophies were extremely hostile towards minorities and present a narrow sectarian outlook, he never openly advocated any violent method to achieve his goals. Jaffrelot also wrote in his book that though Golwalkar vehemently used the word race but his main purpose wasn't intended towards racial homogeneity but cultural unity. He categorised Golwalkar's racism as a form of socio cultural domination rather than achieving racial purity. Jaffrelot also viewed a national language like Sanskrit would act like a medium of the race spirit such as German parallel 'Volksgeist'¹⁹ as proposed by Johann Gottfried Herder. But while his racial theory wasn't a spitting image of Hitler's 'Herrenvolk' principle, it was still mostly in alignment with the idea of a master-slave relation. Moreover, the inflammable racist tones in his thoughts definitely shattered his image as a preacher and recent developments in the country in regard to communal violence direct us to a phantom fear as well. Historian Ramachandra Guha called him "a guru of hate" who only considered India as the sole land of Hindus and viewed Parsis and Jews as guests and Muslims and Christians as the dacoits.²⁰ In "We or Our Nationhood Defined", this view can firmly be established. Golwalkar defined Jews as homeless who despite being a prosperous nation were conquered by Romans and a number of them migrated to Hindustan. Later "the engines of the destruction loose under the name of Islam completely destroyed their power and the Jews", in order to save their religion and culture. These Jews fled from their land, making them homeless in the process. "They are a people and name and are not a nation", wrote Golwalkar.²¹ Parsis, on the other hand fell victim to Islamic invasion with its "attendant massacre, devastation, destruction, loot and arson, violation of all sacred places, discretion of religion and culture and forced conversion to the faith of the ready executioner and everything else that even went hand in hand with the spread of Islam".²² They eventually "took nation with generous Hindus but they themselves are no nation because they have no country". Guha also inculpated Golwalkar for placing himself against the ideals of democracy given the fact that it gives too much freedom to the individual. Excessive freedom of individual concurrently works as the most enlightened principle of democracy on one side and as a devastating backlog on the other. Ancient philosophers like Socrates, Aristotle and Plato were not in favour of vesting absolute power in the hands of the masses. Socrates and Aristotle demanded that common people should be educated and enlightened in political knowledge because they being highly impressionable often tend to get trapped into charming but farcical promises and reject critical but resounding ideas. This allows them take decisions hastily and impulsively and as a result, we have so

¹⁹ Ibid. p.57

²⁰ "Guru of Hate." The Times of India. November 26, 2006, updated: March 26, 2012. Retrieved 18 December, 2018. <https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-features/tp-sundaymagazine/the-guru-of-hate/article3232784.ece>

²¹ Golwalkar, M. S. (1939), *We or Our Nationhood Defined*. Bharat Publication. p.61-62. (PDF version)

²² Ibid. p.62-63.

many sweet sellers in politics rather than more clinically accurate doctors. Golwalkar's ideas by no means resonated with Socrates though. Whether be it democracy or not, Socrates believed in a just and sound administration with equal rights for all. Golwalkar however put his faith in one particular religion to carry India's legacy further and overlooked others. Over and above that, he held Indian constitution culpable for being a flawed piece of document, providing a subtle hint that constitution isn't infallible on every account.²³ As far as Golwalkar's observation of Islamic atrocities is reckoned, of course numerous Islamic invasions resulted in massive bloodshed and systematic and ruthless mass slaughter along with the destruction of Hindu religious shrines. Though not denying the barbarity and brutality that many Islamic invaders inflicted upon India, they were mainly directed towards political gains and at times plain and simple loot of wealth. The religious angles of these attacks are mainly downplayed as there were not many evidences. The army of sultan Mahmud of Ghazni which led seventeen expeditions in India was comprised of 50% of Hindus. Even Muhammad of Ghor, who primarily cleared the way for Qutb ud-Din Aibak to establish Delhi sultanate by launching repeated attacks on Chauhans was by no means a religious bigot. This is evidence from his coins which used to bear the stamp of goddess Laxmi on the reverse. However, calling present day Muslims as the invaders and describing them extremely nonchalant about Hindustan by judging them through some historical happenings is outrightly absurd. This ensuing animosity towards certain castes and religions in his ideologies even forced his own organisation to publicly disregard him as the person to be followed in social and religiopolitical matters.

