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RELIGION AND POLITICS IN INDIA: AN INTERROGATION

Abstract

India attained independence and relatively fulfilled its “tryst with destiny” on 15th August 1947. Following a long night of fateful protests and silent prayers it was a watershed moment in the life of the nation. After debates in the Constituent Assembly, the people of India gave unto themselves a Constitution that along with significant assurance, guaranteed a comprehensive array of basic human rights that occupy a pride of place in Part III of the Constitution. The Preamble from its inception affirmed its purpose to secure to all its citizens, liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship. Article 25 to 28 guaranteed equality in the matters of faith and religion. The 42nd Amendment made it more explicit by inserting the word “secular” in the Preamble. Secularism in Indian context did not mean a country without religion but it ensured the institutional separation of the state from religion and a balanced approach to all faiths. However, a hiatus is amply discernible between theory and practice. Theoretically, India satisfies the test of secularism but in practice, the religious sentiment is exploited. In this paper, I would, most emphatically highlight the mind boggling interrelationship of religion and politics and the practice of secularism in India. Communalism and religious fundamentalism and their relational concernment with the concept of secularism will also be emphasized. It involves multitudinal heterogeneity with diverse shades of involute

deliberation. The volatile phenomenon of religion in contemporary world politics is one of the primary issues that at the same time an integrative force and also a disruptive element that can destabilize the peace and security of a concerned region and also cause a rupture in the elementary fabric of a nation–state.

Keywords: Religion, Secularism, Communalism, Religious fundamentalism, Politics.

Introduction

India is not only the Italy of Asia; it is not only the land of romance, of art and beauty. It is in religion earth's central shrine. India is religion (Bhattacharya 1983). Religion has been the basis of India's thought and life and also the guiding principle against the varied vicissitudes of her history. Freedom of the soul has been the essence of her religious belief and the divinity of human beings and oneness of existence were her external message. It is in India that religion has been made the subject of rigorous enquiry and an object of vast experimentation.

India is a gigantic landmass inhabited by hundreds of millions of people having multitudinous cultural markers, speaking bewildering array of languages, having varying ethnicities marked by profound developments in philosophical thought influenced by north-western region of India. India cannot name the 'actual' proponent of her religion. In fact, religion is a misnomer to characterize India's religious attributes. In true sense of the term, India possesses a '*dharma*' which is not synonymous to religion. India's *dharma* evolved through ages and is still evolving. The Hindus consider the '*Bhagwad Gita*' as sacred text which is but a segmental oration in the *Bhisma Parva* of the great epic *Mahabharata*. Here, the Lord exemplifies the essence of *Dharma*, the incorrigibility of duty and the ontological discourse bounded by philosophical doctrine. Rabindranath Tagore in his exuberant, mind-boggling piece *Sadhana* expresses, "We are enjoined to see whatever there is in the world as being enveloped by God." "I bow to god over and over again who is in fire and in water, who permeates the whole world, who is in the annual crops as well as in the perennial trees". India's *dharma* signifies not merely seeing him in all things, but saluting him, in all the objects of the world (Tagore 1921, 2014). India's religion is realization.

In India, diverse religion and varied streams of philosophy developed indigenously throughout ages. The distinction between theology and philosophy was blurred in India all alone (Bagchi 2016). India witnessed countless religious reformations; the most important was the affirmation of Gautama Buddha, who rose against the excesses of Brahmanism. Brahmanism could make

a comeback because of the debauchery of the Buddhist *bihars* and the incorporation of the principal Buddhist doctrine into Brahmanism by Shankaracharya through the introduction of the *Mayabad* in his interpretation of the *Vedanta*. This act ultimately made Buddhism redundant and Buddha was absorbed into the Hindu pantheon as the Ninth Avatar of Vishnu. The significant fact is that these theatrical changes from one religion into another and back took place without any visible violence between the adherents. In India, the Aryans moved down the Ganges basin and then into the Deccan and beyond, they subjugated many native people while assimilating their rituals into the fold of Brahmanism. Our religious places have roots in our mythology and ancient texts that are accepted by people of all corners of our country.

