



# Sanatan Hinduism vs Hindutva: *A Battle for a faith and India's Soul*

**From Spiritual Pluralism to Political Supremacy  
-The Crisis of Modern India**

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THOUGHT OF THE DAY**

## **Prelude:**

India stands at a civilisational precipice. A nation born out of the dreams of spiritual pluralism, secular justice, and democratic inclusion is witnessing a calculated re-engineering of its soul. The spiritual legacy of Sanatan Dharma - rich in its tolerance, its deep embrace of diversity, and its philosophical openness based on the principal of self-examination - introspection - is being overshadowed by the rise of a politicised ideology: Hindutva.

This ideological shift is not incidental. It is the outcome of a century-old political project that began with the founding of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in 1925 by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, heavily influenced by Dr. B.S. Moonje of the Hindu Mahasabha, which itself was established in 1915. This movement emerged in deliberate opposition to Mahatma Gandhi's vision of a secular, inclusive, and united India as championed by the Indian National Congress — a vision grounded in non-violence, social harmony, and solidarity across caste, religion, and economic class.

Mahatma Gandhi had returned to India from South Africa in 1915, after successfully leading a non-violent civil rights campaign for the Indian minority there, including landmark struggles such as the 1910 campaign for equal rights. Upon his return, he was welcomed into the top leadership of the Indian National Congress, where he began transforming the freedom movement into a mass mobilisation rooted in ethical politics and grassroots empowerment.

Both Hedgewar and Moonje, who were initially associated with the Congress and were active members, eventually resigned from the party to establish their own political platform with some what a faith based politics.

Rejecting Gandhi's inclusive nationalism, they began building a parallel political vision based on Hindutva - a concept that would prioritise religious identity over

constitutional citizenship, and cultural obedience over pluralism.

Their goal was not merely independence from colonial rule, but the establishment of a Hindu Rashtra, an ethno-religious state defined by exclusionary cultural nationalism.

The ideological framework of this movement was further crystallised by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, then president of the Hindu Mahasabha, who in 1923 authored the defining text of Hindutva. Savarkar redefined Hindu identity not as a spiritual pursuit, but as a racial and territorial claim to the Indian nation. Ironically until independence India never existed as one nation but the region was ruled by many emperors for thousands of years battling to expand their own wealth and power. Many expanded their realms, some merged and many eroded without any trace with the passing of the time.

This vision was later expanded upon by Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, the second Sarsanghchalak (chief) of the RSS, who openly admired fascist regimes and laid the groundwork for a cultural nationalism rooted in exclusion, obedience, and ethnocentric pride.

What began as a reactionary fringe political groupings opposing both the Indian National Congress and Mahatma Gandhi has now grown into a formidable force - one that fundamentally challenges the very foundations of India's freedom movement. That movement was once a moral uprising, uniting people of all faiths, castes, and social backgrounds in a shared struggle against oppression by the colonialism, poverty, and tyranny.

Today, the Hindutvavadi vision no longer sees India as a spiritual land belonging to all, but as an exclusive homeland for those who identify as Hindutvavadis - not merely Hindus - defined by territory, race, and rigid

cultural obedience. In this ideological transformation, the rich religious rituals and cultural heritage of Hinduism have been politically weaponised - not to embody the inclusive moral spirit of Sanatan Dharma, but to construct a narrow identity aimed at electoral dominance and cultural supremacy.

This is not a spiritual renaissance. It is - and always was - about the consolidation of political power by a section of the Hindu population.

Tragically, lurking beneath this political project is a darker ambition: the resurrection of the medieval curse of hierarchy enshrined in the Manusmriti practices. Behind the rhetoric of cultural pride lies a silent endorsement of practices that once excluded and oppressed millions - socially, economically, and spiritually. It is a vision that not only denies India's inclusive soul but risks reviving the very structures of discrimination and inequality that our Constitution and freedom struggle sought to dismantle. In practice it had impacted on a majority Hindu population with social and economic exclusion and no stake in power sharing.

