



1. After gaining independence, India defined itself as a secular state. In recent times, however, particularly since the 1980s, India has experienced a resurgence of religious nationalism. Hindutva, the ideology of Hindu nationalists, manifests itself in India today as an organised and militant form of Hindu supremacism, which demands the setting up of a state in which civic rights, nationhood and national culture would be defined by Hinduism. Its proponents have, in recent times, been responsible for a number of acts of religious violence. One of the most significant of these was the destruction of a mosque, the Babri Masjid, in Ayodhya in 1992. They demanded that a temple be established at the site of the mosque, which some Hindus believe to be the birthplace of the Hindu god Rama. Hindutva activists justify incidents such as this by arguing that Muslim rulers destroyed Hindu temples in the past, thereby damaging Hindu pride. They see the present destruction of ancient mosques as crucial for recovering a sense of Hindu dignity and pride. There have been several incidents of violence and rioting between Hindus and Muslims in recent times, linked directly with this temple-mosque controversy.

**(adapted from *A Guide to Hinduism* by Maya Warrior, Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies, The University of Leeds, 2006)**

2. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), English Indian People's Party, pro-Hindu political party of post-independence India. It is 'right wing' and represents the views of Hindu Nationalism (Hindutva). The party has enjoyed broad support among members of the higher castes and in northern India. It has attempted to attract support from lower castes, particularly through the appointment of several lower-caste members to prominent party positions.

The BJP traces its roots to the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS; Indian People's Association), which was established in 1951 as the political wing of the pro-Hindu group Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS; "National Volunteers Corps") by Shyama Prasad Mukherjee. The BJS advocated the rebuilding of India in accordance with Hindu culture and called for the formation of a strong unified state.

In 1967 the BJS gained a substantial foothold in the Hindi-speaking regions of northern India. Ten years later the party, led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee, joined three other political parties to form the Janata Party and took over the reins of government. Plagued by factionalism and internal disputes, however, the government collapsed in July 1979.



The BJP advocated Hindutva ('Hindu-ness'), an ideology that sought to define Indian culture in terms of Hindu values, and it was highly critical of the secular policies and practices of the Indian National Congress (Congress Party). The BJP began to have electoral success again in 1989, when it capitalised on anti-Muslim feeling by calling for the erection of a Hindu temple in an area in Ayodhya considered sacred by Hindus but at that time occupied by the Babri Masjid (Mosque of Bābur). By 1991 the BJP had considerably increased its political appeal, capturing 117 seats in the Lok Sabha (lower chamber of the Indian parliament) and taking power in four states.

The demolition of the Babri Masjid in December 1992 by organizations seen to be associated with the BJP caused a major backlash against the party. The mosque's destruction also led to violence throughout the country that left more than 1,000 dead. The party was regarded with scepticism and suspicion by many committed to secularism in contemporary India. In late 2018 the BJP suffered large election losses. Of the five states that held elections in November and December, the BJP lost in all five, including its strongholds of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh.

**(adapted from *Bharatiya Janata Party* in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*)**

3. Hindutva is not a word but a history. Not only the spiritual or religious history of our people, as at times it is mistaken to be by being confounded with the other cognate term Hinduism, but a history in full. Hinduism is only a derivative, a fraction, a part of Hindutva. Unless it is made clear what is meant by the latter, the first remains unintelligible and vague. Failure to distinguish between these two terms has given rise to much misunderstanding and mutual suspicion between some of those sister communities that have inherited this inestimable and common treasure of our Hindu civilization. What is the fundamental difference in the meaning of these two words would be clear as our argument proceeds. Here it is enough to point out that Hindutva is not identical with what is vaguely indicated by the term Hinduism. By an 'ism' it is generally meant a theory or a code more or less based on spiritual or religious dogma or creed. Had not linguistic usage stood in our way then 'Hinduness' would have certainly been a better word than Hinduism as a near parallel to Hindutva. Hindutva embraces all the departments of thought and activity of the whole Being of our Hindu race. Therefore, to understand the significance of this term Hindutva, we must first understand the essential meaning of the word Hindu itself and realize how it came to exercise such imperial sway



over the hearts of millions of mankind and won a loving allegiance from the bravest and best of them.

(adapted from *The Essentials of Hindutva* by V.D. Savarkar, 2016)

## EXAMPLE OF A FINAL SUMMARY

After gaining independence, India defined itself as a secular state. Since the 1980s, India has experienced a resurgence of religious nationalism.

Hindutva, broadly meaning 'Hindu-ness' is an Indian Nationalist movement that calls for the setting up of a state in which civic rights, nationhood and national culture would be defined by Hinduism. It has been associated with religious violence. For example, the destruction of the Babri Masjid, in Ayodhya in 1992. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), is an Indian political party that is 'right wing' and represents the views of Hindu Nationalism (Hindutva). The BJP began to have electoral success again in 1989, when it capitalised on anti-Muslim feeling by calling for the erection of a Hindu temple in an area in Ayodhya considered sacred by Hindus but at that time occupied by the Babri Masjid. The BJP has broad support among members of the higher castes and in northern India. It advocated the rebuilding of India in accordance with Hindu culture and called for the formation of a strong unified state. The party, led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee, joined three other political parties to form the Janata Party and took over the reins of government. Hindutva campaigners justify incidents such as this by arguing that Muslim rulers destroyed Hindu temples in the past.

