

# Communal Politics and Violence in India:

## An Analytical Study

**Dr. Faraz Ali Ahmed Assistant Professor**

*Deptt. of Political Science Karmashree Hiteswar Saikia College*

### Abstract

This research is based on the intentions raised in the nation and state due to the overcharging of communal violence. Since the past few decades, all over India increasing trends towards communal frenzy and rioting have been witnessed. The lives lost go into the thousands and those mildly affected, have been left with a lasting impact. Communal violence is a dangerous and a frightful phenomena and a curse for a society. A not only communal violence ends up in loss of lives and property; it divides and polarizes the society and gives rise to various political debates. Communal violence is a form of violence which perpetrated across ethnic or communal lines, the violent parties feel solidarity for their respective groups, and victims are chosen based upon group membership. The term includes conflicts, riots, and other forms of violence between communities of different religious faith or ethnic origins.

*Key words: Communalism, Politics, Violence, Solutions.*

### Introduction

Communalism continues to be a sad and hard reality of Indian politics. Even after the adoption of the principles of secularism and equality of all the people, communalism continues to afflict our polity. A very sad fact is that it has been even increasing its intensity and area. Communalism constitutes the biggest strain on the unity and integrity of India as a nation. Jawahar Lal Nehru had rightly pointed out that the greatest danger for this country is from communalism and not so much from external aggression, because when there is external aggression, the people of India tend to get united but when communalism is rampant, the people get divided. Communalism is, thus, the most deadly enemy of the people of India. Anyone who loves India would hate communalism and anyone who hates India would love communalism.

### Objectives

To examine the meaning of communalism.

To describe the impact of communalism on Indian politics. To examine various factors behind communal violence.

To examine the suggestions to overcome communalism.

To study the growth of communalism and how it disintegrates the Indian society.

### Methodology

The study follows descriptive and historical methods. The information collected for the purpose of this study is mainly based on secondary sources as books, periodicals, newspapers, research articles, internet, etc.

#### The Meaning of Communalism

Generally understood, communalism is rivalry kept and practised by one community or religion towards another or each other. Bothering only about the well being of one's own religion and viewing the welfare of another community as a threat is a common characteristic of communalism. The primary feature of communalism is that one community is being viewed doubtfully in every social development.

“Communalism can be considered an ideology which states that society is divided into religious communities whose interests differ and are at times even opposed to each other. The antagonism practised by members of one community against the people of other community and religion can

be termed communalism. This antagonism goes to the extent of falsely accusing, harming and deliberately insulting a particular community and extends to looting, burning down the homes and shops of the helpless and the weak, dishonouring women and even killing persons.” Richard Lambert defines communalism as “something colours political behaviour and produces a community oriented outlook.” Louis Dumont states that “communalism is an affirmation and assertion of the religious community as a political group.” In the words of Satish Sabarwal, “communalism in our sense means the channelling of personal sentiments and actions primarily with reference to the inscriptive group whose boundaries are determined by the accident of one’s birth.” According to Bipan Chandra “communalism is the belief that because a group of people follow a particular religion, they have as a result, common social, political and economic interests.” “Some authors have defined communalism as a form of indifference. Condescension, hatred or aggressive attitude to all the members of a religious community other than one’s own, based on a real or imaginary threat from an individual or a group of that community or an actual damage done to one’s personal interest or way of life or to those of one’s religious community.

India is a land of diverse religions and culture. 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 the 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. Person like Dr. Rajendra Prasad on the other hand hold that the Muslim rulers of India by and large have an attitude of tolerance towards their Hindu subjects. The animosity between the Hindus and the Muslims was largely the creation of the British rulers. In order to keep themselves in power they deliberately adopted a policy of ‘divide and rule’ and tried to promote feeling of alienation and hostility among the members of these two communities. They introduced separate electorates for the Muslims. Even some of the Muslim leaders, motivated by their selfish interest, promoted the filing 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.

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. For example, there have been numerous cases of clashes between the Swarajya Hindus and the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes or conflicts between Sunni-Shia Muslims.

