

Communalism in India: Historical perspective, causes & consequences and strategies to combat communalism in India

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Abstract

Communalism is one of the great threats in Indian stability, one side it is consider for the love and respect for one's community, on the other side; it acquired the symbol of derogatory attitude towards the other community, based on intolerance and almost verging abhorrence of being violence. Earlier this had happened in India; due to the sudden impression of various socio-economic and religious forces happened in India, as well as the role of British Empire in India. The nature of this ideology was changing from time to time. After partition of India, this moved on surface more and more and it was understood as a conflict and hatred between the India's two major communities Hindus and Muslims. For the sake of power politics many political parties used religions as their target and also started mobilising one community against the other for considering their narrow political interests.

Keys words: Communalism, root causes, constitution, political parties, role of media,

Introduction

India is one of the greatest country in this world where there is pluralistic society lived. Almost all major religions of the world are born and synthesis in this country. It is all about the product of a synthetic culture, where people of different religion connected with each other in one aspect or the other aspect. Due to the cohesiveness of these synthetic cultures, various outsiders' powers wanted to expand their imperialism and colonialism in India. Earlier the roles of Mughal were remained dominant, later they shifted all their ideologies and culture to next generations. ¹

After that the roles of British were quite undeniable. They left no stone unturned to shaped Indian society according to their perspective and design. Before that the British there was the role of Feudal lords who considered themselves a very peaceful and they all believed on religion. So when British entered in India, they slightly took the advantage of competition. Before we discuss the communalism it is necessary to discuss what does communalism means.

According to Bipin Chandra

"Communalism is basically ideology. Communal riots are only one consequence of the spread of this ideology. Communalism is the belief that because the group of the people follow a particular religion they have as a result, common secular,

that is social, political and economic interests It is the belief that in India religious groups, like Hindus Muslims, Sikhs and Christians from different and distinct communities; that all the followers of religion share not only commonality of religious interests; but also common secular interest; that there is and can be no such a thing as an Indian nation or Muslims nation and so on; that India can therefore only be mere confederation of religious communities.”

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In this way Bipin Chandra analysis that in first stage communalism ideology is strong among the follower of same religion. But in second stage the belief of follower of same religion are dissimilar and divergent from the interest of follower of another religion. Third stage the interest of follower of different religion mutually incompatible and antagonistic and hostile.³ However the term communalism was first used by the British Colonialist to describe colonies like India and Malaysia where substantial religious minorities existed alongside a religion majority. The colonial used this term, for indicating communalism in negative aspect that is bigotry parochialism and divisiveness and helping to describe its civilization mission.⁴ Communalism in India is mainly in India is used in perspective to Hindus Muslims tensions.

Historical allusion of the communalism in India

In India let's see, it's one of the most powerful country in south Asia, which has a great geographical position in the world. Due to its geopolitical condition, all most all major powers, rulers, as well empire of different era, they wanted to enter in this country. Everyone has had the different motto. Some came here to accumulated wealth, while some came here to expand their empire. Some had the motto to plunder the great wealth from India. For these kinds of purpose, they had started every obsession to meet their end. There was long historical background of this country. Let us see one by one in brief.

1. Role of British Empire

British came in India as traders, but soon they had become the masters of all things. Before, British came in India. Most of the feudal lords were settled in India. All they were living in peace. They had assessed one thing here, that the role of religion was quite dominated. They thought, it was a better option to divide the people on the basis of religion. Earlier they could not divide the people; there was great stability in India. But when the fight for freedom started against them, they grew apprehensive to restore the stability of their empire in India. For this sake, they adopted every means to furtherance their interest in India. The matter remained very silent up to 1857. By getting, the Hindus Muslims unity in the First War of Independence India. They had been worried about their immovability in India. They had moved the policy of divide and Rule. They had started every means to divide the people of India, some encouraging every community on the basis of religions, some time on the basis of castes. They encourage peoples for their representation, their separate identities .In fact, they could not divide people but

people got automatically divided themselves. In this ways the feeling of communalism raised in India. ⁵