India has always been more than a nation-state. It has been a civilisation of ideas - a moral and spiritual consciousness forged not by military conquest or territorial ambition, but by an inward journey of reflection, humility, and acceptance. Its spiritual compass was never drawn by the sword or the sceptre, but by the Vedic whisper: "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*" - The world is one family.

In this worldview, faith was not a fence, but a window. The gods had many forms; the truth had many names. A Brahmin, a Buddhist, a Jain, a Christian, or a Muslim - all were welcome to drink from the same well of compassion, so long as they sought truth with sincerity and lived with conscience.

Sanatan Dharma, in its essence, is not a religion in the Western sense. It is a way of living - a discipline (dharma) that teaches us to see the divine in others, to restrain the ego, and to practice *ātma-manthan* - the constant introspection that checks our impulse to dominate, convert, or conquer. It teaches "*Sarva Dharma Sambhava*" - respect for all faiths - and promotes the moral equality of all living beings, not as charity, but as truth.

Contrast this with the Hindutvavadi project that has grown from the embers of 20th-century nationalism. Founded in fear and political resentment, not spiritual

enquiry, the ideology of Hindutva seeks not to embrace India's diversity, but to erase it. Its founders did not draw inspiration from the Upanishads or the Gita, but from the racial nationalism of Europe - where identity was tied to land, blood, and uniformity.

In 1923, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar defined Hindutva not as a spiritual path, but as a political identity - to be Hindu was to belong to a common territory (*rashtra*), share a common bloodline (*jati*), and submit to a common culture (*sanskriti*). It was not about the soul. It was about power.

From this point onward, the moral teachings of Hinduism began to be co-opted into an ideological apparatus - a weapon to define who belongs, and who does not. This vision was no longer about seeking truth or enlightenment, but about establishing a Hindu *Rashtra*, where power is centralised in the hands of a dominant religious identity.

Where Sanatan Dharma teaches renunciation of empire-building, Hindutvavadi politics seeks to establish cultural empire within and beyond borders. Where ancient Hindu sages walked away from thrones to pursue wisdom, modern Hindutvavadis cloak themselves in saffron to sit on thrones, chanting slogans while silencing inquiry. Where dharma asked rulers to protect the weakest, the new doctrine often celebrates strength, militarism, and dominance - branding those who speak for the marginalised as traitors. This contradiction is not subtle - it is profound and dangerous.

Sanatan Dharma does not criminalise the "other." It invites them to the dialogue. Hindutvavadi politics reduces that dialogue to a loyalty test. Sanatan Dharma is open to dissent, even from the divine - just as Arjuna questioned Krishna on the battlefield. Hindutva punishes dissenters as anti-national. Sanatan Dharma accepts that truth can be many-layered. Hindutva insists that nationalism must be one-coloured - saffron - or it is treason.

What we see today in India - from lynchings in the name of the cow, to rewriting of history books, to branding of secular voices as "anti-Hindu" - is not the flowering of Hindu civilisation. It is the repurposing of Hindu symbols for a political project that contradicts the very essence of dharma. It is not Sanatan Dharma that is rising. It is its mimicry, distorted through the lens of ideology.

This battle, then, is not between religion and secularism. It is not between Hindus and others. It is a deeper conflict - between the spiritual India that once showed the world the path of non-violence, and the political India that now flirts with exclusion, supremacy, and manufactured rage.

And so, we return to the ancient prayer - not as nostalgia, but as a moral compass:

“सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः, सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः”

Let all be happy. Let all be free from disease.  
(Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad)

This prayer is not a slogan. It is a commandment - to govern with care, to live without hatred, and to see every person as divine. To defend this spirit is not to be political - it is to be Indian.

Because to truly honour Sanatan Dharma is to refuse to turn it into a weapon. It is to stand firm against those who would hijack its message in pursuit of power. It is to remember that dharma is not domination - it is restraint, reflection, and reverence for all life.