The communal harmony was seriously disturbed in 1961 when a clash between the students of the two communities took place at the Aligarh Muslim University. This produced repercussion in other parts of UP, Bihar, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh and communal trouble broke out in a number of towns, resulting in enormous loss of property.

In 1968 once again communal harmony was disturbed in UP, Assam, West Bengal. In UP, the trouble spots were Meerut and Allahabad, while in Karimganj (Assam) the trouble started over the killing of a cow.

In recent years communalism has assumed serious dimensions and even those states which were free from communal tension have witnessed communal riots. During the year 1986 there were 180 communal incidents in different parts of the country which resulted in death of about 200 persons. Of all the states Gujarat witnessed maximum number of communal riots (92) during the year. In recent years lot of communal tension has been generated over the issue of Ram Janambhumi and Babri Masjid at Ayodhya. The fundamentalists of two communities have claimed exclusive right over the disputed structure and all efforts to find a mutually acceptable solution of the problem did not yield any results. On the other hand, things took a serious turn following demolition of the disputed structure by the Kar Sevaks on 6th December 1992 which sparked off strong communal riots in different parts of the country and resulted in enormous loss of life and property. But the worst communal riots since independence took place in Mumbai in January 1993 in which over 500 persons were killed and 20,000 people were rendered homeless.

Fresh communal riots broke out in October-December, 2001. In October riots broke out in Malegaon, Maharashtra following protest against American war on Afghanistan. In these riots 13 persons were killed and more than 100 injured. But probably the worst communal riots took place in Gujarat in February-March 2002 which resulted in loss of over 450 lives and left many rootless in their own land of birth.

In 2012 communal violence broke out in Kokrajhar, Assam had murdered four former BLT men by Bengali Muslim settlers when 77 persons were killed and over 70,000 displaced.

The clashes between the Hindu and Muslim communities in Muzaffarnagar and Shamli districts of Uttar Pradesh, in August–September 2013, resulted in at least 62 deaths including 42 Muslims and 20 Hindus and injured 93 and left more than 50,000 displaced. The riot has been described as "the worst violence in Uttar Pradesh in recent history".

The most recent such incident which galvanised the nation was the lynching to death of a Muslim man in Dadri by a Hindu mob because he was suspected of having cow beef in his home. In October 2014 in Bangalore in Congress ruled Karnataka, a well-known anti-cow slaughter activist was attacked and beaten by a Muslim mob for merely distributing his book arguing against cow slaughter.

Violence around consumption of meat need not even have a communal angle. In September 2014, in Bhopal in BJP ruled Madhya Pradesh, a group of female Muslim activists from the people for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, calling for a vegan Eid, were threatened with stoning and stripping by a mob of Muslim men. One of the activists was badly roughed up.

In UP alone, incidents of violence associated with rumours or allegations of cow slaughter, which is illegal in that state as in many other Indian states, are legion. For instance, in 2008, in Agra, riots broke out between the Hindus and the Muslims, after the mysterious deaths of seven cows. According to one report, a Hindu group present on location claimed they were protesting peacefully when stones were pelted at them by a Muslim mob.

The government was proud of itself in 2014 when communal violence witnessed a decline, with the number of incidents dropping to 644 from 823 the previous year. The number of related deaths also fell, declining to 95 in 2014 from 133 in 2013, a Times of India report said. The number of those injured in communal clashes in 2014 also dropped to 1921 from 2,269, the ministry had said earlier. This is the first time that the data has shown the Narendra Modi government in negative light on the state of communal harmony. The Modi sarkar has frequently come under opposition attack for wearing a "mask of nationalism" while promoting communal tension and disrupting harmony across the country.

In 2015 Ballabgarh riot referred to the attacks on 400 Muslim villagers of Atali village, Ballabgarh, Haryana, by a violent Hindu mob. The incident took place on May 25, 2015 in the village of Atali in Ballabgarh, Faridabad. According to the locals, the cause of the confrontation was a dispute over a 30-year-old mosque. In 2009 the Hindus of the village claimed that it was the property of the village Panchayat. The Muslims said the land belonged to the WAKF board. In March 2015, the Faridabad court ruled in favour of the Muslim community. The Hindus, however, continued to raise objections advocating the demolition of the mosque because it stood adjacent to a temple.

