

incidents in all the states Gujarat witnessed maximum number of communal riots (92) during the year. The year 1987 also witnessed lot of communal riots, the worst being in Meerut in May 1987 which resulted in enormous loss of life and property. In recent months lot of communal tension has been generated on the issue of Ram Janambhumi and Babri Masjid. The Fundamentalists of the two communities have been claiming exclusive right over the building. At present the case is pending for settlement with the Courts. However, leaders of one community have openly declared that they would not abide by the decision of the Court if it goes against them. This is rather an unfortunate development. No section of the society should be permitted to flout the law. In the meanwhile efforts are on to find a mutually acceptable solution of the issue through mutual consultations and negotiations but no solution seems to be in sight. In short, it can be said that despite efforts by government to curb communalism, it continues to plague the Indian polity.

Communalism at Present

The nature of communal problem in India has undergone some change in the recent years. Whereas the communal riots in the earlier period were confined to certain urban centres only, in recent years the communal riots have tended to spread to the country-side and thus affected even those areas which earlier enjoyed communal harmony.

Secondly, the present day communal riots are not being led by the Brahmin dominated groups like RSS but the younger generations are playing more active role. For example in the riots at Pune, Solapur, Baramati etc. the young Marathas played an active role.

Causes for Communalism. At this stage a natural question poses itself as to why India after four decades of independence has not been able to overcome the problem of communalism and the relations between the members of two communities (Hindus and Muslims) are often strained. According to one scholar "Religion and religious differences as such do not alone cause a riot. Hinduism and Islam may be different in certain respects but neither of them preaches violence or hatred. it is as much against their basic concepts as against their heritage". Again he says "the immediate causes of the riots such as stoning of a Ganesh procession from a mosque, desecration of the idols of the Hindu deities, butchering of some calves on a Durga Puja procession or an occasion of marriage of a Muslim boy with a Hindu girl do no explain away what is behind the riots". In the main the following factors have been responsible for the existence of communalism.

1. In the first place Prof. Ghose says that communalism has flourished in India because the communalist leaders of both the communities, the Hindus and the Muslims, want it to flourish in their community's interest. To

... has shown that members of such organisations tend to aggravate
... by arousing the sentiments of the members of their community.
... these sentiments are aroused the saner elements are pushed back. This
... the elimination of such organisations.

(4) Close watch should be kept over communally sensitive areas like
... bad, Aligarh, Meerut, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Jamshedpur etc. to
... that minor communal incidents do not develop into fullfledged riots.
... purpose more police stations and police force be provided in these

(5) The government should impose cumulative fines on people living in
... which are scenes of frequent riots. This would act as a deterrent and
... the people take more keen interest to resolve their differences amicably.

(6) A strict watch should be kept on places of religious worship to ensure
... they are not used as hiding places by anti-social or communal elements.
... been observed that often religious places have been used by such elements
... other than religious purposes. In a number of cases it was discovered that
... mosques and Gurdwaras were used to store weapons. This should be
... checked to ensure that religious places are used only for religious
... purposes.

(7) Efforts should be made through constant preaching and persuasion
... to remove the distrust and obscurantist prejudice which prevail among the
... members of various communities. Unless this is done the law and order
... machinery can play only a limited role in checking the communal tension.

(8) Eighthly, the people can also play an important role in curbing
... communalism. To prevent communal incidents mixed peace-keeping Mohalla
... committees should be constituted containing influential members of various
... communities. These members can play an important role in defusing communal
... tension and preventing communal clashes.

Ninthly, T.V. and Radio can play a positive role in elimination of
... communalism by organising discussions to emphasise the secular foundations
... available to India. In these discussions persons from various sections of society should
... be invited to produce wider impact.

Tenthly, reduction of economic disparities and inequalities is also
... essential to eliminate a feeling prevailing among the minority community that
... they are being discriminated against. Once these disparities are removed they
... will tend to forget their separate identity.