Indian society is characterized by the tradition of collaboration and accommodation. The historical lineage bears this fact. The different communities not only shared material resources but very often worshipped the same deity. Hindus and Muslims have been contributing to the preservation of each other's shrines. In a village in Marathwada, where there are no Muslims, the Dargah of a Sufi saint is maintained by Hindus. At Bababudangiri in Karnataka, both Hindus and Muslims worshipped the same saint under different names. The Sabarimala Hindu shrine in Kerala has a Muslim 'deity' whom all devotees of the Hindu God worship. Sant Kabir, a Muslim by birth was a devotee of Lord Jagannath whose '*doha*' (verses) are recited till date. Salbeg, yet another Muslim devotee of Lord Jagannath had composed many lyrics which are sung till today. This mutual relationship is based not on tolerance but on respect for and belief in each other's faith. This is India's religion. However, in the study of political science, India is a state that represents its nation. Politically therefore, let's delve into the issues that are politically relevant in the discourse of India's secular politics and or politicization of religion.

Scope of the study

India attained independence and relatively fulfilled its "tryst with destiny" on 15th August 1947. Following a long night of fateful protests and silent prayers it was a watershed moment in the life of the nation. After debates in the Constituent Assembly, the people of India gave unto themselves a Constitution that along with significant assurance, guaranteed a comprehensive array of basic human rights that occupy a pride of place in Part III of the Constitution. The Preamble from its inception affirmed its purpose to secure to all its citizens, liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship. Article 25 to 28 guaranteed equality in the matters of faith and religion. The 42nd Amendment made it more explicit by inserting the word "secular" in the Preamble. Secularism in Indian context did not mean a country without religion but it ensured the institutional separation of the state from religion and a balanced approach to all faiths.

However, a hiatus is amply discernible between theory and practice. Theoretically, India satisfies the test of secularism but in practice, the religious sentiment is exploited. In this paper, I would, most emphatically highlight the mind boggling interrelationship of religion and politics and the practice of secularism in India. Communalism and religious fundamentalism and their relational concernment with the concept of secularism will also be emphasized. It involves multitudinal heterogeneity with diverse shades of involute deliberation. The volatile phenomenon of religion in contemporary world politics is one of the primary issues that at the same time an integrative force and also a disruptive element that can destabilize the peace and security of a concerned region and also cause a rupture in the elementary fabric of a nation–state.

II

Religion undoubtedly, is associated with the spiritual upliftment of human kind yet it has always been utilized for attaining ‘this-worldly’ interests in the form of power, privilege, authority, influence, social status and domination. Religion is an almost universal and pervasive institution in human society. Religion, though a purely spiritual and other-worldly phenomenon, in real life situation changes its epitome and serves as a tool in the hands of the political operatives who systematically manipulates its usage for this worldly gain. The lexical meaning of religion defies the boundary between the private and the public. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines religion as both a) the belief in a superhuman controlling power, especially in a personal god or gods, entitled to obedience and worship, and b) the expression of this in worship or a particular system of faith and worship. Religion, as a belief, is personal and private and as a form of worship is communal or collective involving the dichotomy between ‘we’ and ‘they’- the believers and the non-believers on the one hand and in this or that system of faith on the other. Therefore, religion has the proclivity of both uniting and dividing people. Religion works less as spiritual bond and more as a tool for fulfilling this-worldly material interests (Mukhopadhyay 2005: 215). Today, it has become rather difficult to identify the existence of bigotry and dogmatism in one or the other religion. Those who consider themselves as messiah of God are the ones who have little faith in God. In South Asia, we have witnessed that political battle for control over state power is fought on the issue of secularism versus communalism. Politicization, instituted from above by the nationalist elites, has necessarily politicized the religious ethos of South Asian countries.

South Asia has been the ‘salad bowl’ of cultures. It has for all practical purposes avoided the American-style melting pot model and its individualistic assumptions and anti-communitarian

bias. In a salad, the ingredients retain their distinctiveness, but each ingredient transcends its individuality through the presence of others. In a melting pot, primordial identities are supposed to melt. All nationalities are expected to dissolve in the long run. The contemporary ethnic violence in South Asia can be traced to the systematic efforts being made to impose the melting-pot model upon time-worn Indian realities (Nandy et. al 1997: VI). The creation of *Hindu Rashtra*, revival of Hindu culture, and ethos and demolition of all diverse cultural markers are yet another attempt to homogenize and petrify Indian tradition. The escalation of fundamentalism- Christians, Muslims and Hindus- all over the world in fact proves that 'secularism is dead.'

