

**Religious Tolerance as a Catalyst for Hindu Revivalism
in Vikas Sharma's Novel *Ideas and Events***

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Abstract:

This paper critically examines the intersection of religious tolerance and Hindu revivalism portrayed in the contemporary novel *Ideas and Events*, by the modern novelist and Hindu mythologist Vikas Sharma, focusing on the processes of ideological deradicalization and the subsequent emergence of narrative dissonance. The novel, set against the backdrop of post-colonial India, is a rich terrain for analyzing how Hindu religion shapes individuality, and through individuality- the entire society. Vikas Sharma, a modern novelist, draws attention to the conflict that exists between ancient Hindu beliefs and the problems of global modernity, including individualism, secularism, and the weakening of communal bonds. He highlights how Hindu revivalism is a continual re-interpretation of Hindu philosophy to address contemporary issues rather than just a return to the past by interlacing several stories together.

The concept of Hindu revivalism has played a significant role in forming India's modern identity, especially in the way it expresses the conflict between tradition and modernity. This paper explores the revival of Hindu heritage via the authentic narration of the novel *Ideas and Events*. The goal of Hindu revivalism, a movement that emerged in the 19th century in reaction to Western ideals and colonial tyranny, was to reclaim and revive ancient Indian cultural and spiritual traditions. With their reinterpretations of Vedanta, Yoga, and Vedic knowledge, thinkers like Swami Vivekananda, Dayananda Saraswati, and Aurobindo Ghose sparked this rebirth by creating a narrative that combined spiritual profundity with nationalist emotion. As the 20th century progressed, revivalist ideologies continued to have an impact on contemporary Indian politics and society, as seen by the growth of groups like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the political ascent of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). These movements have raised complicated issues of secularism, pluralism, and the place of religion in public life by more closely associating Hindu

religious identity with national identity. This study will examine the ways in which these revivalist movements have attempted to negotiate the heterogeneous and multicultural Indian society while creating a cohesive Hindu identity through literature, philosophy, and political activity.

This paper attempts to illustrate the continued impact of Hindu revivalism on modern India's identity through the interpretation of the revival of Hindu ideas as expressed by Vikas Sharma in his novel, *Ideas and Events*.

It will also examine the ways in which these ideas have crossed India's borders and influenced the perception of Hindu identity and heritage in the world metropolitical postcolonial diaspora.

Ultimately, the novel *Ideas and Events* presents Hindu revivalism as a spiritual renaissance and cultural revival, implying that this movement has the potential to offer answers to some of the key existential and ethical dilemmas contemporary society is facing.

Keywords: Hindu revivalism, Ideological deradicalization, Narrative Dissonance, Dharma Polarity, Karma Reversal Syndrome, Bhakti Militarization, Moksha Nationalism, Vedanta, Indian nationalism, Swami Vivekananda, Hindutva, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian diaspora, Postcolonial identity

Introduction

A significant shift in Indian identity and national consciousness occurred during the colonial era when Hindu revivalism emerged as a profound cultural, intellectual, and spiritual reaction to British colonial control. Many Indian politicians and intellectuals saw the importance of preserving and reviving local culture as colonial control progressively imposed Western norms and values on Indian society. Hindu revivalism developed as a declaration of India's distinct spiritual and cultural legacy as well as a religious movement. In order to promote a strong sense of Indian identity rooted in old traditions but open to the needs of modernity, early revivalists like Swami Vivekananda and Dayananda Saraswati were instrumental in reaffirming the importance of Hindu spirituality. Traditional Indian customs and beliefs were questioned by the introduction of Western legal frameworks, educational programs, and religious views during the colonial encounter. Since Hinduism was frequently portrayed in British narratives as inferior and backward, many Indians felt that this imposition undermined the foundation of their civilization. However, Hinduism was

viewed by early Indian thinkers and reformers as both a route to spiritual truth and a rich cultural legacy that could serve as a basis for opposition to colonial oppression. As a result, Hindu philosophy, ethics, and spiritual activities were re-examined as sources of cultural power and pride.

Hinduism was reframed as a universal religion by Swami Vivekananda, for example, who emphasized Vedanta as India's gift to world spirituality. His 1893 addresses at the Parliament of the World's Religions introduced Hindu philosophy to a global audience, promoting religious and scientific harmony as well as human oneness. (Beckerlegge, Swami Vivekananda's Legacy of Service) Vivekananda's worldview presented Hinduism as a flexible and progressive philosophy that could be integrated with contemporary science and intellect, in addition to being a deeply spiritual practice. In a similar vein, Dayananda Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, aimed to combat the "superstitions" that he felt had tainted Hindu practice and revive Vedic wisdom. Saraswati advocated a return to the old Vedas as a source of morality and wisdom through the Satyarth Prakash (The Light of Truth), imagining a reformed Hinduism that could meet the demands of contemporary society. By tying spiritual rejuvenation to social and political empowerment, his demands for Swaraj (self-rule) and the rejection of idolatry matched Hinduism with nationalist principles (Graham, Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics).