Eleventhly, some scholars have pleaded that the abolition of religion can
... greatly contribute to the elimination of communalism. But this suggestion is
... not practicable because the Indian society is a highly spiritualised society and
... religion occupies an important position in this society.

violence for the attainment of their narrow objectives. Often they encourage nationalist outlook and growth of communalism. Hindu Parishad in 1980 communal riots in Pune and Sholapur were caused largely due to sharp reaction of Vishva Hindu Parishad against conversion of Harijans to Islam.

7. Out of proportion growth in the Muslim population in India since independence has given rise to misgivings in the minds of the majority community and generated tension in their mutual relations. Some protagonists of majority community have pointed out Muslims population which constituted only 5.1 per cent of the total population in 1947 increased to 11.20 per cent due to lack of interest in family planning among Muslims, conversion of Harijans to Islam, and illegal entry of Muslims from Bangladesh etc. They have felt highly disturbed over this trend and developed hostile attitude towards Muslims which has naturally fanned the feelings of communalism.

8. The role of Pakistan in fostering communal feeling in the country is no less significant. Quite often it has been alleged by the orthodox leaders of the Hindu community that the communal riots are provoked in India by Pakistan through its Indian agents. Further, whenever there is any Hindu-Muslim conflict the Pakistan authorities always hold the Hindus responsible for it and project the impression that the Government of India is also secretly assisting them in these plans. While it cannot be denied that Pakistan has often encouraged and promoted communal riots by instigating the militant sections of the Indian - Muslim community to resort to violence, the Government of India has certainly failed to win the confidence of the

of economy by market forces has resulted in social frustration. In the process only the affluent sections of society have gained. This is interpreted in communal terms. While the Hindus alleged that the government is pampering the Muslims and backward classes, the Muslims alleged the Hindus are getting favoured treatment. No wonder this has urged the leaders of various communities to organise themselves to demand maximum concessions from political leaders. Moin Shakir has rightly said "An analysis of the growth of communalism and communal politics before and after independence, reveals that the determining role has not been played by religion and culture but by non-religious and non-cultural forces operating in the political and economic system.... Under the mask of religion, and tradition, the communal leaders have aimed at protecting the interests of the lower middle class and urban intelligentsia".

10. Both the Union as well as the State Governments are greatly responsible for the growing communalism in the country. On most of the occasions they were taken unaware by the sudden outburst of riots and failed to participate and take preventive measures. Further, when the riots actually broke out they failed to take quick action to nip the same in the bud. Instead of dealing with the situation firmly, mostly the governments have tried to appease the opposition parties the scapegoat by throwing the entire blame for the riots at their door. The attitude of distrust displayed by the Government during the two Indo-Pak Wars of 1965 and 1971 when it did not assign any responsible duties of civil defence to the Muslims, also promoted the feeling among the Muslims that they were not being treated at par with the rest of the citizens and a sense of distrust persists against them. The Government also failed to take any firm action against the communal parties.

11. The loss of credibility of state on account of decline of its institutions, lack of justice, incompetence of law and order agencies, and lack of an equitable economy has encouraged the people to look to the leaders of their respective communities for justice and security. This tendency can be curbed if the state ensures equitable sharing of political power and economic development amongst various sections of community.

12. Finally, the failure of the law enforcing agencies to play an impartial role has also given rise to serious communal riots. It has been observed that in many cases the police itself committed excesses on the minorities as in the case of the Jhansi riots in 1978, in Jamshedpur in 1979 and in Meerut in 1987.

In short it can be said that the main causes which have contributed to communal riots are unhappy—historical memories; uneven economic development of the two major communities; absence of a fairly strong Muslim middle class; selfish new Muslim leadership; poverty and illiteracy among the Muslim masses and growing aggressiveness of certain sections of Hindu population.

It is evident from the above discussion that despite the best intentions of the framers of the Constitution, who declared India a secular state, the element of religion has continued to be a dominant feature of Indian polity.

Quite often narrow-religious feeling found outlet in communal riots which have widened the gulf and schism between the Hindus and the Muslims. If this trend is not kept under check, it can pose a serious threat to the national unity of the country. According to A.R. Desai "If total disintegration of Indian society is to be prevented, it is imperative that these fissiparous tendencies are checked, the demoralization that is creeping in is prevented, the degeneration of liberty into licence is halted and the impatient and selfish cry for right and facilities is curbed". He further asserts "the need to foster moral and spiritual values to replace the growing selfish and materialistic ends, the necessity to inculcate a sense of duties and obligations in place of growing clamour rights and comforts and promotion of a spirit of self-sacrifice, discipline and obedience instead of the mood of assertion, protest and exhibition of bad manners have become urgent if the Indian nation is to be prevented from being torn to pieces".