One specific aspect that has been central to Golwalkar ideology is the interpretation of Hindu philosophy as a 'way of life' and a 'mode of thinking' for every single citizen. It is no mystery that Golwalkar urged everyone to embrace Hindu ideology. This generates the question whether this is acceptable to the entire population regardless their identities or a forceful implication of a seemingly impossible task? According to popular references, he was completely opposed to the idea of a secular state and fancied every unique cultural and religious element to get absorbed into Hinduism. This idea of Hindu Rashtra evidently proves to be a narrow communalist outlook in our secular country. Golwalkar though had a different opinion is this communalism versus secularism debate. He commented that the notion of secularism was originated in west and had no relevance in our country. Centuries earlier, when Europe was burdened with pope's oppression, the kings rebelled and toppled the theocratic hegemony of pope over their kingdoms and initiated their own dominance. This helped to surface the idea of the 'secular' states as opposed to the 'theocratic' ones. Now 'theocratic state' has generally meant a religious state intolerant of all other faiths. There has never been a single instance for such a

²³ "A question of Sources, the unholy holy book of RSS" The Telegraph. 17 November, 2016. Retrieved 8 December 2018.....Golwalkar believed that document (Indian Constitution) to be deeply flawed and that it must be rejected or at least redrafted since, "the framers of our present constitution also were not firmly rooted in the conviction of our single homogenous nationhood.

conflict or intolerance in our country either in the past or in the present. He also reflected on the matter of the possible misrepresentation of the definition of secularism. According to him (Bunch of Thoughts), if secularism means “mundane things of life” and “divorced itself from higher and nobler attributes” then it will not be acceptable at any cost. But if secularism means “scope and opportunity for every religious persuasion to grow” and prohibits one particular religion to exercise unbounded influences upon others, then that concept of secularism is whole-heartedly welcomed. This same tolerant spirit was missing in his much controversial piece of work, ‘We’, where he considered the minorities (non-Hindus) as second class citizens. As mentioned previously, Rohan Oberoi has emphasised on this very philosophy of hostility and disrespect towards other races. Just to put into a broader perspective, this is what Golwalkar thought about other races as expressed in his book, ‘We, or Our Nationhood Defined’- “The foreign races of Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu religion, must entertain no idea but those of glorification of Hindu race and culture i.e., of the Hindu nation and must lose their separate existence to merge into Hindu race or may stay in the country wholly subordinate to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing, deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment-not even citizen’s rights. We are old nations, let us deal as old nations ought to and do deal with the races, which have chosen to live in our country”.²⁴ In an interview with The Wire, professor of Political Sciences at University of Hyderabad, Jyotirmaya Sharma who authored his much researched book “Terrifying Vision: M.S. Golwalkar, the RSS and India” commented that “the sooner we abandon this view the better it would be for all of us”. He trades off the same view with Ramachandra Guha in this specific context. Guha also despised Hindutva as a way of life citing that the old philosophical traits do not go with modern way of life. Sharma went on to say that the concept of “way of life” is a vague and delusional idea and it generates the question “whose way of life it is”? “It is certainly not everyone’s way of life. Hence the way of life is only central to the dominant classes who forcefully wield power and implement this idea to other classes also”.²⁵ As far as popular beliefs go, espousing way of life is a matter of choice. It should not forcefully or persuasively be imposed on any individual body by any particular authority. However according to contrary beliefs, Golwalkar wanted everybody to embrace this idea and was against enforcing it. It was further advocated that he was also against any sort of repercussive methods and sought an ideological commonness and a total devotion towards the land they tasted salt of

²⁴ Golwalkar, M. S. (1939), *We or Our Nationhood Defined*. Bharat Publications. p.104-105. (PDF version).

²⁵ “Golwalkar’s vision is terrifying because it has no place for modern democratic politics”. The Wire. July 10, 2017. Retrieved December 18, 2018. <https://thewire.in/communalism/ms-golwalkar-icpr-terrifying-vision>.....Being asked on Golwalkar’s idea of every single citizen of India is a Hindu and Hindustan is not a cult or creed but a mode of thinking and a way of living, Jyotirmaya Sharma said, “the sooner we abandon this view, it would be better for all of us. This is because the phrase way of life hides within it a political question: whose way of life? Certainly not everyone’s way of life? Hence those who wield power, force, domination and the instruments of violence will impose a way of life in the name of the nation”.

through harmony regardless their ideological or religious orientations. Rakesh Sinha wrote that Guruji asked Muslims to realise that we are all one people and their lineage don’t draw back to their ancestral lines rather their blood solely belong to the land that has brought them up.²⁶ Attempts were made to purify Golwalkar as a preacher in order to represent him as a true philosopher. Professor and member-secretary of ICPR Rajneesh Kumar Shukla commented that Golwalkar’s adversaries have wrongly tried to judge him on the basis of the book, ‘We, or Our Nationhood Defined’ while he has only written the forward of the book. People always refer to that book when talking about him. The aforementioned seminar being organized by ICPR on former ‘Sarsanghchalak’ is seen by his oppositions as one such attempt in the process. Shukla although defended the seminar by the following remark: “we can discuss Gandhi and Marx. Even we can discuss Mao and Hitler. Why not Golwalkar”?²⁷ But this new Ideological makeover to soothe the racist tones in his remarks enabled many extremist organisations to socially engineer people who earnestly put their faith in the ideology and was thus given the task to spread it across the nation. They believe that each philosophy needs to be broadcasted in order to gain popular support and the preacher is attributed with the task of promulgating and popularising the doctrines as much as possible. It is common in every walk of life and Golwalkar was no exception in this regard

