
Changing Faces Of Communal Disharmony In India Since Akbar's Reign

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ABSTRACT

Communalism, as referred in the western world is a "theory or system of government in which virtually autonomous local communities are loosely in federation". Communalism is a political philosophy, which proposes that market and money be abolished and that land and enterprises to be placed in the custody of community. Development of communalism as political philosophy, has roots in the ethnic and cultural diversity of Africa. It is characterized as, People from different ethnic groups or community, who do not interact much or at all and this has somewhere acted as hindrance in the economic growth and prosperity of Africa. Communalism in South Asia is used to denote the differences between the various religious groups and difference among the people of different community. And generally it is used to catalyze communal violence between those groups. Communalism is not unique only to South Asia, but is also found in Africa, America, Europe, Australia, and Asia. But, it is significant socio-economic and political issue in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Nepal, etc

INTRODUCTION

Communalism is basically an ideology which consists of three elements:-

- A belief that people who follow the same religion have common secular interests i.e. they have same political, economic and social interests. So, here socio-political communalities arises.
- A notion that, in a multi-religious society like India, these common secular interests of one religion are dissimilar and divergent from the interests of the follower of another religion.
- The interests of the follower of the different religion or of different 'communities' are seen to be completely incompatible, antagonist and hostile.

Communalism is political trade in religion. It is an ideology on which communal politics is based. And communal violence are conjectural consequences of communal ideology.

Evolution of communalism in Indian History

If we discuss about Indian society, we will find that, ancient India was united and no such communal feelings were there. People lived peacefully together, there was acceptance for each other's culture and

tradition. For example, Ashoka followed religious tolerance and focussed mainly on Dhamma.

In Medieval period, we have examples such as- Akbar, who was epitome of secular practises and believed in propagating such values by abolishing Jajhiya tax and starting of Din-I- ilahi and IbadatKhana. Same acceptance for different cultures and tradition was practised in several kingdoms throughout India, because of which there was peace and harmony, barring few sectarian rulers like Aurangzeb, who was least tolerant for other religious practises. But, such motives were guided purely for their personal greed of power and wealth. Such rulers and actions by them like- imposing taxes on religious practises of other community, destructing temples, forced conversions, killing of Sikh guru, etc. were instrumental in deepening and establishing the feeling of communal differences in India. But, these incidents were not common as, huge majority of Indians were rural and were aloof from such influences and so people coexisted peacefully. Though, they were very rigid in practising their own rituals and practise, but it never became barrier in the peaceful coexistence. Overall, the Hindus and Muslims in those days, had common economic and political interests.

Communalism in India is result of the emergence of modern politics, which has its roots in **partition of Bengal in 1905** and feature of separate electorate under **Government of India Act,**

1909. Later, British government also appeased various communities through **Communal award in 1932**, which faced strong resistance from Gandhi ji and others. All these acts were done by the British government to appease Muslims and other communities, for their own political needs. This feeling of communalism has deepened since then, fragmenting the Indian society and being a cause of unrest. (by Communal award colonial government mandated that consensus over any issue among different communities (i.e. Hindu, Muslims, Sikhs and others) is precondition for any further political development) Communal consciousness arose as a result of the transformation of Indian society under the impact of colonialism and the need to struggle against it.

Stages in Indian Communalism and how it spread

India is a land of diversity. And it is known for lingual, ethnic, cultural and racial diversity. As, we have discussed above, communalism in India is a modern phenomenon, which has become threat to India's *Unity in Diversity*. We will see the various stages:-

- First stage was **rise of nationalist** Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, etc. with only first element of communalism as discussed above. Roots of this were led in later part of 19th century with Hindu revivalist movement like *Shuddhi movement* of

Arya Samaj and Cow protection riots of 1892. On the other hand movements like Faraizi movement started Haji Shariatullah in Bengal to bring the Bengali Muslims back on the true path of Islam, was one of the religious reform movement which had bearing on communalism in 19th century. Later people like Syed Ahmed Khan, who despite of having scientific and rational approach, projected Indian Muslims as a separate community (qaum) having interest different from others.

- Second stage was of **Liberal communalism**, it believed in communal politics but liberal in democratic, humanist and nationalist values. It was basically before 1937. For example organisations like Hindu Mahasabha, Muslim League and personalities like M.A. Jinnah, M MMalviya, LalaLajpat Rai after 1920s.
- Third was the stage of **Extreme Communalism**, this had a fascist syndrome. It demanded for separate nation, based on fear and hatred. There was tendency to use violence of language, deed and behaviour. For example Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha after 1937.

It spread as a by-product of colonialism, economic stagnations and absence of modern institutions of education and health. These factors caused competition, people started using nepotism (patronage bestowed or favouritism shown on the basis of family relationship, as in business a

nd politics), paying bribes to get job, etc. Short term benefits from communalism started giving validity to communal politics.

Later on, spread of education to peasant and small landlords gave rise to new middle class, as agriculture was becoming stagnant. So, these people started demanding communal representation and this way, social base for communalism widened. Middle class oscillated between anti-imperialism and communalism. Communalism, started rooting deeply, as it was an expression of aspiration and interest of middle class for less opportunity.