The Hindutva movement itself states: 'Hindutva is not a word but a history. Not only the spiritual or religious history of our people as at times it is mistaken to be by being confounded with the other cognate term Hinduism, but a history in full. Hinduism is only a derivative, a fraction, a part of Hindutva.'

It also states: 'Hindutva embraces all the departments of thought and activity of the whole Being of our Hindu race. Therefore, to understand the significance of this term Hindutva, we must first understand the essential meaning of the word Hindu itself.'



**Here are three more resources - this time there is a more specific focus on the origin and background of the Upanishads (Theme 1A). Try yourself to make a summary.**

1. The genesis of the Upanishadic understanding, that the self and cosmic reality were one, is clear. First, the Shatapatha Brahmana stated that the most perfect ritual was, in fact, to be equated to the universe itself, visible and invisible. Second, the Aranyakas made clear that the individual initiated practitioner was the ritual itself. So, if the ritual equals all reality and the individual adept equals the ritual, then the notion that the individual equals all reality is easily arrived at. The Upanishads were arrived at, then, not by philosophical speculation, but by ritual practice. Later Upanishads of the orthodox variety (that is, early texts associated with a Vedic collection) omitted most reference to the ritual aspect and merely stated the concepts as they had been derived.

Most importantly, the concepts of rebirth (reincarnation) and the notion that actions in this life would have consequence in a new birth (karma) were first elaborated in the Upanishads. This evidence shows that the concept of karma, or ethically conditioned rebirth, had its roots in earlier Vedic thought. But the full expression of the concept was not found until the later texts, the Upanishads, which are called the Vedanta, or the end or culmination of the Vedas. Therefore, the notion of reaching unity with the ultimate reality was seen as not merely a spiritual apotheosis, but also a way out of the trap of rebirth (or redeath).

**(Adapted from *Encyclopedia of Hinduism* by Jones and Ryan 2007)**

2. The Upanishads are a collection of texts of religious and philosophical nature, written in India probably between c. 800 BCE and c. 500 BCE, during a time when Indian society started to question the traditional Vedic religious order. Some people during this time decided to engage in the pursuit of spiritual progress, living as ascetic hermits, rejecting ordinary material concerns and giving up family life. Some of their speculations and philosophy were compiled into the Upanishads. There is an attempt in these texts to shift the focus of religious life from external rites and sacrifices to internal spiritual quests in the search for answers. Etymologically, the name Upanishad is composed of the terms upa (near) and shad (to sit), meaning something like "sitting down near". The name is inspired by the action of sitting at the feet of an illuminated teacher to engage in a session of spiritual instructions, as aspirants still do in India today.



The books, then, contain the thoughts and insights of important spiritual Indian figures. Although we speak of them together as a body of texts, the Upanishads are not parts of a whole, like chapters in a book. Each of them is complete in itself. Therefore, they represent not a consistent philosophy or worldview, but rather the experiences, opinions and lessons of many different men and women.

Although there are over 200 surviving Upanishads, only 14 are considered to be the most important. The names of these Upanishads are: Isa, Kena, Katha, Prasna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Chandogya, Brhadaranyaka, Svetasvatara, Kausitaki, Mahanarayana and the Maitri. These texts provide the basic source for many important topics of Indian philosophy and all major philosophical themes are covered in their pages. The purpose is not so much instruction as inspiration: they are meant to be expounded by an illuminated teacher from the basis of personal experience. The Upanishads do not claim that our brain is entirely useless; it certainly has its use. However, when it is used to unlock the great mysteries of life, the eternal, the infinite, then it simply is not enough. The highest understanding, according to this view, comes from direct perception and intuition.

**(extract adapted from *Ancient History Encyclopedia* by C. Violatti, 2014)**

3. Because the Upanishads constitute the concluding portions of the Vedas, they are called vedanta (“the conclusion of the Vedas”), and they serve as the foundational texts in the theological discourses of many Hindu traditions. The Upanishads became the subject of many commentaries and sub-commentaries, and texts modelled after them and bearing the name “Upanishad” were composed through the centuries up to about 1400 CE to support a variety of theological positions. Western scholars have called them the first “philosophical treatises” of India, though they neither contain any systematic philosophical reflections nor present a unified doctrine. Indeed, the material they contain would not be considered philosophical in the modern, academic sense. Contrary to the assertion of early Western scholars, the Sanskrit term Upanishad did not originally mean “sitting around” or a “session” of students assembled around a teacher. Rather, it meant “connection” or “equivalence” and was used in reference to the homology between aspects of the human individual and celestial entities or forces that increasingly became primary features of Indian cosmology. The Upanishads present a vision of an interconnected universe with a single, unifying principle behind the apparent diversity in the cosmos, any articulation of which is called brahman. Within this context, the Upanishads teach



that brahman resides in the atman, the unchanging core of the human individual. Many later Indian theologies viewed the equation of brahman with atman as the Upanishads' core teaching.

Thirteen known Upanishads were composed from the middle of the 5th century through the 2nd century BCE. The first five of these—Brihadaranyaka, Chandogya, Taittiriya, Aitareya, and Kaushitaki—were composed in prose interspersed with verse. The middle five—Kena, Katha, Isa, Svetasvatara, and Mundaka—were composed primarily in verse. The last three—Prasna, Mandukya, and Maitri—were composed in prose.

**(adapted from *The Upanishads* by P.Olivelle in Encyclopaedia Britannica)**