### **A Nation at a Civilisational Crossroads: Between Spiritual Integrity and Political Appropriation**

India, long celebrated as the cradle of spiritual thought and philosophical plurality, now stands at a decisive turning point in its civilisational journey. This is not merely a political crisis or a transient ideological shift—it is a deeper, more existential rupture. At stake is not just electoral power, but the very soul of Bharat. The question confronting the nation is stark and urgent: will India continue to be a civilisation rooted in spiritual inclusiveness and intellectual freedom, or will it be reengineered into a rigid, majoritarian state governed by fear and ideological conformity?

The conflict playing out today is not between the ancient and the modern, nor between tradition and progress. It is between Sanatan Dharma, a civilisational ethos founded on self-realisation, diversity, and acceptance, and Hindutva, a 20th-century political project built on the ideals of ethnic nationalism, exclusion, and obedience. This is not a disagreement between religions or faith traditions - it is a confrontation between two incompatible visions of what it means to be Indian.

For centuries, India grew not by enforcing sameness, but by embracing multiplicity. Its civilisation was never defined by a single race, language, or doctrine, but by a mosaic of paths, ideas, and expressions of the divine.

The spiritual journey in India was never imposed from above; it was discovered within. But that core principle is now under systematic assault. The symbols of India's spiritual identity are being rebranded as instruments of state power. Its diversity is being recast as division. Its history is being reimagined not to inspire, but to inflame.

The ancient verse from the Chandogya Upanishad—*“एकोऽहम् बहुस्याम्”* (I am One, let Me become many)—reflects the founding spirit of Indian thought: unity not through uniformity, but through the celebration of difference. That sacred insight is today being reversed by those who cloak their politics in the language of religion, while dismantling its most essential values.

At the heart of this crisis lies the distortion of Sanatan Dharma. Often misrepresented as a fixed religious identity, Sanatan Dharma is not a religion in the Western sense. It has no single founder, no central institution, and no doctrinal rigidity. It is a spiritual river flowing across millennia - absorbing, adapting, and elevating. It encompasses the rituals of the Vedas, the non-dualism of the Upanishads, the Bhakti of the saints, the mysticism of Tantra, and the atheism of Charvaka. It reveres debate over decree, and places Satya (truth), Ahimsa (non-violence), Atma-Bodha (self-knowledge), and Dharma (ethical duty) at the centre of life's purpose.

This civilisational ethic gave rise not only to Hinduism's internal schools but also to Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism. It allowed room for Islam and Christianity to find a home here, not as invaders to be rejected, but as fellow travellers on the path of spiritual inquiry.

As the Rigveda proclaims,

“आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः”

—Let noble thoughts come to us from all directions.

This was not passive tolerance, but active, philosophical acceptance. Sanatan Dharma thrived not by controlling belief, but by expanding consciousness. It taught that the divine could be found in silence, in song, in form, and even in formlessness.

To equate this expansive tradition with a political ideology like Hindutva is not only intellectually dishonest - it is spiritually violent. Hindutva, as defined by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in his 1923 manifesto *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?*, is not concerned with liberation, introspection, or transcendence. It is

concerned with territory, racial purity, and cultural control. It defines identity not by inner realisation but by external allegiance. In Savarkar's view, only those who regard India as both fatherland and holy land can be considered true Indians - thereby excluding Muslims and Christians by design.

Savarkar, notably an atheist, used the cultural symbols of Hinduism to create a nationalist doctrine devoid of spirituality. He was less a sage than a strategist - building a framework of majoritarian identity to confront colonialism, but in the process internalising the very logic of imperialism. His ideological descendant, M.S. Golwalkar, openly admired the fascist regimes of Europe. He praised Hitler's racial policies and envisioned an India where minorities would live as second-class citizens, subordinate to the cultural hegemony of the Hindu majority.

This is the Hindutva vision - a nation defined not by Dharma but by dominance. It repurposes spiritual texts into political tools, transforms temples into stages for statecraft, and converts deities into electoral mascots. "Jai Shri Ram," once a sacred chant of devotion, now echoes as a war cry on streets scarred by lynchings and hate. The language of devotion has become the rhetoric of exclusion. The bhakti of the saints has been reduced to the obedience of the mob.