Suggestions to Overcome Communalism

The Government as well as the political leaders have felt greatly concerned over the persistence of Communalism in India and come forward with numerous suggestions from time to time to overcome this problem. It is not possible to deal with these suggestions in detail here, and only a brief reference to some of the suggestions can be made.

In 1969 the Committee on National Integration suggested (a) joint celebration of community festivals; (b) observing of restraint by the Hindus in taking out processions and playing music before mosques and in Muslim localities; (c) the throwing of *gulas* should not violate norms of decency and decorum; (d) cultivating a sense of respect for religious beliefs and practices of neighbours; and (e) prevention of acts of desecration of idols or violations of taboos observed by others. The Committee also recommended the formation of Ekata Committees at local levels to ensure proper atmosphere and to prevent the anti-social elements from disturbing communal harmony.

(1) As most of the communal riots are sparked off by a minor incident involving a few individuals belonging to different communities and the rumours play a major role in fanning these riots, it is desirable that complete and truthful reports about the actual position should be made available to the people promptly to prevent the minor incidents developing into serious ones.

(2) A close scrutiny of the conduct of the officials concerned with the maintenance of communal peace in any area must be made without delay to weed out the undesirable elements from the administration. There is also need to reorganise the police force and associate members of the minor communities and other weaker sections with the law enforcing agencies. The positive nature of police and law-enforcing administration shall greatly help in gaining the confidence of all sections of society.

(3) As generally the communal tension among the various communities is built up by the militant organisations among these communities effort should be made to curb the growth of such militant organisations. The

7
motivated by their selfish interests, promoted the feeling of communalism. All this, despite the best efforts of Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders, ultimately led to the partition of the country into two states of India and Pakistan. The religious frenzy displayed by the members of the two communities on both the sides. A large number of Muslims migrated to Pakistan and a sizeable number of them were persuaded to stay on in India with an assurance of security of life, religion and property. On the other hand millions of Hindus were forced to leave the territories constituting Pakistan and returned to India. All this created a serious problem of communal harmony.

Communalism in Post Independence Period

The framers of the Constitution, therefore, decided to do away with communal electorates introduced by the British in India. Instead they introduced universal adult franchise by which all the citizen above 21 years of age irrespective of their religion, language, caste, places of residence etc. were given right to vote. They also declared India secular state which means that state was completely detached in matter of religion. The constitution provided to all the citizens the "freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion - subject to public order, morality and law". All persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion".

It forbade the imparting of religious instructions in educational institutions maintained out of state funds, or receiving aid out of state funds. It also provided that "no person shall be compelled to pay any taxes, the proceeds of which are specifically appropriated in payment of expenses for the promotion or maintenance of any particular religious denomination". In fact, they tried to isolate religion from the significant areas of common life. The framers of the Constitution, in the words of M. Setalvad, tried to promote a secular approach and outlook with a view to "wean us away from the approach that in our relations with our fellow beings or in dealing with other social groups we have less and less regard for religion and religious practices and results our lives and actions more on worldly considerations, restricting religion to its influence to what has been called 'proper' sphere, the advancement of the spiritual life and well-being of the individuals".

The constitutional provisions had the desired effect and for some time there was perfect communal harmony. However religion continued to be an important factor in Indian politics. A number of political parties were organised on a religious basis such as Jana Sangh, Muslim League, Majlise Mushawrat, Jamaate-Islami, Akali Dal etc. (These political parties exploited the religious sentiments of the voters to capture greater number of seats). The reasons for the continuance of religion as an important factor in the Indian politics even after the adoption of secular polity can be best stated in the words of Grace Jones. He says "basic religious beliefs survive in disguised form in moral assumptions and cultural norms and they continue to mould the attitudes of many people to such institutions as the family, marriage and the education system. This influence is exercised in a concealed way either at the individual or sub-conscious level or through the medium of indirect pressure politics, and it is, therefore, impossible to assess with any precision. It is nonetheless real for that".

