

Role of Communalism in the partition of India

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Abstract:

In this research paper, I have tried to describe the political and social situation of India at the time of partition of India. The spirit of communalism was born in the society through Hindu, Muslims and Sikh. People were divided into many classes on the basis of religion. They started forming their own political parties on the basis of religion. These political parties started trickling people on the basis of religion. Due to this there were communal riots in the country and many people lost their lives. A large number of the people had to be displaced. Political parties created a rift in the heart of the people to shine their politics. British government did the work of dividing the Indian peoples on the basis religion. They used the policy "Divide and Rule" for dividing the people of India, which later became the reason of the partition of the India.

Keywords: -Communalism, Riots, Political Parties, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Partition, League, Congress, British, Government,

The partition of India was the result of the communalism prevailing in the Indian society and the 'Divide and Rule' policy of the British. As a result of the reform movements in India, when the enthusiasm intensified, then everyone took steps to strengthen their position in the colonial economy. But in the colonial backward economy there was no scope for the development of the whole society. Thus, communalism was discovered, under which the possibility of ensuring greater participation for their respective societies in the economic field began to appear at many levels. With the discovery of communalism as a tool for grabbing economic power, it became a tactic for the elite to hide their class interests and pursue their selfish interests by creating artificial competition. For the British Empire, it became a more reliable and lethal weapon than language, region, class, caste etc. He made full use of it to strengthen his rule. Therefore, it can be said that communalism and the leadership unable to stop it was responsible for the partition of India.

Communalism nature and definitions:

Communalism is a situation in which a particular community considers its material life untouched by other societies on the basis of religious separation. Later this virtual separation takes the form of mutual conflict between the sects as the other sect is

considered to be the reason for the socioeconomic inferiority of its sect. Here communalism is the Hindi version of the English word 'communal'.

1. N. Satya Roy says- "With respect to communalism, it has been believed that the people of a particular community, being followers of a common religion, have similar political, economic, social and cultural interests. According to this view Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians are persons of different sects in India, whose secular interests are common among the people of that sect and the social, political and cultural affairs of these Indian people should be differentiated on the basis of such religious units only. Thus, the fundamental unit of Indian society is religious sect. Classes, nationalities, linguistic cultural groups, not territorial units like nation or province or state. Moreover, communalism begins with mutual friendship of interests, but usually ends with mutuality between different religions. Out of a feeling of antagonism or enmity."¹
2. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in 1986 "It should never be forgotten that communalism in India is a later phenomenon, born before our very eyes."²

Reasons for the rise of communalism in India:

Communal ideology is based on unscientific and irrational facts. When the communalist talks about the separation of socio-economic interests, he is actually a victim of self-deception, because in an economy the interests of the individuals are also the same. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs or Christians did not have their own separate collective interests in any field other than religion, but also in terms of region, language, culture, class, caste, social status, social customs, food and dress etc. Or that there was no community unity among the Hindus, because the life of an upper-class Muslim was culturally closer to that of an upper-class Hindu than that of a poor Muslim. At the regional level, the Punjabi Muslim was closer to the Punjabi Hindu, while the Bengali Muslim, despite being a co-religionist, had a significant disparity with him in terms of language, culture, food, clothing, etc. Similarly, disparity between Muslims and Muslims was seen everywhere. Therefore, it can be said that in many aspects, community differences were found among the Muslims of the country and at many levels they were closer to the Hindus. Exactly the same situation was with the Hindus of the country. It is clear from the disparity between Muslim-Muslim or between Hindu-Hindu and the similarity found in Hindu-Muslim that the unity and interest at the level of sect in both the religions was unrestrained. Communalism effort was created in India for which there were many reasons. Communalism was the result of all-round decline in the economy after the colonization of India. In the 20th century, due to the lack of employment in modern industrial development, socio-cultural services, there was a huge amount of unemployment in India. "The old craft technique clashed with the new industrial method. But it was accelerated by political and economic pressure and no attempt was made to bring new methods to India. In fact, efforts were made to ensure that this did not happen. And thus, India's progress should be stopped. Machines in India could not be imported from outside. A void was created that could only be filled with British goods, and this led to a rapid increase in bakeries and poverty. The modern colonial economy was established and India became an agricultural colony of industrial England, which supplied raw materials and consumed finished goods from