The word 'secularism' was coined by George Holyoake. In his published book, *Principles of Secularism* in 1859 attempted to define it as "which seeks the developments of the moral and intellectual nature of man to the highest possible point, as the immediate duty of life" (Saxena 1971: 2). Webster's Dictionary defines 'secularism' as "a view of life or of any particular matter based on the premise that religion and religious considerations should be ignored or purposely excluded- a system of social ethics based upon a doctrine that ethical standards and conduct should be determined exclusively with reference to the present life and social well-being without reference to religion" (Webster). *Grolier Encyclopedia* defines 'secularism' as a "philosophical system which limits the destiny of man to the present life" (Grotier, 1956). According to the *Oxford Modern English Dictionary*, secularism is "concerned with the affairs of this world; not spiritual or sacred" (Oxford 1993). Secularism many a times has been equated with anti-religion, atheism and materialism. "Materialism implied for Marx a radical rejection of religion, indeed a militant atheism,- Religion supplies imaginary or 'fantastic' satisfactions that misdirect any rational effort to find real satisfaction. It is 'The opium of the people', a soporific that prevents the oppressed from making any effort to better their lot by resisting their exploiters. Materialism meant for Marx, as it has continued to mean for Marxists, an anti-religious Secularism, regarded as the precondition of any thorough going social reform" (Sabine 1964: VII).

III

Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India had laid the foundation of independent India on the pillars of democracy, socialism and secularism. Whether Nehru really succeeded to secularize every mind of the country is obviously questionable. But the attempt he made to establish a harmonious relation between the two communities, to create peaceful solidarity and feeling of co-existence is undoubtedly a great effort. Though Nehru was an agnostic and

indifferent to religion, he was fully aware of the contribution of religion to society and its stronghold. But religion has also tried to imprison truth and has checked the tendency to change and progress inherent in human society. Religion “produces narrowness and intolerance, credulity and superstition, emotionalism and irrationalism. It tends to close and limit the mind of man”.

While Gandhi and Azad spoke of secularism from their religious perspective, Nehru was the first to accept the western notion of secularism and he advocated the separation of religion and politics. Nehru was born and brought up in a multicultural environment and had access to an expensive rational western education which helped him to stay outside the influence of religion. He stressed the point that it is culture that binds people together. Nehru stressed that “The word ‘secular’ is perhaps not a happy one. And yet for want of a better term, we use it and call our state a secular state” (Chandra et. al 2001). According to Nehru, the state should not identify itself with any religion. It cannot attach itself to any one religion and declare it as the state religion. The state may be nourished by all or by none. Even if the majority of a country owes their allegiance to one of the religions, so that the general climate is coloured, as he believed India’s is, with the Hindu ethos, the state should not be Hindu (Gopal and Iyenger 2003: 194-95). He was vehemently opposed to the conception of *Hindu Rashtra* or Hindu nation-state.

It may sound very nice to some people that we will create a *Hindu Rashtra* but I cannot understand what it means. Hindus are in the majority in this country and whatever they wish will be done. But the moment you think of a *Hindu Rashtra*, you speak in a language which no other country except one can comprehend and that country is Pakistan because they are familiar with this concept. They can immediately justify their creation of an Islamic nation by pointing to the world that we are doing something similar.

...Hindu Rashtra can only reduce the status of those who are not Hindus...You may say patronizingly that you will look after the Muslims or Christians or others...but do you think any race or individual will accept for long the claim that they are looked after while we sit high above them? (Gopal and Iyenger 2003: 186).

This placement of various ethnic denominations will not only reduce the status of others but also will lead to pathetic marginalization. Nehru stressed that the nationalism that needs to be nurtured in India must have its doors and windows open to internationalism. According to Nehru, a secular state cannot be an anti-religious state (Gopal and Iyenger 2003: 194). Rather a secular state must accept the public presence of all religions. A secular state must protect

each of their places of worship and guarantee their religious practices. It must protect freedom of religion and conscience, including, of course, the freedom for those who have no religion (including the atheists). Nehru, in fact, pushes himself a step further saying that the state must honour all faiths equally and give them equal opportunity. Certainly, this is a duty of the secular state in a religiously diverse society and also the duty of both the minority and majority communities to not jeopardize the ideals of the secular state (Bhargava 2017:36).