In contemporary India, Hindu revivalism has taken on renewed urgency, positioning itself as a movement that seeks not only spiritual renewal but also cultural and political cohesion in a Hindu-majority nation. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) have become central actors in this revival, emphasizing the importance of Hindu identity within the framework of Indian nationalism. Building on the legacy of figures like Swami Vivekananda and Dayananda Saraswati, who redefined Hinduism as a source of cultural pride and resistance to colonial influence, the BJP and RSS now advocate for a "Hindu Rashtra" that reclaims and asserts Hindu values in public life (Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*). Scholars like Chetan Bhatt argue that this revivalist ideology has fused spirituality with political action, portraying Hindu identity as essential to India's moral and social regeneration (*Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies, and Modern Myths*). In a time of global cultural flux, the RSS's focus on Hindu education and cultural programs aims to foster a cohesive identity among Indians, while the BJP's policies on religious reform and cultural preservation seek to align governance with Hindu ethos, reinforcing Hindu revivalism as both a cultural necessity and a

political vision (Nanda, *The God Market: How Globalization is Making India More Hindu*). This modern revivalist thrust acknowledges Hinduism's rich philosophical heritage while adapting it to assert India's place in an interconnected, multicultural world.

Ideas and Events: A Key Text in Hindu Revivalism

Ideas and Events by Vikas Sharma extends the legacy of Hindu revivalist literature by engaging with Hinduism's responses to global modernity. Set in a postcolonial context, the novel reaffirms Hindu philosophy's capacity to address contemporary issues, from individuality to moral degradation. Through characters like Sandhya, who aspires to create a "perfect man," Sharma explores the tension between modern scientific ambition and ancient Hindu cosmology, where creation is a divine prerogative. The concept of ideological deradicalization in the novel introduces us to a unique form of "narrative dissonance," where conflicting ideals exist within the same characters, setting the stage for a philosophical investigation. Sandhya, the protagonist, embodies this tension. Growing up in a Hindu household that honours Brahma as the supreme creator, her ambition to create the ideal human form defies divine authority and inspires a type of spiritual rebellion. The subject of narrative dissonance, in which Sandhya's scientific inclination and her respect for supernatural authority are constantly at odds, is introduced by her ambition. The existential conundrums that Indian intellectuals encountered throughout the revivalist movement are reflected in Sandhya's struggle between scientific innovation and religious humility. Her efforts to balance her scientific goals with Hindu principles are indicative of the revivalist philosophy of modifying Hinduism for contemporary settings without sacrificing its core principles.

Hindu revivalist literature, in which the divine is dynamic, flexible, and interpretive, is consistent with this conflict. Hindu revivalist intellectuals maintained that the power of Hinduism resides in its capacity to bring disparate ideas together, promoting a pragmatic spirituality that attends to both individual enlightenment and society issues (Vivekananda, *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*). The author highlights the age-old conflict between respect for tradition and the desire for advancement—a fundamental component of Hindu revivalism—through Sandhya's trip. Vikas Sharma's work demonstrates how Hindu concepts are woven into the narrative as a prism through which contemporary challenges are evaluated, and it is consistent with revivalist literature in its use of Hindu mythology and karmic cycles. Hindu revivalism is not portrayed in the book as a static throwback to the past, but as a dynamic, changing tradition. This viewpoint is consistent with the writings of R.K.

Narayan and Raja Rao, who both presented Hinduism as adaptable and resilient, able to offer moral and ethical guidance even in the face of social upheavals (Naik, A History of Indian English Literature).

Vikas Sharma expresses his opinion on the divine authority and human aspiration: **“It is universally accepted that God is, was and will be the greatest source of enlightenment for all kinds of people. His ways are just and, at the same time, mysterious and wonderful. God alone sets things right when they get upset and upturned.”**

This opening line sets the theological foundation of the novel. It underscores the central conflict between divine authority and human ambition, as embodied by Sandhya's desire to “create a perfect man” that parallels the mythical actions of Brahma, the Hindu creator. This act of creation by Sandhya challenges traditional religious boundaries, placing human Innovation in tension with religious doctrine—a fitting exploration of how Hindu revivalism in the novel questions and redefines religious limits while respecting their spiritual significance.