Communal clashes in India have risen under the Narendra Modi-led government. A report compiled by the Union Home Ministry showed that in the first five months of 2015, incidents of communal clashes had risen by almost 25% as compared to the corresponding period of the previous year when the Congress-led UPA-II was in power.

#### Growth of Communalism: Main Causes

The following main factors and forces have been responsible for the existence of communalism.

In the first place 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.

Secondly tendency of the Muslims to keep aloof from the majority community is also partly to blame for the growing communal tension. Most of the 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, reservation for the Muslim in services, etc.

The Hindu Mahasabha, Muslim League, BJP and the Akali Dal are some well known communal parties in India. They not only represent particular communities but also thrive on communal politics. Their leaders often use them to create communal tensions so that they may fish in trouble waters.

Today our politics is purely ballot-box oriented and elections have become end in themselves. Selection of candidate for a particular constituency is generally made after considering the relative strength of different castes and communities residing in that constituency.

After the partition of the country many among the Hindus forcefully argued that since the Muslims had got their homeland, India which was now left behind, should be the land of the Hindus. The Jana Sangh which was created in 1951 is influenced by the ideology of Hindu revivalism. The RSS always blames the Muslims for any communal incidents in the country and refuses to see the other side of the picture.

The communal groups among the Muslims also are working against the goal of communal amity. They represent the Muslim opinion in this country as far as the Muslim grievances are concerned. A feeling of economic backwardness and a discontent that benefits the modernization in terms of government jobs, business and education opportunities, etc, have not been enjoyed by the Muslims promote separatist tendencies among them.

#### Suggestions to Overcome Communalism

Communalism in India is an elephantine problem. It is impossible to root it out from the country. At best it can be contained and that too with a collective effort. The following remedies have been suggested for eradicating communalism:

Banning communal organizations and imposing community fine in the riot affected areas are considered the two important remedies of the problem.

The Muslim and other groups must be brought up to par economically with other communities so that their sense of security is enhanced.

The people can also play an important role in curbing communalism. To prevent communal incidents mixed peace-keeping Mohalla Samities should be constituted containing influential members of various communities.

A strict watch should be kept on places of religious worship to ensure that they are not used as hiding places by anti-social or communal elements. It has been observed that often religious places have been used by such elements for other than religious purposes.

Media can play a positive role in eliminating communalism by organizing discussions to emphasis the secular foundations of India. In these discussion persons from various sections of society should be invited to produce wider impact.

Special courts should be constituted for the trial of those involved in communal riots. More severe punishments should be awarded to those guilty of providing communal violence.

#### Findings of the Study

Communalism, in its varied shapes, has acquired a very dangerous form and alarming proportions in India. It disrupts the pattern of co-existence in our multi-religious fraternity. It is an affront to India's nationalist identity and a tragic setback to our evolving secular culture. It is subversive of our democratic political stability. By killing each other in mindless communal strife, we are in effect killing ourselves – killing the Indian nation, killing our own larger family, killing our glorious heritage of humanism and composite culture.

## Conclusion

Communalism is the enemy of progress, social change, democracy and federal nation state building on rational scientific lines and above all of human decency, compassion and human fraternity. In our struggle against communalism we should mobilize a wide cross-section of our people including genuine religious persons, women, youth, professional groups, especially media persons because communalism is both anti-national and anti - human.

## References

1. H Kumar, Pramod "Communal Ideology: The Instruments, Basis and Social Appeal" New Delhi, 1989. Engineer, Ali Asghar. "Distorting Indian History" The Times of India, 11th March, 1975.
2. Fyzee, A.A.A. "The Muslim Minority in India". Quest (Bombay). October-December, 1967. Praksh, Chander. Indian Government and Politics .Cosmos Bookhive (P) Ltd.
3. Fadia, B. L. Indian Government and Politics. Agra: Sahitya Bhawan, 2015. Mehta, V. R. Ideology, Modernization and Politics in India. New Delhi, 1983.