2. Nature of Freedom struggle in India

When, the British had entered in India. They settled their chain of communication. In the same way they were welcome whole heartily by the Indian people in the earlier stages. So when the situation came arrived and they started to neglect the Indian culture and tradition in every walk of life. The revolution of 1857 took place. In this revolution, both Hindus and Muslims started together fight against the British tyrannical attitude. When the revolution came to an end, British Hanged 27,000 Muslims in Delhi. From there onward the Muslims were targeted. British first tried to help the Muslims, in order to gain their support. They had urged landlord newly young educates for the fostering the separation of the Indian society. They started dividing people on the basis of castes. They motivated Brahmin against Non Brahmin. They allowed some writers for spreading communal ideologies through their news papers, literature and posters, so this was pointed division of Indian society on the basis of religions. ⁶

3. Role of social reformer and their prevailing attitude toward communalism in India.

In the later parts of 19th century and earlier part of 20th century, large number of orthodox leaders social reformers grown up. They were very worrying about the culture and tradition of their communities. Some social reformers belong to minority community in India. They were also worrying about their isolated culture and tradition. The leaders of each community tried to promote the culture of their own communities. In this ways sir sayed Ahmed khan played important role in transformation of Indian society in the first stage. Later his attitude also changed, and he went toward in favoritism of his own community, and also laid the foundation of Muslim communalism in India. In 1880 he had declared that Hindus and Muslims interest are different and conflicting and it could not determine in the same ways. ⁷ Some other leaders also felt that the culture of their community were distinct and superior. In this ways there was sense of belonging could grow more and more. There were various rudiments of and fundamentalism conservatism started grew in India. Such a type of always compelled them to adopt the sense of secularism. That is why they could never adopt the religious tolerance in India. ⁸

4. Temperament of partition of India

The freedom movement took along side with a major disaster that is of partition of India, on 15 August 1947, into two major parts one side it represented as India and other side it indicated as Pakistan. It was a kind of major upheaval and also horror whose outcome are demoted to our combined unconsciousness. There were diversities in India, its composite culture and tradition remained unsaved. The partition which held in India was only on basis of religion and

the interests of both the leaders of two particular communities. On the 15 August 1947 there was bloody partition took place, on the same night communal riots erupted and near about some 5, 00,000 people got killed and many more injured. Near about 55.00,000 people left their homes. For six weeks the violence remained continued across the whole north India. There were lot of murders rapes and also property lost. So this bloody partition left both the communities Hindus and Muslims ever panic. ⁹

5. Politics of Hindutva and ideologies.

After partition it was thought that problem of communalism would soon end. But nothing like that happened. The Muslim who remained in India after partition, they were again had a desire for further partition of the country. After partition up to 1970 there were usual causes of communal feeling in the country as it was earlier happening. But the situation changed quietly after 1980 when there was *khalistan* movement took place in Punjab. It further fueled communalism in India. ¹⁰

From the mid 1980s there was new waves of politics started, a new kind of Hindu nationalism appears in Indian civic life. Most of the Hindu revivalist had made a propaganda that Muslims were in minority in India but always threatened the Hindu majority. In this ways most of the Hindu leaders as decided to make India as Hindu nation (*Rashtra*). In this period BJP and other political parties played important role in mobilising peoples on the name of religion and nationalism. This paved the ways for great destruction of Babri mosque in 1992. After that the feeling of communalism culminated more and more. This could be turned out again in the shape of Gujarat riots in 2002. ¹¹