The author of *Ideas and Events* describes Hindu revivalism as a movement that highlights the richness and flexibility of Hindu spirituality in a world that is becoming more interconnected by the day. The narrative style of the book highlights Hinduism's potential for rebirth and reinterpretation by contrasting Hindu cosmology with contemporary scientific concerns. The author implies that revivalism can offer solutions to the existential problems of modernity, like moral deterioration and alienation, by presenting Hinduism as a flexible and timeless philosophy. This brings to mind the revivalist notion, promoted by Swami Vivekananda, that Hinduism provides a framework for moral behaviour in a world that is changing quickly in addition to spiritual understanding.

Ideas and Events promotes a balance between spiritual depth and social significance by presenting Hinduism as a path that can be followed both individually and collectively. Sharma's book emphasizes the value of cultural legacy in creating a unified national consciousness by stressing Hinduism's function in promoting a common identity among India's diversity. In doing so, *Ideas and Events* affirms the applicability of Hindu philosophy in tackling modern issues and places itself within the larger tradition of Hindu revivalism.

Quest for Creation: Scientific Experiment as Modern Tapasya

Sandhya's scientific attempt to make Youngstein the "ideal man" reflects a contemporary form of tapasya, or ascetic practice, which is consistent with the work of revivalists such as Swami Vivekananda, who maintained that discipline and self-transformation were essential to social change (Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*). Vikas Sharma's references to the Mahabharata's Pandavas are a reflection of Hinduism's idealized heroism, in which each brother represents a virtue that serves as the model for the perfect person. A philosophical and psychological aspect of Hindu revivalism, which takes into account people's capacity to embody divine characteristics, is also shown in Vikas Sharma's portrayal of Sandhya's yearning. The work of Sri Aurobindo, who saw a spiritual transformation of humanity as an evolution toward a higher awareness, is comparable to this quest for transcendence by focused effort (Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*).

In order to portray the protagonist Sandhya's defiance of religious norms, the novelist writes; **"Despite knowing that only Lord Brahma can create, Sandhya aspires to compete with the Lord and wants to create a perfect man with all of the qualities of the Pandava brothers of the Mahabharata."** Sandhya's ambition highlights the Hindu mythological legacy while also symbolizing the modern aspiration to transcend established norms. The desire to incorporate the virtues of the Pandavas reveals how Hindu revivalism in the novel draws from epic qualities to engage with modernity. Her creation, Youngstein, is a tribute to ancient wisdom repurposed for the contemporary world, pointing toward a synthesis of past and present that Hindu revivalism often seeks. Youngstein's character's adoption of Pandava traits is reminiscent of Hindu revivalist writing, especially Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's works, which reinterpreted the lessons of the Bhagavad Gita for a nationalist awakening (Chatterjee, *Anandamath*). Sandhya expresses her dissatisfaction with modernity's apparent estrangement from ancient Hindu knowledge through her yearning for the knowledge of rishis such as Vishwamitra and Parshuram. This is similar to the idea of spiritual mentoring in Indian literature, where sages serve as a bridge between the divine and humanity, as demonstrated in Tulsidas's *Ramcharitmanas* and *The Upanishads*. Thus, Sandhya's portrayal illustrates Hindu revivalism's aim to balance traditional knowledge with contemporary independence.

Karma and Kaliyuga: The Pancham Yuga as Modern Wasteland

Based on the Puranic framework of the four Yugas—Satya, Treta, Dwapara, and Kali—the Pancham Yuga (Fifth Age) notion arises as a modern reworking of the classic Hindu cosmological cycle. The Kali Yuga is the age of degeneration and moral degradation, whereas the Mahabharata and Bhagavata Purana describe these Yugas as a cyclical march of time, each marked by a slow deterioration in justice and virtue.

Thinkers like Aurobindo Ghose, who saw the Fifth Age as a time of spiritual renewal and world unification that went beyond the moral decline of the Kali Yuga, were the ones who first popularized the idea of the Pancham Yuga in contemporary Hindu thought, especially in the 19th and 20th centuries (Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*). This concept is essential to contemporary Hindu revivalism because it provides a framework for comprehending how the revival of traditional spiritual values and global modernity connect. The Pancham Yuga is a key idea in the novel's critique of modernity and its emphasis on Hindu ideals as tools for societal regeneration because, in the context of *Ideas and Events*, it is both a literary and philosophical response to the moral decay observed in the postcolonial world and a prophetic vision of spiritual rebirth. The Pancham Yuga urges a return to spiritual understanding and dharma, claiming that Hinduism, although seen as a holdover from the past, has the ability to confront the existential issues of the modern world. Vikas Sharma's depiction of Vindhya's children offspring engaging in sensual pleasures and giving in to incest is reminiscent of the Pancham Yuga, a Hindu apocalyptic era characterized by moral decay. The Mahabharata and Bhagavata Purana, which predict that the Kali Yuga will be a time of degradation during which dharma will be abandoned and familial ties will be destroyed by self-centered aspirations, are the inspiration for this contemporary *Wasteland* concept. Like T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Vikas Sharma's portrayal of Vindhya's children's incestuous relationship in the novel criticizes the moral collapse of modernity by showing how social deterioration results from spiritual separation.