But when popular citing about one of main sources of inspiration of RSS is drawing attention by creating quite a stir in political fields, there remains the question, how much do his ideologies including the “way of life” mean in modern democratic politics? The world view of former RSS ideologue had no place for modern politics and the way people perceive democracy in a globalised world. It is downright ludicrous and added no sense of rationality within it. According to author Ramachandra Guha “assumption that Golwalkar works with is that despite their fallen state today, Hindus are destined to lead and guide the world”.²⁸ Hindus, themselves are ideologically shattered and working on a false sense of myth shaping hysteria along the way. Often compilation of Golwalkar

²⁶ Sinha, Rakesh (2014). *Shri Guruji and Indian Muslims*. Chapter Two- “Aggressors and Converts”.....”Shri Guruji begins with the theory that the people of the land irrespective of their religious beliefs belong to the same cultural and ancestral origin and says, “Muslims must realise that we are all one people and it has the same blood that courses in our veins. They are not Arabs or Turks or Mongols. They are only Hindu converts.....the problem can and must be solved by Indian Muslims owing the country and its ancient culture as theirs. Indian history did not begin with Mohammed Ghazni”.

²⁷ “Push to idolise Modi’s mentor Golwalkar.” The Telegraph. July 5, 2017. Retrieved December 18, 2018. <https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/push-to-idolise-modi-mentor-golwalkar/cid/1520838>

²⁸ “A question of Sources: The unholy holy book of the RSS.” The Telegraph. September 17, 2016. Retrieved December 8, 2018..... “A second assumption that Golwalkar works is that despite their fallen state today, Hindus are destined to lead and guide the world. He claimed that it “is the grand world-unifying thoughts of Hindus alone that can supply the abiding basis for human brotherhood”. World leadership, he continues, “is a divine trust, we must say, given to the charge of the Hindus by Destiny”.

ideologies named 'Bunch of Thoughts' receives criticism for being irrational and critics seem to have reservations against plenty of points raised in the book. Even the zealot tones used for countering certain threats to nation may irk one for being extreme and it is generally believed that they should instead have more of a constructive angle. But even with all his concomitant flaws, there is no denying that some problems described by Golwalkar in the book are the bare realities of the society at ground and some views are also very striking not abiding with the superficiality of being peaceful with a blind eye. It focuses on building a united strength that would drive the nation towards progress and prosperity. But building this united strength is synonymous of building a united Hindu strength only, thus leaving the question, had Golwalkar ever seen India apart from one specific perspective? Yet, his followers find his teachings exactly in conjunction with rationality and designate them as the remedy of the major conundrums in the society. It is also proclaimed that embracing Golwalkar's ideologies is a matter of individual choice and one can find many positive sides from his teachings to be inspired and enlightened, apart from the 'unfortunate' controversies. Koenraad Elst, an independent researcher who obtained his MA degrees in Indology, Sinology and Philosophy and Ph.D. degree in Asian Studies from Catholic University of Leuven questioned Ramachandra Guha's assertion on Golwalkar. Based on Guha's column, "The question of Sources" published in 'The Telegraph', he said, Guha totally misunderstood Golwalkar's "slim maiden volume" called 'We or Our Nationhood Defined' and thus equated extreme Hindu inclination with today's right wing politics and grossly misrepresented the entire scenario. His argument over the misrepresentation of the said book or rather the pamphlet deserves a special mention. According to him, the targeted book of Golwalkar 'We' became a prominent account of polemic researches because of the "two over quoted passages", one relating to Nazi ideology and the other dealing with "more contemporary issue" which distinguishes Christians and Muslims from Hindus. As far as the first controversial passage goes, Elst wrote, "I have analysed this passage in the context of the book and of its time and found this common allegation, present in every introductory text on Hindutva, totally wanting. Thus, anti-Semitism was the core doctrine of National-Socialism, yet the Jewish people were the foremost role model upheld by Golwalkar for the Hindu nation".²⁹ Scrutinizing the second passage, Elst again wrote "it clearly distinguishes Christians and Muslims from the Hindus, as mere guests vis-à-vis the host society, entitled to protection and an honourable life, but to nothing more. Golwalkar proposes that they re-assimilate, or else accept a protected status as foreign residents claiming nothing, not even citizens' rights. Yet, as the book disappeared from circulation in 1948 and Golwalkar vetoed its reprint for being immature, most Sangh members have never even seen that line. It doesn't reflect the current party-line of the RSS let alone the BJP".³⁰ Aside the professional and independent researchers, prominent politicians also had their significant parts to play in this debate. Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was said to have

