

Religiosity, not Religion, Lead(ing) to Partition

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Abstract: *It is believed that the uneventful event of Partition of India in 1947 took place primarily for two reasons: 1. The nationalists were unable to combat the wave of communalism that spread out immediately after the independence which definitely had its deep seated roots already in the Indian society, and 2. Because of the religious fanatics who were adamant to take charge of their respective religion and guide the whole community under their fundamentalist umbrella of religiosity. The British, who adopted the policy of "Divide and Rule", were only instrumental in increasing the gap between Hindus and Muslims. For tens of decades, the religious communities in India lived peacefully, with occasional riots taking place only in exceptional cases and that too in pockets, which later turned out to be an act of personal vendetta. The paper tries to define Religiosity in the broader sense of the term, as having a strong but false religious commitment, so much so that it intrudes even non-religious issues and dominates every sphere of life. Contrary to the basic principles of religion such as faith in Almighty, tolerance and trust towards belief system of others, respect towards other religions etc., religiosity believes in idiosyncrasies that have never been part of any religion. However, in the context of India, religiosity has played a vital role in deciding the socio-political structure of the Indian society. Therefore, this paper will look into the different layers of the event of partition and will try to reevaluate and conceptualize the framework in which it will emphasize on how religiosity and not religion became a means to employ separation and was used as a kind of disuniting force by people with distorted religious ideologies.*

Key Words: *Religiosity; Religion; Partition; Communal; Divide and Rule.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Nobody can change the past but historians might just play with it. History is not something that happened in the past; it refers to how the event was represented by the historians. Out of a hundred events that happened, for example, a historian might choose ten events that suit his agenda; similarly some other historian might choose a list of other ten events that suit his other agenda. For either side, the good lies only in the *Us* and the blame lies entirely on the *them*. It has happened over a century ago which led to the culmination in 1947 i.e., Partition of India and also it re-emerged its head in 1971. Our contemporary time is again witnessing almost the same kind of atmosphere and feeling, where, in India, the fanatics are trying to send off the members of a particular community to Pakistan; while in Pakistan, the fanatics are either killing or forcefully converting the minorities. The actions from both the sides stand in stark contrast to what the Indian culture and Islam believe in.

India has always been an inclusive country; its rich culture has always tried to embrace all sorts of people under its giant cultural umbrella. It has always been able to make a mark of its Indianness. Jawaharlal Nehru in his famous book *The Discovery of India*, quotes Dodwell, that India is infinitely absorbent like the ocean (1). "It is odd to think of India," Nehru continues, "with her caste system and exclusiveness, having this astonishing inclusive capacity to absorb foreign races and cultures. Perhaps it was due to this that she retained her vitality and rejuvenated herself from time to time" (1). So, when the fanatics claim that people need to go to Pakistan it is not in line with the Indian culture. Similarly, in the case of Islam, forcing people to accept the religion is totally and unequivocally against the teachings of Islam. "There is no compulsion in religion" (2), the Quran states very clearly. Similarly, killing innocent human beings is totally prohibited: "Whoever kills any innocent human being it is as if he has killed the whole of humanity and if anyone saves any human being it is as if he has saved the whole humanity"(3).

Swami Vivekananda, who is the embodiment of Indian culture and religious tolerance, stated that we must look within and not be like frogs in the pond thinking foolishly and believing that only we are in the correct. The feeling and belief of one being in the correct is quite dangerous because it does not allow differences of opinion. The culmination of believing in just one monolithic interpretation of religion leads to

religiosity which has led to the partition of India. Religiosity may be defined as having such a strong religious commitment that it intrudes in even non-religious issues and ultimately goes on to dominate every other sphere of life. Religiosity is highly emotional and hence has no basis in rationality (4). Religiosity sees every good in its own religion and believes that the other religion is entirely in the wrong. The religious commitment is so high that it interferes in private lives of the individual. Religiosity cannot be directly considered as communalism but rather it becomes the way for a person to become communal.

This culmination of communalism also became one of the major factors for Partition (5). Partition happened because of many reasons, two of the relevant reasons in the contemporary time are: 1. to let the few religious fanatics take charge of their respective religions and guiding the whole community under their fundamentalist umbrella and; 2. the inability of the nationalists to fight the forces of religiosity and communalism head on and defeat it intellectually. Communalism, according to Bipan Chandra, has 3 layers: Communal Nationalism, Liberal Communalism and Extreme Communalism, each being a development of the other (6). Religion teaches us that the path to God can be reached by any sincere way; but religiosity teaches that only one kind of dictatorial way leads to Him. Had this been the case then why would we have so many creeds? Religion teaches us to tolerate differences of opinion; religiosity teaches to curb and counter *the others'* opinions.