England. Due to the extinction of the artisan-professional people, unemployment spread on a very large scale. What would these billions of peoples, who were engaged in the work of preparing different types of goods and in different occupations, now do? Where do they go? Now his old profession was not open and the way for the new profession was blocked”³

If we talk about Punjab, then the population of Punjab was divided into occupational classes like farmers, traders and craftsmen. Among them, mainly Jats, Rajput's and Sikhs were associated with agriculture, police and army etc. The mainly agricultural castes in Punjab were Rajput's, Jats, Gujar's and Kambojas who were found in all three sects of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Apart from this, Ahirs were in both Hindu and Muslim sects and Avans and Maos were only among Muslims. Among the Hindus there were Rahi and Koli castes who were engaged in agricultural work, their condition was quite good. Apart from this, people of Saini caste used to do agricultural work in large numbers in Ambala and Jalandhar division and were very influential.⁴

Shri Banwari Lal ji says that in Punjab, one-third of the cultivable land in the rural areas was owned by the Muslims and the work of labour was done by the Hindus. But this economic inequality had created differences in the minds of the people, due to which the feeling of communalism started growing. They started looking at each other sect with hatred because the people of another class started hating them due to the possession of one class over the means of production.⁵

In the Indian colonial economy, the old handicrafts, crafts, textiles, traditional trades, etc., had been destroyed, but they were replaced by modern industries, banking, commerce, social services, music radio, theatre, fine arts and cinema in the absence of new employable activities. The educated class was compelled to go towards government services. Therefore, by resorting to communal politics, demands were made for government jobs, admission to commercial colleges, political positions like legislative councils and municipal committees. Hindu or Muslim communalism started because of this economic rivalry.

When the imperialist powers were constantly opposed by the Indians. In this situation political struggle started and national consciousness came among the people which became a matter of concern for the ruling class. In such a situation, communalism was used by the British government to divide and weaken the nationalist forces from within. For the British government, it was a kind of weapon by which they could use the province, caste, language, religion and class all to break the unity of Indian society, but till the end of imperialism, religious division gave only. By adopting the attitude of indifference, sometimes encouragement and sometimes neglect, the ruling class gave full opportunity to communalism to flourish. It was only due to this help from the ruling class that communalism became a powerful force to divide the country.

Everyone used communalism for their own benefit. In a hungry, unemployed India, cunning and crooked minds hid their class interests behind this and for this snatched the rights and happiness of the poor and downtrodden. The imperialists did the nationalism a little high aristocracy exploited the common people a lot

Partition of India:

The conflict between religion and culture (which took the form of communalism) played an important role behind the partition of India. The story of Partition is the story of the rise of this communalism, the failure of the nationalists to find a solution, the Muslim leadership and the misuse of communalism by the rulers.

After the revolution of 1857, the Muslim elite were severely crushed, which made the Muslim society indifferent to the British rule. The British considered Muslims responsible for the revolution of 1857 AD. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan wanted to reduce the resentment of the British Government towards the Muslims. For this he inspired the Muslims for modern education.

First of all, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan started communal politics. Initially he was a secular man, but in 1872, Hindi was made the court language in place of Urdu in the United Provinces and in the districts, due to which he became communal. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan asked the Muslims to stay away from the Congress. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan campaigned against the Congress and warned the Muslims about the dangers of the Congress.⁶ Due to this the Muslims started to separate themselves from the national movement and started cooperating with the British government to get political rights.