According to Dr. Radhakrishnan, “Secularism here does not mean irreligion or atheism or even stress on material comforts. It proclaims that it lays stress on the universality of spiritual values which may be attained by a variety of ways” (Hussain 1978: VII). Umakant Saxena, in the Indian context says “Secularism certainly means a doctrine having been religious morality, tolerance and reasonable margin for freedom of worship and faith to each and all citizens of a country irrespective of their color, caste, sex, sect, religion, faith, nationality and other conditions of birth” (Saxena 1971: 3). D.E Smith defined a secular state as “a state which guarantees individual and corporate freedom of religion, deals with the individual as a citizen irrespective of his religion, is not constitutionally connected to a particular religion nor does it seek either to promote or interfere with religion” (Smith 1963).

Undoubtedly however is the fact that India witnessed during the 1980s the fiercest debate regarding the thematic and pragmatic definition and connotation of the term secularism? In practice there remains tremendous amount of ambiguity regarding what secularism is all about. Does secularism stand for ‘separation’ between the state and religion and thus trivializing the importance of religion in the public sphere? Or it is about considering all religion on the same parameter and attaching equal weightage to all? There are, two mind-boggling issues centering on the debate regarding secularism in India – one, considering the impeccable ubiquity of innumerable religious components in India, is secularism a viable solution for the country? And two, can secularism as practiced today ward off the virus of communalism from Indian soil?

The ‘liberal left’ are of the opinion that religion and politics belong to two different arenas altogether. They perceived the emergence of Hindutva politics in the 1980s as a failure of the secular state and certainly of the modernization project. Religion had not taken its due place in the private sphere of individual lives and the sprouting attachment of the Indians to their primordial and ascriptive identities that had arrested the actualization of a civic deal. Another strand of thought argued that the idea of secularism was not indigenous to India. Ashis Nandy, wrote extensively on secularism. Rather he himself initiated a fierce debate on secularism. Nandy, in his contribution *The Politics of Secularism and Recovery of Religious Toleration*

tried to put forward the thesis of the cultural inappropriateness of secularism that the public-private binary that lies at the core of modern secularism is vague. Nandy views the project of secularism in India as an attempt to impose from above a model of social behaviour incompatible with the particularities of a 'tradition' society such as India (Tejani 2016: 9). In *Anti-Secularist Manifesto* which was originally written in the 1980s, Nandy stated that the modern state tries to dominate individual and also collective lives. In this endeavour it tries to eliminate all rival ideologies such as religion to the peripheral segment and hierarchizes the binary domains by categorizing religious affiliations as inferior ways of being. This, in a way prohibits understanding within the modern public sphere and also proscribes dialogue between the two spheres that might have been enriching each other. Ashis Nandy here makes a challenging point here by stating that religious identities have been expatriated which makes it petrified. This in turn interdicts a dialogue within and between religions. As religion constitutes an endearing aspect of humanity it will invariably make its appearance in the public sphere. This is all the more possible due to the democratization of politics. Therefore, religious identities, which are regarded as *de trop* by formal politics, make their appearance either in the form of religious instrumentalism, or religious fundamentalism. Secularism provides us with an impoverished public sphere devoid of any substantive system of meaning, the entry of religious identities into the public sphere impoverishes religion, because religion is subordinated to political pursuits (Chandhoke 2011: 337).

T.N.Madan is of the view that secularism is a late Christian idea and it is not indigenous to the religious cultures of India. He argues that "in the prevailing circumstances secularism in South Asia as a generally shared credo of life is impossible, as a basis for state action impracticable, and as a blueprint for the foreseeable future impotent (Madan 1998: 298)". Madan clarifies that Indian religions, specifically Hinduism and Islam, have no history of a Reformation, and have therefore never delineated separate spheres for secular and sacred activities. Any attempt to make them create these discrete spaces would involve an erosion of the uniqueness of Indian culture: 'models of modernization ...prescribe the transfer of secularism to non-Western societies without regard for the character of their religious traditions or for the gifts these might have to offer...' (Madan 1998: 308). By 'recrudescence' of religion in the late twentieth century Madan clarifies that religion was never going to reside happily in the private lives of Indians and it should not as well. Advocates of secularism in India 'ignored the fact that religion itself could be a powerful resource in the struggle against religious extremism' (Madan 1998: 316).