Hindutva does not elevate Sanatan Dharma - it hollows it out. It replaces introspection with indoctrination. It trades self-realisation for submission. It promotes a version of India where questioning power is blasphemy, where plurality is a threat, and where uniformity is the highest virtue. This inversion of India's spiritual heritage into a political machine is not a revival - it is a betrayal.

The implications are everywhere. Minorities are no longer fellow citizens but "suspect communities." Constitutional values - secularism, equality, freedom of expression - are dismissed as colonial impositions. Schoolbooks are being rewritten to erase Gandhi's assassin, sideline Nehru, and glorify figures who stood against the very principles of the republic. History itself is being weaponised - scrubbed clean of diversity, and recast into a narrative of Hindu victimhood and vengeance.

Dissent is no longer patriotic - it is treasonous. Citizenship is no longer guaranteed - it is conditional. Institutions are no longer impartial - they are instruments of ideological enforcement. What was once

a vibrant republic of ideas is slowly turning into a fortress of fear.

This is not a theoretical concern. It is a lived reality for millions of Indians. And it brings us back, unmistakably, to the crossroads.

Will India remember its spiritual legacy as a civilisation that welcomed every path to truth? Or will it surrender that legacy to an ideology that sees difference as danger, and power as a substitute for principle? Will we uphold Sanatan Dharma as a philosophy of life, or allow it to be misused as a tool of exclusion? Will we protect our democracy, not just as a political system, but as a sacred space where every voice, every faith, and every identity has a place?

This moment demands more than political opposition - it demands civilisational clarity. It requires courage - not as the sword, but of conviction. The courage to say that India is not a monolith and never was. That its greatness lies not in dominance, but in dialogue. That true dharma cannot be enforced - it must be discovered.

For civilisations do not fall when they are challenged from outside. They fall when they forget what they stood for. If India forgets its civilisational roots in spiritual integrity, compassion, plurality, and truth, then no amount of slogans, statues, or sanitised textbooks will save it.

The real battle is not between Hindus and non-Hindus. It is between those who believe India belongs to all - and those who believe it belongs only to them. And so, India must choose.

### **From Devotion to Domination: The Political Hijack of Faith, Institutions, and Memory in New India**

In the republic envisioned by the makers of India's Constitution, religion was meant to be a matter of personal faith, institutions were to uphold democratic safeguards, and history was to inform conscience, not manipulate it. But today, that vision stands under siege. Faith is no longer sacred - it is politicised. Institutions no longer serve the people - they serve power. And history no longer teaches - it is being rewritten. This transformation is not incidental; it is systemic.

In the ideological universe of Hindutvavadi politics, devotion is no longer a spiritual journey - it is a tool of political consolidation. The line between reverence and control has been deliberately blurred. Temples have

become theatres for state-sponsored spectacles. Religious icons are weaponised to validate political authority. Even the most intimate acts of faith are redirected outward - converted into symbols of loyalty to the state and its leader.

The consecration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, once a matter of personal belief, was turned into a national television event, endorsed by the state and choreographed for mass emotional mobilisation. Likewise, the Kumbh Mela, held at the peak of the pandemic, was not questioned for risking lives - it was celebrated as a cultural triumph, revealing how political immunity has enveloped religious privilege.

Slogans like "Jai Shri Ram," once sacred invocations, are now shouted as political war cries. They echo not just in temples but in rallies, lynch mobs, and hate-filled campaigns. To question this public performance of faith is to invite accusations of being "anti-national." Dissenters are cast as heretics. The essence of bhakti, which once meant surrender to the divine, is now repackaged as submission to authority.

The Bhagavad Gita, however, reminds us of a higher moral calling:

*"न त्वहं कामये राज्यं न स्वर्गं न पुनर्भवम्।*

*कामये दुःखतप्तानां प्राणिनामार्तिनाशनम्॥"*

*I do not seek kingdom, heaven, or rebirth*

*-I seek to end the suffering of all beings.*

That spiritual ideal has been inverted. Power, not compassion, is now the aspiration.

India's first Prime Minister Hon Pundit Nehru one said, 'wiping tears from very eye' when he spoke on the eve of the Independence Day. Now we want to erase this caring notion from our constitution.