Further, from very beginning upper caste Hindus dominated colonial services as they adapted early to colonial structure. Because of Mughal rule and 1857 revolt, colonial government was suspicious towards Muslims and they patronised Hindus. This resulted in resentment in Muslims in late 19th century and they then formed a pressure group under Sir Sayed Ahmed Kahn to bargain as a separate community. In contrast Congress standpoint was always focused on 'rights and freedom of individual' not on a particular community

In several part religious distinction coincided with social and class distinction, causing communal distortion. Communal outlook was given, not by participants but by the officials, politician and journalists. In fact agrarian conflicts, did not assume communal colour until 20th century. For example- Pabna agrarian movement.

Communalism represented a struggle between two upper classes / strata for power, privileges and economic gain. For Example- In western Punjab at that time, Muslim landlord opposed Hindu moneylenders. In eastern Bengal, Muslim *jotedars* opposed Hindu *zamindars*. Later on, communalism developed as weapon of economically and politically reactionary social classes and political forces.

Infamous communal violence in India

- **Partition of India, 1947**

After partition, millions of population were forced to move from both sides of the border. Hindus in Pakistan and Muslims in India were killed in masses, women were raped, and many children lost their parents. There was hatred everywhere, violence didn't see anything except bloodshed. Later, it turned in the problem of refugees and their rehabilitation became one of the biggest challenge for independent India.

- **Anti-Sikh riots, 1984**

This is one of the bloodshed in India, where Sikhs in large number were massacred by anti- Sikh mob. This massacre took place in response to the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by his own Sikh body Guard in response to her actions authorising the military operation.

- **Ethnic cleansing of Kashmiri Hindu Pundits in 1989**

Kashmir is known as the heaven of India and was known for its *Kashmiryat*, i.e. the reflection of love, peace and harmony through brotherhood and unity of Hindu, Muslims and other communities living together. But, the brotherhood saw a serious blow due to Extremist Islamic terrorism in the Kashmir valley, which led to mass killing and large scale exodus of Kashmiri Pundits from the valley to the various regions and corners of the India, giving them the status of refugee in their own country.

- **Babri masjid demolition in Ayodhya, 1992**

According to Hindu mythology, Ayodhya is birth place of Lord Rama and therefore it is sacred place for Hindu religion. But in medieval period Mughal general Mir Baqi, built a mosque, named after Mughal ruler Babur. There were disputes since then and riots also took place. But in 1990, due to some political mobilisation, there was atmosphere of protest by Hindu religious groups and in large scale "karsevak" visited Ayodhya from all parts of India, in support of demolishing Babri masjid and building Ram temple there. These movements caused huge amount of bloodshed and since then it is a disputed matter.

After this, violence was followed by the Godhra incident in 2002, when "karsevak" returning from Ayodhya in a Sabarmati Express were killed by fire in the coaches of train. This act was followed by the extended communal violence in Gujarat. That violence is like black spot in the history of the Gujarat and nation too, as people were killed without any mercy. Hindu and Muslim community became antagonist to each other. Till now people are fighting for justice in Supreme Court, with a ray hope from the Indian Judiciary.

- **Muzaffarnagar violence, 2013**

The cause of this ethnic clash between Jat and Muslim community is very much disputed and has many versions. According to few, it was started after some suspicious post on Social media platform Facebook. According to some, it was escalated after the eve teasing case in Shamli. Let the reasons be unknown, but what matters is, the nature and scale of loss to the country with respect to human resource and peace.

Conclusion

Communal violence is common now days throughout the world. They are known by various alternative names, as in China, the communal violence in Xinjiang province is called ethnic violence. Communal violence and riots have also been called non-State

conflict, violent civil or minorities unrest, mass racial violence, social or inter-communal violence and ethno-religious violence. Violence between Buddhists and the Muslim Rohingya, inhabit Rakhine state (formerly Arakan province) which stretches along most of Myanmar's coast up to the Bay of Bengal and borders the Chittagong province of Bangladesh, erupted in 2013. Such violence in neighbouring countries like Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Pakistan causes violence in retaliation in India also. It also catalyses the problem of refugees, as in case of Pakistani Hindus, etc. Sri Lanka is also facing international critics and United Nations related to ethnic clashes and action of government against minority Tamilians, which has direct bearing on India and Sri Lanka relations and India's internal security.

Increasing diversity, due to influx of populations from all corners of world in western countries like USA, UK, Canada, Australia, etc. is posing the challenge of ethnic clashes and violence in their respective societies.

Communalism can be combated with the help of globalisation as a tool. In the globalised world, all countries are becoming integrated and dependent on each other. Movement of people from one place to other is becoming very easy, in such conditions to avoid such potential violence, governments are already promoting cultural exchanges through shows, programs, heritage walk, cultural visit by students and parliamentarians. Promoting learning of

each other's local language for easy exchange of ideas. With respect to this, recently US President Barak Obama's message on Diwali festival can be seen as an active step to promote cultural mingling and living peacefully. If all the countries cooperate with each other, they can face and solve even the deadliest challenge of terrorism and groups like Al-qaeda, ISIS, etc.

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