6. Constitutional hypocrisy

In Indian constitution part third clearly represent some fundamental rights for the citizens of India. The nature of these rights are very hard it cannot change or abridge away. Some fundamental rights also provided to minority community. Article 28, 29 and 30 clearly represents the minority's community interest. However under these articles minority communities shall have the right to maintain its culture tradition as well as education of their choice. But some time these rights are being used in extraordinary sense, by the personal law with help of community concerned. This has already been seen in Shah Bano controversy in 1986. So these rights also become the base of prejudice between the minority and majority community. Some time the interest of minority community goes against the interest of majority community. In the same way, majority community demands for the implementation of Uniform Civil Code under the article 44 of Indian constitution. Due to absence of uniform civil code, every community represents different and divergent interest. In the same ways these interest some time becomes the base of communalism and communal riots. ¹²

7. Socio- economic inequity and class conflicts

The internal stress and strain between majority community and minority community for the purpose of socio economic necessity of life also promoted communal hatred at the mass level. There are various scholars presented the idea that communalism is raised in India is due to the product of class conflicts. Some time upper classes tried to dominate lower classes; it also created the feeling of hatred, bigotry and fanaticism. Generally the need of every community is different from the needs of other community. Some their interest collides this lead to communal riots. Muslims in India is often represented the claim after partition of the country that they were continued exploited and deprived by Hindus majority. In this ways this is another cause that can be seen in India for giving birth to communalism and communal riots in India.¹³

8. Political competitions

India is a largest democracy country in the world where the political competition between the political leaders common there. Every leader for the purpose of gaining political powers asserted many ideologies, repeated the past of other communities, raised many slogans also generated the feeling of communalism in India. Some time the reaction of all these communal feeling turned out in the shape of communal riots.¹⁴

9. Role of Media in spreading communalism in India

Quite often it has been seen that the media instead of following scientific knowledge it continued to followed communal horror in the country. Most of the communal riots took place in India; all these are the sudden expression of long term communal feeling generated in the heart of communities and some time abrupt in the shape of communal riots. These riots are infect are the essential parts of communalism. The role of media remained quite powerful in spreading communal ideologies, behavior and reactions of different communities. During the freedom struggle the role of news papers and media remained quite good. It was all to spread communal harmony at that time. Somehow the partial attitude of media seen in many place during the freedom struggle, likewise the controversy of Urdu, Hindi in 1880s. In earlier 20th century the issue of *khilafat* agitation also prevailed. Therefore much broke was also done to broaden the gap both the communities on religious basis. It was also remained a kind of prejudiced between the communities. However the projection of media after partition of India quite changed. Some of the Muslims owned newspapers and channels also spread the interest of their community. On the other side some Hindus Owned press and newspapers also showed and claimed the interest of its own community. Many facts were distorted; many other issues were also largely misrepresented. In the same ways there was remained widening the gap between the two communities.¹⁵

After Partition the media also remained continue in highlighting various controversial issues in which Hindus casting Muslims and Muslims casting Hindus. There was much controversy remained on the issues like uniform civil code, Shah Bano case, Salamn Rushdie's book *The*

Satanic Verses, the issues of Triple Talaq, Aameena Arab Marriages. Besides these, the news of some other communal riots also sharpened the division of both the communities Hindus and Muslims. The presses of both the communities showed the views of their own communities, and somehow they all degenerated the facts and created the biased feeling among the communities,¹⁶