The decline is not confined to faith. It extends to the very institutions that once stood as the sentinels of Indian democracy. Over the past decade, the systematic capture of institutions - judiciary, media, investigative agencies, and the Election Commission - has weakened the constitutional fabric.

The judiciary, once the last refuge for the marginalised, has drawn criticism for delays and selective silence. The abrogation of Article 370 in Kashmir saw habeas corpus pleas delayed for months. Courts remained largely silent amid open calls for genocide by ruling party affiliates. The moral authority of the bench, hard-won through decades of independence, now hangs in doubt.

The Election Commission of India, once a beacon of electoral integrity, has been accused of partisan bias. Complaints against the Prime Minister's campaign speeches were ignored or delayed, while opposition leaders faced swift punitive action. Investigative bodies like the ED and CBI, instead of serving the public interest, have become instruments of political intimidation -targeting figures like Rahul Gandhi, Arvind Kejriwal, and Hemant Soren while sparing allies of the ruling regime.

The media, once the fourth pillar of democracy, is now largely absorbed into a machinery of manufactured consent. Channels like NDTV, once a symbol of independent journalism, have changed ownership and tone. Prime-time anchors, far from challenging power, have become its cheerleaders—demonising dissenters and glorifying the state. Journalism has morphed into public relations.

This isn't administrative dysfunction - it's ideological capture. As Dr. B.R. Ambedkar warned during the Constituent Assembly Debates, when those in power subvert institutions, constitutional morality collapses. What remains is a hollow shell of legality wrapped around majoritarianism.

The Mahabharata's Shanti Parva offers an ancient warning:

*"गयां जन्यान्त्र्यम् धार्म्यम् राज्यन्"*

Only that governance which upholds Dharma and institutional justice is worthy of being called a righteous state.

India today risks becoming a state where Dharma is replaced by decree, and justice is replaced by ideology. In this historical revisionism, there is an element of cleansing of population memory. In the battle for power, history has become the next casualty. Curriculums are being rewritten, monuments renamed, and facts rearranged to fit the Hindutvavadi narrative of a glorified Hindu past and a vilified 'other.'

School textbooks have removed references to Mughal emperors, reduced the role of Gandhi and Nehru, and eliminated key discussions on caste oppression, especially the role of Brahmanical dominance. Even the mention of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination by Nathuram Godse, an RSS member, has been edited out in recent NCERT revisions.

These erasures are not academic adjustments. They are a strategic cultural cleansing—one that seeks to vilify diversity and sanitize historical complicity. The Hindu Mahasabha's collaboration with the British during the Quit India Movement has vanished from syllabi. Meanwhile, efforts to glorify Savarkar, Golwalkar, and even Godse as nationalists are gaining traction.

Public spaces are also part of this revisionist campaign. The renaming of Mughal Garden to Amrit Udyan at Rashtrapati Bhavan, and attempts to reinterpret monuments like the Qutub Minar as Hindu structures, reveal an agenda that doesn't merely seek to reclaim the past—but to erase the pluralism that shaped it.

This isn't education—it is indoctrination. It breeds hostility towards India's Islamic, Christian, and Dalit histories and fosters a false narrative of civilisational victimhood -a belief that India was enslaved by outsiders and must now be purified.

The ancient scriptures offer a grave caution:

"यदा येन् धार्म्या गच्छन्ति भवन्ति स्मृतियाः"

When the righteous path is distorted, memory itself becomes a casualty.

Today, memory is not just fading - it is being systematically reprogrammed. India is at a defining moment. Faith is being politicised, institutions are being domesticated, and history is being rewritten - not to enlighten, but to enforce. This is not the republic envisioned in 1950. It is a shadow republic - where bhakti has been replaced by obedience, dissent by conformity, and memory by mythology. The question is not only whether India can resist this slide - but whether its citizens can reclaim the moral and constitutional compass that once guided its soul.

### **The Republic in the Shadow: How Personality Cult and Fear are Reshaping India**

Democracy is not a spectacle - it is a shared responsibility. It draws its strength from institutions, not individuals, from debate, not devotion. Yet in today's India, the world's largest democracy is being systematically hollowed out from within.

