

## Divide & Rule Policy: Challenge before Indian Nationalism

**Dr. Pramod M. Pawar**

*Research Guide, Principal, Dhandai Arts & Sci College, Amalner, Tal: Amalner. Dist : Jalgaon (MS) [pramodpawar1761@gmail.com](mailto:pramodpawar1761@gmail.com)*

**Shashikant Bhalchandra Patil**

*Research Scholar, Asst. Prof. Dept. of Pol. Science, Kisan ACS College Parola, Tal: Parola Dist : Jalgaon (MS), [shashipatil8580@gmail.com](mailto:shashipatil8580@gmail.com)*

### **Preparation:**

*India had a trade relation with European countries from the ancient time. The European merchants from various nations like Portuguese, Dutch, French and British came to India for the purpose of trade. The commercial competition gave the birth to struggle among the four powers. Britain became the most super colonial power in the world by 1757. Britain turned to Asia after establishing colonies in America and Africa. India was the richest country in Asia so Britain established its power there soon. The British ruled over India from 1757 to 1947. When British came to India, there were three formidable power like Marathas, Mughals and Afghans. After the declined of these three power, there was no power left in India without British. This situation opened up the fortunes and prospects of British rule in India. Though British came to India with the prime motive of trade and business, they gradually got the political power in India. Britain established their political power in India by the victory in Plassey battle on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1757 and tightened it by the victory in Buxer battle on 22 October 1764. By ruling in India, British made various policies in various situation like Lord Wellesley' Subsidiary Alliance, Cornwallis' Permanent Settlement, Lord Bentinck' Suppression of Thuggees, Lord Dalhousie' Policy of Annexation, Lord Elgin' Holding Darbaars, Lord Lyton' Vernacular Press Act, Lord Ripon' Local Self Government Act, Hunter' Education Commission, Lord Curzon' Partition of Bengal, Minto' Council Act of 1909, Chelmsford' Act of 1919 etc.(01) When they observed, there was a huge unity in all Indians specially in Hindu and Muslim in revolt of 1857, they alerted and used "Divide & Rule Policy" time to time to maintain their power in India forever. In this paper, scholar has tried to searched how the "Divide & Rule Policy" of British colonial became a challenge before the Indian Nationalism.*

### **Objectives:**

- 1) To study the concept of Divide and Rule Policy.
- 2) To review the Divide & Rule Policy of the British Colonial.
- 3) To analyze the Divide & Rule Policy of the British Colonial.

### **Hypothesis:**

- 1) Divide & Rule Policy leads to partition in homogeneous people.
- 2) Divide & Rule Policy helps to retain the political power.
- 3) Divide & Rule Policy gives challenge to Nationalism.

### **Divide and Rule Policy:**

Divide and Rule means maintaining power by breaking up larger concentrations of power into pieces. The use of this technique is meant to empower the sovereign to control subjects, populations or fractions of different interests who collectively might be able to oppose its rule. Machiavelli advised in Book VI of The Art of War “A captain should endeavor with every act to divide the forces of the enemy.” This tactic was utilized by the Roman Ruler Julius Caesar and French Emperor Napoleon. This tactic was used in many different ways by empires seeking to expand their territories. The elements of this tactic involve—(web/01)

- 1) Creating or encouraging divisions among the subjects to prevent alliance that could challenge the sovereign.
- 2) Aiding and promoting those who are willing to cooperate with the sovereign.
- 3) Fostering distrust and enmity between local rulers.

This tactic was also used by British Governors in India to maintain their power and to create division among Indians specially between Hindu and Muslim.

### **Divide & Rule Policy of British:**

Indian jurist Markandey Kartuj wrote in The Nation “ Up to 1857, there were no communal problem in India and no difference between Hindus and Muslims. There was no animosity. In fact, the Hindus and Muslim used to help each other. Hindus used to participate in Eid and Muslim in Holi and Diwali. In the munity of 1857, Hindus and Muslims jointly fought against the British

Empire. This fact shocked to British and they decided to start the policy of divide and rule. In the reaction of 1857' munity, Lord Elphinstone wrote "divide and impera was the old Roman motto, and it should be ours." (web/03) All communal riots began after 1857 because British collector separately called Hindu Pandit and Muslim Maulavi, pay them money and tell them to speak against each other. This kind of communal poison injected into Indian year after year. (web/02) British encouraged and nurtured communalism in many ways. Bipan Chandra remarked, "An effort was made to set region against region, province against province, caste against cast, reformer against orthodox, the moderate against militant and even class against class." (04) British used the divide and rule policy by following action.

### **1) Suppressing Wahabi Movement:**

Though Wahabi movement was religious reform movement it is famous in Indian History for Hindu and Muslim unity. The movement was started in Arabia and brought to India by Saiyyad Ahmad at Bareli. Its main purpose was to establish the Muslim power once again in India by unified all Indian Muslim to oppose the British colonial. Muslim Dharmguru Rashid Ahmad announced that Muslim should be unified with Hindu against the British power. The British governor Lord Elgin cared about the rise of nationalism and launched expedition against the Wahabi. Finally, he suppressed Wahabi Movement.