Syed Ahmed Khan changed his tone by supporting the British government's nationalism and anti-Congress policy, increasing economic opportunities for Muslims and seeking the support of big landlords and British officials for his Aligarh College. They began to say that the best care of Muslim interests could be taken by the British. Congress is a Hindu organization whose objectives are against Muslim interests and if as a result of the Congress movements "the British leave India, then Hindus will dominate the Muslims due to numerical strength."⁷ He demanded reservation when Congress demanded democratic elections. To recognize the political importance of Muslims, he asked for reservation for Muslims in government jobs and legislatures. He instructed Muslims to stay away from the national movement. But they were newly educated. The government could not keep the Muslims pro-government. Many Muslim intellectuals joined the Congress and joined the national stream. They also took part in the anti-Bangla movement. Under the pressure of the Swadeshi movement, the government was also forced to make some constitutional concessions.

The establishment of the Muslim League is considered to be the first step in the history of communal politics and the partition of India. The Muslim League was founded on 30 December 1906 by Aga Khan, the Nawab of Dhaka. Now the Congress started being opposed from the platform of the Muslim League. The British government also promoted the Muslim League. Marley Minto reforms were implemented in India in 1909. In this, separate representation was given to Muslims on the basis of separate representation system. Due to which Congress opposed it.⁸ This bill was passed so that Muslims could be weakened by separating them from the national movement, this act was an example of the British's policy of 'Divide and Rule'.

Hindu Mahasabha also did the work of increasing communalism. In April 1928, a convention was called in Jabalpur. The communalists opposed the reservation of seats for the majority in Punjab and Bengal.⁹ In 1927, a constitutional commission was appointed by the British, which was opposed by the Indians. Due to which the government put the

challenge of making a constitution in front of the Indians. For this, the all-party Conference was organized on 22 February 1928. Dr. Ansari presided over it and Motilal Nehru presented his report. Muhammad Ali Jinnah demanded amendment in it. He demanded one-third seats for Muslims in the Central Legislative Assembly.¹⁰

But the young Muslim intellectual was increasingly attracted to modern and radical national ideas. This youth also started a vigorous nationalist Ahrar movement. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was also spreading rationalist and national ideas through his newspaper 'Al Halal'. Thus, the nationalist Muslims started getting prominence in the Muslim League as well. The Muslim League had also included self-government in its objectives on par with the Congress. From 1912 to 1924, the nationalist sections were very active in the Muslim League and the party's policies were very close to the Congress, but nationalism could not tarnish their religious and Islamic unionist logic. "Instead of understanding the economic and political consequences of imperialism, they opposed it on the grounds that it threatened the Caliphate and religious places."¹¹

'Divide and rule' was a policy which was followed deliberately in the era of British rule, in which Indians were divided and one community was encouraged to inflict injury on another. This policy was openly accepted during the early period of the British rule and in fact it was natural for an imperialist power. After the progress of the national movement, this policy took a devious and more dreadful form and although the existence of this policy was not acknowledged, it was carried out even more vigorously than before.¹²

After the First World War, there was a change in Hindu-Muslim relations during the protest against Rowlett Laws, Khilafat and Non-Cooperation Movement. The 'Khilafat Movement' was religious, but it helped in awakening national and anti-imperialist sentiment among the Muslim masses and the middle class. Due to the Khilafat movement, the importance of the Muslim League, which was based on communalism, diminished. The aristocratic landlord class and former bureaucrats started leaving the Muslim League. The problem was that the nationalist leadership could not convert the religious-political consciousness of the Muslims into secular political consciousness. For example, the leaders of the Khilafat movement made appeals in the name of religion and used fatwas and religious tools extensively. As a result, the grip of fundamentalism was strengthened and there was a habit of looking at political questions from a religious point of view. Due to this reason and the emphasis on Muslim federalism also opened the doors of communal ideology and politics.¹³