A new political culture has taken root -one that thrives not on consensus but on compliance, not on reason but on reverence. At its heart lies a personality cult unprecedented in Indian political history, and a growing architecture of fear that rewards silence and punishes dissent.

The transformation is unmistakable. The face of Prime Minister Narendra Modi now eclipses every aspect of governance. Welfare schemes are no longer identified by their constitutional mandate but are marketed as personal charity - PM Awas Yojana, PM Gareeb Kalyan Yojana, PM Kisan Samman Nidhi - as though the Prime Minister, not the state, is the provider of rights. The very language of governance has shifted from collective service to individual benevolence. This isn't simply branding; it's mythmaking.

Across India, Modi's image is omnipresent. From billboards to textbooks, from school curriculums to cinema halls, a single figure dominates the public sphere. Even COVID-19 vaccination certificates bore his portrait- a subtle but insistent message that everything the state delivers flows from one source. In the world's most diverse democracy, governance is being centralised into a spectacle of devotion.

State institutions and cultural mediums are being reoriented to serve this narrative. The 2023 film *The Kashmir Files*, endorsed and amplified by ruling party leaders, served not only as propaganda but as a weapon - fueling Islamophobia, painting Muslims as the eternal threat, and stoking communal resentment. Meanwhile, uncomfortable truths - like the real causes and consequences of the 2002 Gujarat riots, or the role of the state in enabling such violence - are censored, ignored, or denied.

When the BBC aired a documentary critically examining Narendra Modi's role during the Gujarat violence, the state's response was immediate and authoritarian. Emergency laws were invoked to ban the film. BBC offices were raided. Independent journalism was made an example of. This was not about debate - it was about control. Even digital platforms, once havens for alternative voices, are increasingly weaponised. State-backed trends glorify the leader while demonising activists, journalists, students, and anyone who dares to ask questions. In this climate, truth is not contested- it is curated. Dissent is not debated - it is dismantled.

The Bhagavad Gita offers a stark philosophical counterpoint:

"कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन"

*Karmany-evadhikaras te ma phaleshu kadachana*

-You have the right to action, not to the fruits of action. But the republic today teaches the opposite: that all fruits - economic growth, social welfare, national pride - are the personal outcome of one man's will. In such a

myth, the citizen becomes passive, stripped of agency. Governance becomes spectacle. Accountability disappears into applause. Yet beneath the spectacle lies something more sinister - a political order fueled by fear.

Since 2014, hate crimes have surged. Muslims and Dalits have faced unprecedented levels of targeted violence. Human Rights Watch and numerous civil rights groups have chronicled the rise of mob lynchings, often under the pretext of cow protection. Mohammad Akhlaq was lynched in Dadri in 2015 for allegedly consuming beef. Dalit youth were flogged in Una in 2016 for skinning a dead cow. In Delhi, 2020, riots erupted under the shadow of a citizenship law that many believed institutionalised discrimination. The police were accused not only of failing to act - but of complicity.

This new order of fear operates with impunity. Homes are bulldozed without court orders, anti-conversion laws are used to target interfaith couples, and slogans once considered fringe are now mainstream political rhetoric. The CAA-NRC framework has threatened the very idea of citizenship - replacing constitutional identity with religious identity.

Those who protest are met not with dialogue but with brutality. Students from Jamia Millia Islamia and JNU, who raised their voices against the CAA, were met with lathi charges and campus raids. Activists like Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam remain imprisoned, often without timely trials, while hate speech from ruling party sympathisers goes unpunished. This culture of fear violates the foundational spirit of Bharat. The Rigveda had once called upon the people of this land with a noble vision:

*"कृण्वन्तो विश्वमार्यम्"*

*Kṛṇvanto viśvam āryam*

- Let us make the world noble.