Hinduism's cyclical conception of time emphasizes the idea of unavoidable karmic consequences. Vikas Sharma's usage of karmic cycles and reincarnation is consistent with the Bhagavad Gita's claim that moral behavior is inescapably connected to spiritual outcomes (Miller, *The Bhagavad-Gita*). The story highlights the Hindu revivalist notion that a return to dharma is the only way to bring about societal rebirth by portraying the end of the Pancham Yuga as a karmic conclusion.

The idea of Kali Yuga, a time of decay that signifies the conclusion of a cosmic cycle, is echoed in this image. Hindu philosophy's cyclical conception of time, as explained by Gavin Flood, affirms that every period has a spiritual decline, and the conclusion of a yuga is frequently linked to moral decay (Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism*). Thus, Vikas Sharma's portrayal of a "modern wasteland" and "Pancham Yuga" in the novel serves as a warning about the perils of eschewing dharmic principles in the pursuit of unbridled individualism.

Revivalism as Cultural Renaissance: Hindu Identity and Nationalist Reclamation

An example of the wider fight for Hindu identity in the postcolonial globe is Sandhya's father's experience of religious pressure in Pakistan. In the face of colonial and religious incursion, his forced conversion to Islam symbolizes the external forces Hindu society faces and echoes the nationalist fervor of writers like Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan, who saw Hinduism as crucial to India's cultural identity. Similar themes are explored in Narayan's *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* and Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, which show Hindu tenacity in the face of ideological impositions (Naik, *A History of Indian English Literature*).

In order to combat the alienation brought on by Western influence, Ashis Nandy contends in *The Intimate Enemy* that Hindu revivalism constituted both a cultural renaissance and a psychological reclamation. Vikas Sharma's novel reinforces the story of Hinduism's tenacity by showing Sandhya's father's survival and eventual acceptance of his Hindu identity.

The Assault of Modernity and Secularism on Communal Unity

The assault of modernity and secularism on communal Hindu unity has become a pressing concern in contemporary India, where the forces of globalization, individualism, and secular ideologies have led to a gradual weakening of the traditional social and cultural bonds that once united Hindu communities. In today's India, secularism, often interpreted as religious neutrality, has led to the sidelining of Hindu identity in public discourse, creating a sense of alienation within the majority community.

Scholars such as Rajeev Bhargava contend that this idea of secularism has been used in ways that marginalize Hindu cultural practices and values in public life and state policies (*The Challenge of Secularism in India*). Meanwhile, a shift in society has been brought about by modernity's emphasis on consumerism, individual rights, and technical advancement, which has diminished the sense of communal identity derived from shared cultural and spiritual traditions. With groups like the BJP and RSS advocating for a Hindu-centric view of national identity and highlighting the need to restore Hindu unity in the face of increasing religious and social division, identity-based politics have further exacerbated this conflict between contemporary secular values and Hindu communal cohesion. In this regard, Hindu revivalism is not only a cultural reclamation; rather, it is an essential response to protect the communal and

spiritual integrity of a society that is being threatened by the forces of contemporary secularization.

Vikas Sharma's novel examines how modernity affects social bonds, showing how secularism and individualism rip apart Hindu society. Vindhya's children's behaviour and the breakdown of traditional values in her life serve as an example of how alienation and a lack of moral compass can occur in a secular society. The story implies that Hindu communal ties are weakened by secular modernity, a viewpoint shared by revivalist leaders who saw Western ideas as dangers to India's spiritual cohesion (Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*).