General impacts of Communalism

- **People Killing:** Communalism is a kind of serious diseases, which devastated society internally. Communalism off shoot communal riots where genocide, mass murders, killing, looting, plundering take place.¹⁷
- **Violation of human rights:** Communalism caused large scale human rights violation, as more poor and needy people suffered more and more. They lost their home as we already seen in many communal riots before. Some time women loss their husbands. Sometime children loss their parents and become orphans for the rest of life.¹⁸
- **Stress on land buildings:** Most of the town that grows in cities later, the real reasons behind these cities was migrations. Many people tried to settle the peaceful areas where they could find better settlement of land, business, as well as peace. People disturbed of one area try to accumulate other areas where the poor people lived already there. The rich people also acquire land from poor people there. In this way new inhabitants feel sometime problems there with already existing non Muslims there. In this way this again will become the fertile ground for communalism there. This could be seen in the Aligarh, Moradabad and Bombay.¹⁹
- **Political parties and orgainstions work on communal divide:** Generally it has been seen the structure of political parties in India. They orgained on the basis religion, Muslim league, BJP, Shiv sena, Hindu Mahsbha, Alali Dal. All these parties are arranged on religion basis. Therefore at the time of election these political parties select candidates belong to their community. Political leader belong to particular religion, will play every means to secure votes at the time of election. In this way communalism prevent Fair selection of efficient candidates in election.²⁰
- **Ballot votes casts on communal basis.** Generally people cast votes to those candidates who belong to their community. In this way candidates who deserve more move out there. After securing the largest amount of vote the candiates declared to be elected. After declaring elected, he will promote the interest of the community to which he belongs. In this way whole system of the government would be disturbed there.²¹

Strategies to combat the communalism in India:

- **Develop the rationality among people**
Efforts must be done to develop rationality among the people, so that they are able to understand the distortion of complex history. There were lot of communal riots had happened in India, the reasons behind these riots were misrepresentation and

manipulation of historical ideas, myth, identity and also some sort of belonging. There must be change the projection of history at all level of schools, colleges and universities. One must study history impartially.²²

- **Develop the concept of secularism in India**

In fact the Indian constitution relegates on the principle of secularism. But in practice it somewhere little used. Because, in India there is diversity, multi religions people are living here. People of every religion has its own customized culture, so in this way it is necessary to encourage every person in society to respect the sentiment of every religion, enjoy it all festivals. In schools, colleges must orgainse the program me that could respect the sentiments of every religion. It should not use songs poster that could relate to particular community.²³

- **Need to build strong cohesion at society level.**

It is the right of every community to live peacefully, independent. There is need to develop the strong bond in society. So that people adopt the culture tradition of his community apart from the identities of other community. There must be need to develop social program me at the schools colleges that could encourage students to cooperate each other at normal time.²⁴

- **Need for peaceful institutions**

There is need to established peaceful institutions, where the memberships form every community happily welcome. It will give a way to members of every community to work together to share the common bond of solidarity. This will give a new message to all the individuals of society, in this way they will remove all fear and hatred, and will also give a way for respect love and understanding²⁵

- **Need for social campaigns**

There must be need for organizing long campaigns for the de communalizing people in India. The task of campaign must be to ensure all people of the society, regardless of caste colour and religion, the socio economic background of communal ideologies and also to insist the drawbacks of this disease at social level and national level.²⁶

- **Need for strong Anti communal commission at both national level and state level.**

There is perfect need for the country to settle the anti communal commission at state level and national level. The commission must be empowered to check the miscreant's role in political sphere and every other sphere where they are spreading the communal ideologies and support communalism.²⁷

- **Need for impartial mass media.**

In present days it is consider that media is fourth organs of the government. But unfortunately the role of media whether it is prints media or electronics media, the role

always remained partial for spreading the communal thriller in the country Legislature should deliberately make strong laws that could deal effectively with biased media.²⁸

Conclusion:

No doubt, Communalism today has become a serious threat to stability and integrity of country. Since then it came into existence, it had continued to destroy the country's awakening culture, tradition. It is infect a negative concept that had brought the partition of the country as it always used against the nationalism. Now Days, It is a kind of deadly weapon in the hands of politicians for mobilising one community on the basis of religion, against another community, for the purpose of securing the majority of votes in election. Communalism is by no means a resolution to any problems. Because it is an ideology, that always used to promoted hatred and violence. It also disturbs the atmosphere of the country as well as it also creates problems at international level. Because the world is shrinking now a days, Different communities of the world they are doing migration, immigration from one country to another. In the same way, by promoting such type of ideology it will divide the society into many communities and sects more and more as result there will large communal riots or violence will be happen. Therefore, the maximum efforts should be done to curb this menace like disease from the society.

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