But nobility today is branded "anti-national." Compassion is framed as weakness. Dissent is mislabeled as sedition. What's more disturbing is the misuse of India's spiritual heritage to justify the politics of exclusion. The values of Sanatan Dharma - grounded in *karuṇā* (compassion), *ahiṃsā* (non-violence), and *satya* (truth) - are being hijacked. Ancient texts are being twisted into tools for majoritarian dominance. Ritualism is weaponised, while spiritual introspection is discarded. A dhārmic civilisation is being re-scripted into an authoritarian myth.

This is not a clash of ideologies. It is a distortion of the very soul of the Indian republic. The cult of personality is not just a political strategy - it is the undoing of constitutional democracy. And the politics of fear is not just a tool of control - it is the enemy of freedom.

India stands at a perilous crossroad. Its institutions are under siege. Its citizens are being divided. Its spiritual traditions are being hollowed out and replaced with political theatre. The republic, once a promise of pluralism and dignity, now lingers in the long shadow of power concentrated in one image, one voice, one narrative. The question that remains is not whether India will survive - but whether its soul will.

### **Sanatan Dharma vs Hindutva: Two Irreconcilable Visions**

Sanatan Dharma, the ancient spiritual current that flows through India's civilisational soul, is neither a religion in the Western sense nor a rigid dogma. It is a living philosophy rooted in inquiry, not obedience. Found in the Vedas, Upanishads, and Bhagavad Gita, its ethos embraces paradox and plurality. There is no single prophet, no final scripture, and no demand for conformity. The atheist, the agnostic, and the devotee all find space within its boundless fold.

In striking contrast stands Hindutva - a political invention of the 20th century. Coined and first defined by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in his 1923 tract *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?*, it was later ideologically hardened by M.S. Golwalkar, the ideological architect of the RSS. Together, these men forged a vision of India that mirrored the ethno-nationalist fervour of Europe's darkest chapters. Both openly admired fascist models - Savarkar praising Mussolini, and Golwalkar lauding Hitler's racial policies.

Savarkar's Hindutva draws a hard boundary around identity. According to him, only those who regard India as both *pitrbhumi* (fatherland) and *punyabhumi* (holy land) could be true Hindus. By this measure, Indian Muslims and Christians - whose holy lands lie outside the subcontinent - were to be regarded as outsiders. Golwalkar took this further in *Bunch of Thoughts*, declaring that minorities must live in India "as subordinate citizens," stripped of claims to equality or cultural legitimacy.

This is not a reinterpretation of Sanatan Dharma. It is a betrayal of it.

Sanatan Dharma speaks the language of Ekam Satyam Bahudhā Vadanti - "Truth is One, the wise express it in many ways." It celebrates the coexistence of Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Shaktism, Buddhism, Jainism, and more. It thrives in contradiction, allowing silence to speak louder than dogma, and questions to triumph over commandments.

Hindutva, on the other hand, demands sameness. One language. One religion. One culture. One leader. These are the cries not of sages but of stormtroopers - echoes not of the Gita but of Goebbels. The attempt is not to elevate the dhārmic soul of India but to fossilise it into a militant majoritarianism.

What is at stake is not merely the meaning of Hinduism - but the very moral compass of the Indian republic. Sanatan Dharma was never a tool of the state. It was a refuge of the spirit. Hindutva, by contrast, seeks to capture the state in the name of a distorted faith—turning the spiritual into the political, and the inclusive into the exclusionary.

As the Mahabharata warns,  
"धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः"

- Dharma protects those who protect it. But Dharma here does not mean ritual or identity -it means righteousness, justice, and the moral order that sustains society.

India is not built on a foundation of fear. It is not threatened by diversity -it is enriched by it. To stand for Sanatan Dharma today is to stand against those who misuse its name for narrow political ends. It is to remind ourselves that Bharat's civilisational strength lies not in uniformity, but in unity amidst difference.

### **Epilogue: A Future Rooted in Reflection, Not Reaction**

India's destiny has never followed a straight line. It was never meant to be confined by the margins of maps or the rise and fall of empires. It has always been shaped not by conquerors or kings alone, but by the meditative minds of sages, the fiery courage of reformers, the enduring silence of the marginalised, and the dreams of ordinary people who believed that dharma must uplift all - not serve the ambition of a few.