been influenced by Golwalkar ideologies of building a united strength. But Vajpayee's united strength included every single culture, race and religion, not just Hindus alone. Current Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his book 'Jyotipunjya' describes how he underwent ideological transformation after meeting Golwalkar's teachings. Still not everyone is seemed to be his admirer. Communist leaders such as Prakash Karat and Sitaram Yechury scorned his philosophies by referring them as superfluous, irrational and quixotic. Anyway, the foregoing political outlooks are subjected to prejudice and dogmatism as they are designed to satisfy the motives of certain politicians. They are mostly influenced by one's personal feelings and in the perplexing nature of politics, reality remains blur most often. But as far historical studies go, Golwalkar always seemed to be against the natural flow with his version of an extremely antiquated and conservative model of cultural revivalism and in a modern day secular and democratic society, it is indeed quite an unreasonable and divisional task to implement the Hindu Rashtra theory without a general consensus.

Hence in regard to his Hindutva ideology, the opinions seem to be divided, with one fraction slandering them for being biased and one-sided, the out-spoken nature of his ideologies however is being upheld by the other. But historians and social scientists mainly attributed his teachings to the diabolical motive of creating a state where others are at mercy of Hindus. Several case studies bear the testimony of his ideologies relating to Hindu Rashtra theory as misplaced, outdated and primitive. They cannot be classified as veracious ideas because the very foundation is crammed with an apocryphal approach of Hindu ideology taking the centre-stage of everyday life. But his followers believe that Golwalkar never yielded any antagonism and bad blood against people having different religious beliefs. Rakesh Sinha wrote Guruji clearly devised a clear distinction between Muslim aggressors and converts denoting common culture, history and ancestors to Muslim converts same as Hindus unlike the aggressors. Sinha also claimed that Golwalkar wasn't bothered of god being called as Allah and always stressed on the principles of religious toleration.³¹ He emphasised on the fact that non-Hindus especially Islam (Muslims) did everything to propagate the religion they believed in and the culture they took pride of, often at others' expenses. He urged Hindus to uphold India's heritage and culture but in a harmonic and peaceful manner. However, preservation of ancient culture doesn't mean restoring only the Hindu aspect relating to it because ancient Indian culture is not a Hindu culture alone rather it is a blend of different heterogeneous elements into a homogenous whole. Moreover, this idea seems irrational in our multi-dimensional socio-political world because it virtually carries no value against Golwalkar's expectation. His adherents nonetheless defended his teachings as the sole realization of his spiritual findings and expressed contempt to the notion of Hindu Rashtra theory being called as the brain child of an obnoxious

²⁹Guha's Golwalkar' Koenraad Elst.

<http://koenraadelst.blogspot.com/2016/11/guhas-golwalkar.html>

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Sinha, Rakesh (2014). *Shri Guruji and Indian Muslims*. Chapter Two- "Aggressors and Converts"..... "We are not so mean as to say that with a mere change in the method of worship an individual ceases to be a son of the soil. We have no objection to God being called by any name whatever ...he can not be a Hindu at all who is intolerant of other faiths"

propagandist. Golwalkar devised a clear distinction between nation and state, denoting socio-cultural aspect to nation and political and administrative approach to state. But the ideologue's vision of India to be a perfect nation, free from any political rule cannot be a solution to preserve our culture as surmised by his proponents. Golwalkar's concept of reinventing ancient heritage and reestablish India in global stage was a noble gesture but the methods and mechanisms he propounded was against the plurality of our culture. He was keen on exerting an ideological influence upon common people to mould them into the process that he expected India to carry forward. This mere construction of an ideological hegemony was not based on a mutual agreement with the general populous. Besides, this ideological domination seems

extremely preposterous in a more open and globalised world where people are exposed to different sets of values and in the course of time, these objectives are destined to be vain and inefficacious. Furthermore, Golwalkar's ideological findings met several new interpretations, adding more flaws to a doctrine already blemished with strong racial tones. These misapprehended versions became hackneyed and stereotyped in due time and virtually proved to be worthless in democratic way of thinking. As the by-products, these newly interpreted reactionary views along with a bunch already misplaced 'thoughts' of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's chief ideologue set themselves in stern contrast with the religious and socio-political fabrics of India today.