It may be noted that tension has existed not only among the Hindus and the Muslims but even among the members of the same community. F

Communalism in Indian Politics

"...the religious revivalism, suspicion, hatred and distrust between the two major communities, communal organisations, transformation of religious and caste groups into pressure groups to collar off the meagre economic gains flowing from national development, and the reliance of political parties on the voter's loyalty to region or caste have rendered the society in India vulnerable to communal tensions and conflicts".

Meaning of Communalism

Scholars have offered different definitions of 'communalism'. Some view it as an ideology which emphasises the separate identity of a religious group in relation to other groups and often a tendency to promote its own interest at their expense. Prof. Bipin Chandra says "the concept of communalism is based on the belief that religious distinction is the most important and fundamental distinction, and this distinction overrides all other distinctions. Since Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs are different religious entities, their social, economic cultural and political interests are also dissimilar and divergent. As such the loss of one religious group is the gain of another group and vice-versa. If a particular community seeks to better its social and economic situation, it is doing at the expense of the other".

Background

India is land of diverse religions and cultures. Some of the prominent religions which flourish in India include Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism etc. While the Hindus constitute the majority, the members of other religions constitute the minority with Muslims being the largest minority. Unfortunately a proper adjustment has not taken place between the Hindus and the Muslims which has often resulted in violent outbursts and communal riots. It has been asserted by certain scholars that communalism is not a new phenomenon and has been in existence since the times of the Muslims rule during the medieval period. However, this view is not universally endorsed. Persons like Dr. Rajendra Prasad on the other hand hold that the Muslim rulers of India adopted by and large an attitude of tolerance towards their Hindu subjects. To quote him "The attitude of the Muslim conqueror had on the whole been one of tolerance".

Muslims. The riots took a heavy toll of life. It is estimated that 600 to 1000 lives were lost in these riots. In view of the large scale at which these riots took place in Ahmedabad it has been asserted by certain scholars that such riots could not have proceeded without a plan.

In 1970 Bhiwandi, near Bombay, was the scene of fresh riots. The riots started over the stoning of a Hindu procession by certain Muslims. In 1971 and 1972 there were riots at Aligarh, Telicherry and Ahmedabad. The Report of the Union Home Ministry admitted that there was a deterioration in the communal situation since 1960 and it sharply pointed out in a report issued in 1964. According to the Report from 1954 to 1960 there was a consistent downward trend in communal riots. The lowest number of riots was below fifty - occurred in 1958, 1959 and 1960. In 1961, the situations sharply reversed. A substantial fall during the next two years was followed by a rise in 1964 when "largely as a repercussion of communal riots in the East and West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. During the conflicts with Pakistan in 1965 there were communal riots only in some areas. In 1966 despite a slight fall in the incidents, their number was relatively high and they occurred in a wider area than before. In the subsequent years also communal tension has continued to grow and a number of communal riots took place in different parts of the country.

In 1973 once again Meerut was the scene of serious riots which resulted in the death of nine persons and injury to over 40 persons, apart from normal damage to property. In 1974, Delhi, the capital of India witnessed one of the worst communal riots since independence. The riots virtually assumed the shape of a mass fight in the streets. Over 100 shops were burnt ten persons lost their lives while over 300 persons were injured. In view of the serious nature of the riots at Delhi the service of border forces had to be secured. In the subsequent years also the things have hardly shown any improvement and occasional communal conflicts have erupted up in various parts of the country. There was a comparative lull and communal harmony prevailed during the emergency years 1975-77. With the end of emergency and the formation of Government by the Janata Party once again the communal harmony was disturbed and very serious riots broke out at Aligarh in 1978 which resulted in loss of many lives. There were incidents of communal violence in other parts of the country. In 1980 once again communal troubles broke out in various parts of the country. The trouble started at Moradabad, where on the Id day when the prayers were going on some stray animals entered the mosque. In the riots which ensued this incident about 150 persons including some policemen were killed. This was followed by riots in Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, and UP (at Allahabad, Sambal and Bhubaneswar). At some places the situation grew so tense that the army had to be called in to bring the things under control.

example there have been numerous cases of clashes between the Hindus and the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes; or between the Nihang Akalis and the Nirankaris which burst out in open clashes; or conflicts between Sunni-Shia Muslims.