The third position regarding secularism was represented by the proponents of Hindu Rashtra. They held the view that reservation for the minorities or recognition of minorities particularly Muslims are in reality stance that manifest pseudo secularism. For them Shah Bano episode was a clear cut example of pseudo secularism. They unequivocally asserts that a true secular state would not recognize any difference amongst its citizens and would provide equal treatment to all before the law. According to them, Hindu culture is by default culture of India and thereby all have to abide by the so called Hindu norms and modalities.

The fourth stand was reflected in the thoughts of Rajeev Bhargava. He points out that 'the divide between the "secular" and the "religious" is somewhat of an institution in our country and mentions that if it is not possible to take the spiritual and ethical elements common to all religions and relocate them into a secular, non-doctrinal framework for behaviour. Bhargava, therefore, offers a 'spiritualised, humanist secularism' (Bhargava 1995: 341).

IV

A gap is clearly visible between theory and practice. In the name of religion, riots, brutal mass killings, mass genocide take place. Moreover, it has been observed that in an area dominated by a minority religious community, a candidate belonging to that community is put forward for election. Voting pattern also indicated the communal divisions of the society. Hindus are more likely to vote for Hindu candidates while Muslims would be favouring Muslim candidates. Religion, undoubtedly is used in order to garner support from religious community for non-religious purposes. Exploitation of religious sentiments for the satisfaction of non-religious ends continues unabated.

Communalization of politics is a by-product of politicization of religion. A large number of individuals tend to defend their political identity in terms of their religious faiths, develop prejudices against those following different religious creed. When communal polarization becomes extreme, when religious divisions tend to develop political cleavages, a democratic political system is exposed to a serious challenge. Communalism is a festering sore on the Indian body politic. It undermines the cherished ideal of secularism embedded in the constitution.

Communalism is a disease which warps the human mind so much that he cannot see any good in a man unless he belongs to his community. In the Indian context, communalism mainly refers to the Hindu-Muslim conflict. It has charged the atmosphere with distrust and suspicion between Hindus and Muslims in India. Communalism masks all social identities under the cloak of religion. Religion cradles a riddle which is at the root of religious fanaticism that

consumed Graham Steins and his two children. Dara Singh is not a rare monster. He is simply the agent victim of a depraved understanding of God and religion guided by the notion 'your God is my devil'.

In the present Indian context, communalism denotes an emphasis on the exclusiveness of religious group or community, a feeling of superiority for "us" (i.e. the community itself) and the dislike for "them" (i.e. towards other religious groups). Communalism, according to Bipan Chandra is a modern political ideology which originated during the British colonial rule in India. Communalism generates a false consciousness as it distorts the objective reality- the reality of class conflict that are inherent in an unequal society. By dividing people along religious lines it prevents the unification among the working class people in their struggle against exploitation, oppression and injustice. Communalism is born out of hatred or of a real or imaginary fear of the other communities in a plural society.

Another term closely related to communal tension is 'fundamentalism'. The word is derived from a Latin word 'fundamentum' meaning 'base'. It is a style of thought in which certain principles are recognized as essential 'truths' that have unchallengeable and overriding authority, regardless of their content. Substantive fundamentalisms therefore have little or nothing in common, except that their supporters tend to evince an earnestness or fervour born out of doctrinal certainty. It is usually associated with religion and the literal truth of 'sacred' texts. Fundamentalism is an ideology which believes that each religion can be reduced to a given number of fundamental principles.

In case of communalism, religion sometimes is exploited and misinterpreted. But in case of fundamentalism, the principles remain unaltered. A communalist can even change his loyalty according to his convenience. For example, in West Bengal, at the time of Parliamentary election campaign, a candidate in favour of his wall writing added the prefix 'comrade' in the Hindu majority areas but avoided it from the writings in Muslim dominated areas and instead used his convenient first name 'Mohammad'.