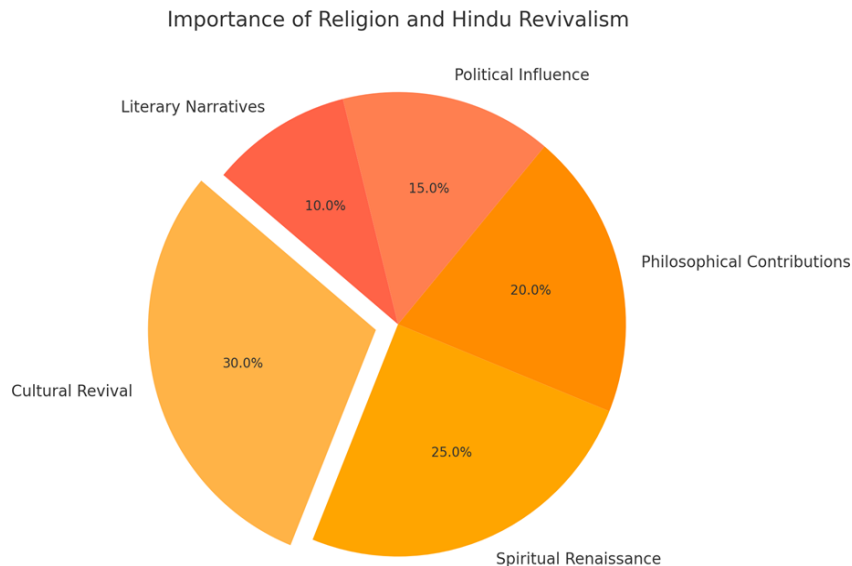
Conclusion: Hindu Revivalism as A Powerful Response to Modern Crises

In India's current stage of sociocultural development, where the preservation of its cultural legacy and identity is threatened by the forces of globalization, secularism, and internal diversity, Hindu revivalism is an absolute necessity. Novels like Vikas Sharma's *Ideas and Events*, which remind readers of the breadth and flexibility of Hindu thought, are crucial to this resurgence because they engage Hindu philosophy and ideals with the intricacies of contemporary life. *Ideas and Events* revives crucial ideas like karma, dharma, and moksha as timeless principles providing moral clarity and purpose by examining characters who negotiate existential and ethical dilemmas within Hindu frameworks.

This re-engagement with Hindu philosophy is particularly crucial now, as India grapples with the erosion of traditional values amidst the forces of individualism, materialism, and social fragmentation. Such works go beyond nostalgia, presenting Hinduism as a living tradition equipped to address contemporary challenges and sustain collective identity in a rapidly shifting world. As India faces intensified debates on secularism and pluralism, *Ideas and Events* exemplifies how Hindu revivalism can be a unifying force, reinforcing the nation's cultural backbone while asserting an indigenous philosophical voice within global discourse. The role of revivalist literature is not merely to reflect on heritage but to actively shape India's future through a sustained commitment to its spiritual and cultural integrity.

Hindu revivalism is positioned in *Ideas and Events* as a tool for dealing with contemporary existential and moral issues. Vikas Sharma's story highlights the belief that Hinduism's depth and adaptability provide solutions to today's moral confusion by portraying Hindu revivalism as both a spiritual renaissance and a cultural reclaim. The novelist highlights the novel's appeal for a return to dharma as a means of achieving resilience and renewal through the use of mythological motifs and karmic

cycles. Similar to the views of Hindutva advocates M.S. Golwalkar and Deendayal Upadhyaya, who favoured a single Hindu identity over Western individualism, Vikas Sharma criticizes secularism and individualism as factors that undermine Hindu society's communal ethos (Golwalkar, *We, or Our Nationhood Defined*). The revivalist criticism of Western secularism, which is perceived as undermining traditional values and creating spiritual estrangement, is reflected in Vindhya's way of life and moral decay. This is consistent with the criticism in Tagore's *Gora*, where the main character struggles with the conflict between Hindu inclusion and nationalist fervour, finally aiming for unity amid variety (Tagore, *Gora*). Through Vindhya's children death, Vikas Sharma's novel illustrates the Hindu revivalist theory that secular individualism erodes the moral foundation of society.



The pie chart illustrates the multifaceted importance of Religion and Hindu Revivalism in shaping cultural, spiritual, philosophical, political, and literary narratives. Cultural Revival holds the largest share (30%), emphasizing the reawakening of Vedic philosophy to preserve heritage and national identity. Spiritual Renaissance (25%) highlights the relevance of Hindu principles like dharma and karma in addressing modern moral dilemmas. Philosophical Contributions (20%) reflect the integration of ancient wisdom by thinkers such as Swami Vivekananda and Dayananda Saraswati to align spirituality with modernity. Political Influence (15%) and Literary Narratives (10%) also play significant roles in the revivalist movement.

showcases the role of organizations like RSS and BJP in defining Hindu identity within Indian nationalism. Finally, Literary Narratives (10%) underscore the power of literature in exploring Hinduism's role in resolving contemporary existential challenges. The orange hues symbolize spiritual awakening, aligning with the ethos of Hindu revivalism.

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