This epilogue is not an end. It is an awakening. A mirror held up to the nation's conscience - inviting reflection before reaction. We do not close a chapter here; rather,

we open a deeper dialogue. A dialogue about the choices that lie ahead for a civilisation older than memory, yet young in its democratic promise.

The ideological struggle between Sanatan Dharma and political Hindutva is not a mere battle of words or ideas. It is a lived, daily experience - woven into the way we govern our institutions, teach our children, worship our gods, debate our differences, and walk the streets alongside one another. It shapes who gets to speak, who is silenced, and who gets to belong.

Sanatan Dharma teaches that time is cyclical - that the Kali Yuga, the age of confusion, fear, and division, is not the end but a passage. And in every passage, there are those who light the way. Each individual is not a passive spectator but a moral agent - capable of invoking the dawn through clarity, courage, and compassion.

It is the dharmic duty of every Indian - and indeed, every inheritor of this civilisational legacy - to distinguish between the timeless light of dharma and the blazing, flickering flame of ideological aggression that burns hot but leaves only ash.

We are compelled to ask - not as politicians or pundits, but as citizens and seekers: *Will India continue to be a civilisation that reveres many gods, embraces many truths, speaks many tongues, and honours many identities? Or will it retreat into a guarded enclosure - a cultural fortress fortified by fear, shouting slogans of unity while silencing its own spirit?*

The choices of the coming decades will not be defined by elections alone. They will be measured by whether we choose *renewal over revenge, reflection over reaction, unity over uniformity*. Resistance will not be enough. What we need is a profound reassertion of the values encoded in both our scriptures and our Constitution.

- *Liberty*, not as a borrowed concept, but as swatantrata - the right to think, speak, believe, and become.
- *Equality*, not just in law, but as samanata - the recognition of every soul's dignity, regardless of caste, creed, or gender.
- *Fraternity*, not a slogan, but as bandhutva - the living thread that binds diverse people together in shared purpose.
- *Justice*, not delayed or denied, but as nyaya - the moral backbone of any righteous state.

While Race supremacy parallel, faith exclusive supremacy is a foreign ideals, the constitution of India and values of our faith are not Western ideals implanted upon Indian soil. They are deeply Indic values, rediscovered in our freedom struggle, reflected in our founding debates, and preserved in the pages of our Constitution. They are the bridge between the Gita and Gandhi, between Ashoka and Ambedkar.

Across India, quietly but unmistakably, a new consciousness is stirring. It does not shout, but it will not be silent. It rises from classrooms, courtrooms, fields, and footpaths. It belongs to a generation that carries the past in its heart but is not imprisoned by it. A generation that reads the Constitution in the morning and chants from the Gita at night. That refuses to be divided by caste or seduced by slogans. That does not fear difference but sees in it the soul of India.

### **This epilogue is theirs. And so is the future.**

For India does not need to be made great again. It only needs to remember what made it great to begin with: *the courage to ask questions, the compassion to hear others, the humility to change, and the wisdom to walk many paths without losing its way.* As we stand at this civilisational crossroads, let us not turn away in cynicism or despair. Let us turn inward - and then forward - with eyes open, memory intact, and hearts ready to uphold the dharma that belongs to all. □

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**THOUGHT OF THE DAY** is for movers, shakers and thinkers of our civil society wish to preserve and protect the India's secular and caring democracy. It is not intended to demine the Astha of the Sanatani Hindus but toe distinguish the political version of the Hindutvavdi ideological trend that wants India to be converted in to an exclusive Hindu Rashtra where others of diverse faiths and so called low caste Hindus would be socially and economically excluded. Central to this piece, is the focus on promotion of respecting the diversity and community cohesion in our multifaith society.

**About the author:** Buddhdev Pandya is a prolific writer of sociopolitical issues and committed to embracing diversity in our society and in law. He is publisher of two magazines and written number of books – Essential Truth of Hinduism and Mahatma Gandhi My Hero. - along with some controversial articles to explore impacts of economic policies and expose the political dominations of mega rich multinational corporate families overshadowing democracy.

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