Communalism is not of uniform type. The most intense form of it is communal riot, the least intense is communal prejudice and the middling is communal competition. The distinction among these three is of conceptual in nature. In reality, it is rather difficult to determine when prejudices come to an end and competition begins and when competition comes to an end riots begin. All riots are expressions of prejudices. Unless there is prejudice, riots cannot take place. But all cases of prejudices are not necessarily cases of riots.

Prejudices by themselves do not play a part in the political process, but as a psychic factor they do influence political and social behaviour. Communalism is a psychic phenomenon. Its roots

lie deep in human mind. Prejudice is specifically conflict between groups characterized by strong in-group and out group features. Its essential aspects consist in giving and applying a stereotyped name or label of differences to members of a given group which is not supported by sound reasoning or scientific facts. The members of the in-group have a somewhat exalted opinion of themselves and display a selfish, callous attitude or one of aggressive ruthlessness towards members of an out-group. There is incessant conflict, a conflict which is sometimes overt and sometimes hidden. It is a negative attitude towards the members of another community even before getting interacted with that community. Prejudices have never been based on historical evidence but on a separate view of history and belief on myth as history. The Hindu-Muslim relationship has been shaped by this separate view. Myths exist at the very base of human society. This is mankind's substitute for instincts. Myths are based on faith rather than on fact. For example, the myth of infiltration and the fear of supposed submergence of local religious group operate at the perceptual level assuming imminent breakdown of the system and geography of population. Such phobia is fanned by political groups only to gain control over power. For example, those who champion the cause of Hinduism are steeped in the misconception that Muslims are outnumbering Hindus, polygamy is rampant amongst Muslims.

The ideology of communal paranoia considers groups as religious communities and insists on its total separation. Basic economic issues, backwardness and demand for development and social justice are mobilized on communal lines. Every type of oppression and deprivation tends to shape their world view in communal frame. The sense of 'otherness' receives a boost in such atmosphere. Five social and psychological processes are involved in the formation of prejudices.

1. Projection: projecting the 'other' group or the minority community for social and economic disturbances i.e. attributing the reason of failure of the established system on the other. Some pamphlets for example, put forward the viewpoint that India would have been more prosperous had there been no Muslims. Muslims are pulling down India. Had there been no excess population which was dumped in and around Calcutta during partition, India would have been a prosperous country. Thus, a socio-economic issue is covered under a communal garb.
2. Explanation: Here a person's attitude and behavior is explained with reference to his community. Both Hindus and Muslims have the same degrees of virtues and vices. There is a tendency to say that Muslims are traitors. But if history has produced traitors

like Mir Jafar, there is also men like Amin Chand who was equally responsible for treachery to the motherland.

3. Non-verifiability: Prejudices reside in the realm of belief. On 6th December 1992, the four-hundred-year-old *Babari Masjid* was brought down arguing that the site had its connection to the life of Ram and it belongs to the Hindus. No conclusive archaeological or historical evidences have been presented to support the Hindu claim that an important Ram temple previously existed on the spot.
4. Incurability: It is something whose correctness cannot be ascertained. In Hinduism, for instance, Moksha or salvation signifies the merging of the human self in the cosmic and trans cosmic self. That one's work in the present life will determine whether he will attain salvation after death or not. The ontology of *moksha* is beyond the province of science and one can either maintain an attitude of skepticism towards them or believe in them as dictated by his personal faith. Prejudices are formulated in a similar way whose truthfulness cannot be ascertained.
5. Inflexibility: Prejudices are often inflexible in nature. It is based on certain dogmas which cannot even be questioned. For example, Galileo was persecuted as he questioned the established belief and put forward the proposition that the earth moves round the sun. though he was persecuted his theory ultimately proved to be true. Prejudices are often transmitted from generation to generation. For example, the *madrassas* sometimes are a breeding ground for Islamic fundamentalism. Their belief is so stubborn that they can finish their life in anticipation for the emancipation of their fraternity.