One of the purposes of religiosity is to straitjacket the people into one line of thought. There is no element of deviation and difference that is allowed or accepted. Everything has to be uniform. Mind maneuvering is one of their goals. Two of the most powerful tools to control and master the mass are: 1. Use of Fear Psychology and 2. Promise of the Golden Days (7). Both these tactics are used by master manipulators. Scientifically speaking, when a person is fearful of something then the heartbeat increases, sweating increases and there is an upshot of adrenaline in the blood. The biochemical response to this situation is either to flight or to fight. But the master manipulators add the other element of the Promise of the Golden Days which acts as a motivator to the *Fight* factor. That is why the mass feels compelled to go in for conflict instead of letting go of the situation. All the major commanders have used one or both of these tactics to control the mind of the common people.

2. LOOKING BACKWARDS:

In India, too, there was no exception. The communal parties like Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League employed the same-old tactic of fear psychology. The Hindu Mahasabha raised the cry of Hindu Culture and Hinduism in danger while the Muslim League talked about Islam in danger. Similarly, the Hindu Sabha motivated people to hark back to the Golden Age of Hindus by bringing to mind the noble and courageous figures like Chandragupta I, Samudragupta, Kalidasa etc. So, too the same motivating factor was applied by the Muslim League to hark back to the Golden Age of Islamic achievement in West Asia and it propagated the notion that Muslims were the rulers of India in the Medieval Age and it is now time for them to regain that power and glory. Going back to a long lost so-called "Golden Age" is very dangerous. We must live in the present. Going back brings in false or artificial consciousness.

The same tactics are used today as well to divide the Indians on the basis of so many things, especially religion. Swami Vivekananda's speech at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago is as relevant today as it was then. His call for self-introspection and toleration of the views of others' beliefs, however, is much more important today than it was then. The Upanishad says "Ekkam Satye vipra bhutvedante" (8) which means "God is one, Truth is one. Sages call him by various names"; similarly the Quran says "Say: "Call upon God, or call upon Beneficent: by whatever name you call upon Him, (it is well): for to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names. Neither speak your Prayer aloud, nor speak it in a low tone, but seek a middle course between." (9). This can also be interpreted to mean that just as God has different names and has different attributes so we can approach God and deal with him in different ways and it is also relevant to note that following the extreme way is not welcome in religion. We are asked to follow the middle course.

Vivekananda also stated that for our motherland India to prosper, a junction or a middle path of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam is the only hope. What has happened and what is happening is that instead of the common, peace loving people, who are actually balanced in their religious approach, we have the fanatics from both sides of the religion who have taken control of the religious authority and they drive the religion the way they want to drive. The common people have taken a back seat. Instead of merely following, the common Hindus and the common Muslims should take control of their religions.

If the common people continue to shy away from taking control of religion then religiosity increases and communal heads increase in size and strength. Historically speaking, the communal consciousness was the result of British colonialism. The lack of proper economic development resulted in the decline of the Indian economy. The element of zero-sum was increasing very rapidly. It is a common behavioural psychology that when one is alone, one feels vulnerable but when one is part of a group then the individual's identity is diffused and gets its strength from members of the other group. That is why the bigger the group the stronger one feels and the more one loses one's identity.

The exploitation by the British left the lower and middle class Indians in a very bad state. There was widespread unemployment and poverty. The Colonizers did nothing to alleviate their situation. The middle class Indians felt weak and alone against the mighty British Empire. That is why the common people felt compelled to join the communal forces only to better their socio-economic conditions (10). The communal leaders knew of this crisis and that is why they used the language of Fear and Motivation to keep the common Indian (Hindu or Muslim) under their control.

The communal leaders knew that there was no stark conflict between the Hindus and the Muslims, because they have been living since hundreds of years in a state of relative peace. Unless they would employ the mind controlling tactic they could not keep the lower and middle class people under its belt. So, in a sense the common Indian was doubly colonized; on the surface level they were colonized by the Britishers and on the deeper level they were colonized by the fanatic Indian communal leaders.

Ignorance and lack of education is a crucial element in colonialism. It is said that the Britishers overpowered the Indian forces and that is why they were able to rule India; it is partially correct to say such a thing. The real reason for the overpowering of the Indians was the ignorance and lack of intellectual growth amongst the Indians. If only we had knowledge, we would have understood that colonialism is a natural process and it is a fact of history. It has been happening since the inception of civilization. It is just a matter of power. It is a known fact that *power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely*. Indians were not only militarily weak they were also intellectually weak and because of this they retreated into the state of decline.

3. CONCLUSION:

The real problem is not religiosity even, because religiosity has no actual basis in religion. It is only the deliberate misinterpretation of religion that brings about the ideology of religiosity. The real problem is not having the critical acumen to think and analyze things on our own. A common man does not like to think. It is a long held belief that if you want to make a man hate you, then make him think. It is a fact that most of us don't like to think and ponder deeply over things. We accept things on face value; be it text books or news or advertising. It is necessary to do our own personal research to come to any conclusion. The past has witnessed that the powerful agents have used the policy to divide people on the basis of caste, creed, religion, gender; it is now time for the common people to unite and serve.

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