The communal harmony was seriously disturbed between the students of the two communities at the Muslim University. This produced repercussions in West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh and communal trouble for about two years the communal harmony was disturbed in 1963 following the theft of a relic of the Hazratbal mosque at Srinagar. This was followed by and protests from the Muslims of Kashmir. There was genuineness was challenged by the fanatic Muslims and the throne of violence for sometime. This produced a number of Hindus were killed and their houses looted. West Bengal, in which a number of Muslims were killed. Pradesh also riots broke out which were accompanied by arson. As a result

When the Indo-Pak War broke out in 1965 it was generally feared that the communal harmony would pose a serious internal threat to the Hindu-Muslim amity. This united stand was largely responsible for India's victory over Pakistan. In 1966 trouble once again broke out in Maharashtra) on the question of stoning of a Hindu Muslim. The situation became so tense that the police had to resort to firing which resulted in a number of deaths. The next year Srinagar was once again the scene of communal riots. This time the trouble started over the conversion of a Brahman girl to Islam and her marriage to a Muslim. The trouble spread to the Jammu region of the state. The situation became so grave that military assistance had to be sought to bring the things under control. The year also witnessed riots over recognition of Urdu as a second official language of Bihar as well as riots at Malegaon, in Maharashtra. It is needless to repeat that these riots resulted in enormous loss of life and property.

The 1968 once again communal harmony was disturbed in U.P., Assam, and West Bengal. In UP the trouble spots were Meerut and Allahabad, while in Karimganj (Assam) the trouble started over the killing of a cow. A similar incident at Aurangabad led to communal riots. What is worse that the year 1968 for the first time witnessed the communal amity being disturbed in the states of Kerala and Mysore, which had so far been immune from communal tension. But probably the worst riots broke out at Ahmedabad in 1969 the issue of chasing away of certain cows belonging to a Hindu temple.

him "They want communalism to flourish and secularism to perish in the ironical, however, is that if communalism flourishes the Muslim and religious minorities will suffer. For religious minorities there is no alternative to secularism. And to resist and fight communalism and militancy the best weapons would be secularism. They must, therefore, abandon communalism and strive to make secularism in India, strike roots and beer for their interests and be safeguarded by secular Hindus and not by communal Muslims, Sikhs, Christians or Parsis".

2. Secondly, the tendency of the Muslims to keep aloof from the majority community is also party to blame for the growing communal tension. Most Muslims do not take part in the secular-nationalistic politics of the country and have insisted on their being treated as a separate entity and demanded security of life and property, protection of Urdu, reservation for Muslims in services etc. This attitude on their part has prevented them from merging into the main stream of the Indian nation. According to Edward A. Schermerthorn "the Muslims must realize that their future is bound up with the future of secularism and they should support and strengthen the Hindus and others who have launched a crusade against communalism. Without the minorities support their crusade may not succeed".

3. Thirdly, the orthodoxy and obscurantism of the Muslims which makes them feel that they are a distinct entity with their own culture, personal laws, and way of thinking has also prevented them from accepting the modern concepts of religious toleration, secularism etc. In this regard the blame is to be shared by the chauvinist Hindu leaders, who have claimed a dominant position for the Hindu culture. Quite often they have tried to base their culture on the Muslims in the name of Indianisation, which has provoked resistance from the Muslims and led to the revival of demand for separate electorates, and the formation of the *Muslim Sena*. This has encouraged the Hindus to set up *Hindus Sena*. All these developments have tended to aggravate communal tension among the two communities.

4. In the fourth place, certain scholars look at the communal riots as a part of the network of organized and militant Hindu organisations like RSS. For example, Moin Shakir in his book *Politics of Minorities* says "these Communal organisations like R.S.S. They seek to achieve certain political objectives through rioting. Communal violence is the result of political objectives of one community".