V

History shows that there were times when nations were destroyed. In such a crisis, the state has come forward and intervened in the nation-building process which would be based on the principles of secularism and embrace within its fold people of all religion, race, culture. The formation of nation is neither natural nor inevitable. The entire enterprise of building the nation is undertaken by the state. A secular state does not represent any single community or group. It represents the nation which includes all communities. Secularism is equivalent to nationalism.

However, a controversy had arisen with regard to the role of the state in communal riots. Though the state is supposed to act in a neutral manner, the reality is different which shows the officials of the state participating in communal riots, overtly or covertly. For example,

during the Bombay riots in December 1992 and January 1993, very serious allegations were leveled against police. The case of the 1987 Meerut riots is the most notorious. The PAC constables pulled out 84 young boys from Hashimpura and shot them dead. In Moradabad riots of the 1980, the PAC fired ruthlessly on innocent people gathered in the Idhgha Maidan.

In the recent Gujarat riot (2002) most of the witnesses described complicity of the police. The attackers arrived by trucks shouting slogans of incitement to kill, armed with swords, sophisticated explosives and gas cylinders. Guided by computer print outs listing the addresses of Muslim families' information obtained from the Municipal corporation and other sources that they embarked on a murderous rampage. In many cases, the police led the charge aiming and firing at Muslims. Their crimes ranged from direct participation in the looting and burning of Muslim shops, restaurants, hotels, houses and the killing of Muslim residence. Worse still, officers who tried to keep peace or act against murderous mobs have been transferred or had to face the wrath of their superiors.

The contemporary world scenario brings into forth a picture that reflects an absolute contrasting feature. Self-confidence is subjugated by inferiority complex, self-restraint challenged by a never-ending competitive pugnacity, peace of mind suppressed by an over-empowering frustration. Always and in every stratum of individual life and society a kind of insecurity, frustration, competition and jealousy have crawled in consequently gripping human mind and soul. Hindus in India are insecure because of a probable futuristic prediction of population imbalance in favour of the Muslims. On the other hand, Muslims face an uncomfortable situation whenever there occurs a terrorist attack. They portray their overt self-assertion in defending their stand and their religion. Frustration breeds in through prejudice. Prejudice by themselves do not play a part in the political process, but as a psychic factor they do influence political and social behavior. Communal, racial, sectarian, ethnic intolerance are all psychic phenomenons though their roots definitely can be found in economy as well. Prejudice is specifically conflicts between groups categorized by strong in-group and out-group features. Its essential aspect consists in giving and applying a stereotyped name or level of differences to members of a given group which is not supported by sound reasoning or scientific facts. The members of the in-group have a somewhat exalted opinion of themselves and display a selfish, callous attitude or one of aggressive ruthlessness towards members of an out-group. There exists incessant conflict, a conflict which is sometimes overt and sometimes covert. It is a negative attitude towards the members of another community even before getting interaction with that community. Prejudices have never been based on historical evidence but

on a separate view of history and belief on myth and history. Myths exist at the very base of human society. This is mankind's substitute for instincts. Myths are based on faith rather than on fact. For example, the myth of infiltration and the fear of supposed submergence of local religious group operate at the perceptual level assuming imminent breakdown at the system. Such phobia is fanned to titillate dastardly instincts for material advantages and privileges. And the driving force for such intolerance is prejudice which is transmitted from generation to generation.

The present day situation in Hindu society is in fact, a struggle between Gandhian Hinduism and the Savarkar inspired version of Hinduism. Today, every society has to respect its own taboos and those of its neighbors. There is one simple reason why a few Danish cartoons could rock the world: the world is no longer a world, we live in the same neighborhood, and every human being is our neighbor.

Religion is nothing but realization. Today, particularly Hindu religion has been dragged and brought down to market place. To the Hindus, Ram is a national Hero-a unifying symbol, to the Muslims he is a Hindu God in whose name number of Muslims have been killed. Swami Vivekananda once said the Hindu religion does not consist of struggles and attempts to believe in certain dogmas but in realizing-not in believing but in being and becoming. India was perhaps the one nation in the ancient world which recognized cultural democracy whereby it is held- all religions are true, that the roads to God are many but the goal is one, because God is one and the same. Our culture enlightens tolerance, our thought expounds tolerance, our Constitution sermonizes tolerance, the great men of history illuminate tolerance; let us not dilute it.

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