### **2) Supporting to Aligarh Movement:**

The pioneer of Aligarh Movement was Sir Sayyad Ahmed Khan who was a nationalist and a lover of Hindu-Muslim unity. At beginning, he used to calling the Hindu-Muslim communities "two eyes of the beautiful bride that was India." (04) He was influenced by Maulvi Chirag Ali who had strongly believed that Muslim should be cooperate with the British. Later on, he was weaned by Mr. Beck, English principal of Aligarh college. This was lead to his anti-national and anti-Hindu activities and helped to grow the Muslim communalism which consisted opposition to nationalist and democratic process and loyalty to British. To counter the popularity of Rashtiy Sabha , under the secretariat of Mr. Beck, Mohammedan Anglo-Oriented Defense Association was organized in 1893 to prevent the Muslim from joining the Rashtiry Sabha.

### **3) By Bengal Partition:**

To break the growing Indian Nationalism, British had taken the decision of Bengal partition on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1905. It was a measure of Lord Curzon to keep divided the Bengalis who were

the most politically advanced people in India. The British had successfully driven a wedge between Hindu and Muslim by creating a separate Muslim province of East Bengal. Though, The British Government had clarified it as a mere readjustment of administration. It was an attempt to prevent the Hindu-Muslim unity and to disrupt the growing spirit of nationalism. Surendranath Bannerjee wrote. “The announcement fell like a bombshell. We felt that we have been insulted, humiliated and tricked.” (03) The extremists criticized the Bengal partition as an attempt to divide a homogeneous people.

#### **4) Support to Muslim League:**

The Muslims were very annoyed when Hindu and Rashtriya Sabha opposed to the Bengal partition and this led to communal forces. All the Muslim leaders met at Dacca on 30<sup>th</sup> December 1906 to look after the interest of Muslim community and they founded the Muslim League under the president of Salimullah Khan. The British government was the backbone of Muslim League because they gave the financial and political support. The main aims of the Muslim League were to protect the rights of Muslims and to promote among Muslim feeling of loyalty toward the British government. British government used the Muslim League as a counterpoise to Rashtriya Sabha.

#### **5) Communal Electorate:**

In 1906, the Muslim deputation led by Agha Khan met Lord Minto to put the demand of separate electorate for Muslims. The Viceroy accepted this proposal favorably. The Act of 1909 provided the communal electorate for Muslim. In the Act of 1919 and the Act of 1935, Communal electorate was also covered to Shikhs, Christians, Anglo-Indians and Backwards communities. Nehru said, “It created Political barriers among Muslim, isolating them from the rest of India and reversing the unifying and amalgamating process.” The National Unity was broken up by the communal electorate. M. Gandhi said, “The Morley-Minto Act have been our undoing.” (03)

#### **Analysis:**

The Divide & Rule Policy is the oldest one. It was used by many kings and communal power for the sake of controlling the subjects, populations or fractions of different interests who collectively might be able to oppose its rule. Even the modern political thinker Machiavelli has also suggested to use this policy specially for enemy. The main purpose of this tactic is to foster

the enmity between local rulers and people from difference class. This kind of communal poison injected into Indian by British governors after the revolt of 1857. Wahabi religious reform movement was established by Saiyyad Ahmad at Bareli for the sake of Hindu-Muslim unity against the British communal power. When this movement led to develop the nationalism British governor Lord Elgin suppressed it immediately. Sir Saiyyad Ahmad Khan who was a great lover of Hindu-Muslim unity later on weaned by Mr. Beck. Mr. Beck had succeeded to convince to Sir Saiyyad Ahmad Khan for loyalty to British and it helped to grow the Muslim communalism against the Indian Nationalism. Mr. Beck also tried to his best level to prevent the Muslim from joining the Congress party. The tactic of Divide and Rule was greatly utilized by British governor Lord Curzon in the case of Bengal Partition. The British had successfully driven a wedge between Hindu and Muslim by creating a separate Muslim province of East Bengal. British government gave the financial and political support to establish the Muslim League and used it as a counterpoise to Congress party. The Congress had tried many for unity between Hindu and Muslim but it was broken up by the communal electorate system under the Act of 1909. When Muslim members got representation they supported to British government policies and rejected to Congress demands. In this way, the Divide and Rule policy stood as a challenge before the Indian nationalism.

**Conclusion:**

In short we can say that the Divide and Rule policy was nothing but the national calamity for Indian nationalism. The system of allowing Muslims to vote only for the Muslim candidates had developed a separatist tendency in them. The British Empire used it to divide the unity between Hindu and Muslim and to rule over the India years after years. The Muslims and other minorities had been encouraged by British power to think of themselves in terms of communities and not as Indians. The suppressing of Wahabi movement, the establishment of Aligarh Movement and Muslim league, the Bengal partition and the Communal electorate gave the strength to Divide and Rule policy.

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