But after the withdrawal of the 'Non-cooperation Movement' in 1922, communalism again returned to its place in the despair and emptiness spread all around. In the Muslim League, the intelligentsia Muslim class was ousted and replaced by the upper-class government-pro-communal leadership. In the meantime, many communal riots took place. There were many communal movements among Hindus and Muslims; nationalism was again accepted as untouchable. This rise of communalism also infected some nationalists and they became communal or semi-sectarian. Lala Lajpat Rai, Madan Mohan Malviya and N. C. Kelkar joined the Hindu Mahasabha. Lala Lajpat Rai and Lalchand strongly criticized the one nation theory of the Congress and said that Hindus are a separate nation apart from Muslims and other sects. Instead of keeping social reforms aside and adopting new ideas of social progress, he continued the traditional, fanatical and narrow approach.¹⁴ Support was

offered to the government for the Hindus, secular Congressmen were opposed and the Muslim faction accused the Congress of forming a Hindu government.

The displeasure of Muslims was visible in the Civil Disobedience Movement because Muslims took little part in it. In August 1932, in the form of a communal manifesto, the British, under their 'divide and rule' policy, reserved some seats in the legislatures for each minority community, for which the members were to be elected from separate electorates. In this the Muslim could vote for the Muslim and the Sikh only for the Sikh. Behind this communal manifesto, the British believed that India is not a country, but it is a group of many caste and religious and cultural groups and fraternities and their own interests. This was a plan of the British thinking that the political parties at the centre and in the provinces would not be prepared on political or social basis but on communal and religious basis.¹⁵

The Congress opposed this as it believed that it would encourage communalism. The Indian Council Act was enacted on 4 August 1935, in which the communal representation was not only kept as it is but also increased. Minority communities were given disproportionate representation in the provinces. But in Punjab and Bengal minority Hindus were not treated equally.¹⁶

The Congress got a clear majority in the January 1937 elections. He formed his government in eight British provinces, but Congress received little support in Muslim provinces. The position of the Muslim League was also not good in these elections. Congress got 716 seats out of 1161. After this the League saw its future in danger and Jinnah started demanding Pakistan as the representative of the League. The word Pakistan was first used in 1933 by Chaudhary Rehmat Ali, a student of Cambridge University. He laid down the plan of a separate Muslim state, which later turned into a solid and complete Pakistan.¹⁷

In India, communalism had proved to be the most effective of all the measures taken by the British Government under the policy of 'Divide and Rule' on the basis of language, caste, region and class. Everyone else was swept away one by one in the nationalist current. The tremendous victory of the Congress, which raised the voice of national unity and independence in the elections of 1937, made the British rule completely dependent on communalism and they gave unprecedented freedom to Muslim communalism. "The communalism that developed along with nationalism was, if it was the result of the concern for British imperialism to remain in power, it was also the result of the failure of the national leadership to attract people of both religious faiths equally, failed to do."¹⁸

At the time of the Second World War, when the Congress got its ministers to resign and demanded that the British government should be given complete independence and an effective share in the government after the war, the Muslim League was pitted against the Congress. He was given the sole spokesperson of the Muslims and the right to exercise his 'veto' against any political settlement. The Muslim League and the government opened hearts and doors for each other. Due to the decimation in the 1937 elections, even the communalists had agreed that if they did not resort to extremist mass-based politics, they would gradually die out.

In December 1938, a session of the Muslim League was held in Patna in which Jinnah approved the violent action against the Congress and it was passed unanimously. After this the violent phase started in India. After the Congress resigned in 1939, the League

celebrated 'Liberation Day', this further increased the distance between the Congress and the League.¹⁹ On 24 March 1940, a resolution on Pakistan was passed in the Lahore session of the League.²⁰

The League demanded the creation of Pakistan by merging the Muslim majority areas. In the Aligarh session of the League in April 1941, Jinnah said, "Not only can Pakistan be taken, but if you want to prevent the complete extinction of Islam in this country, the only solution can be the establishment of Pakistan."²¹ The partition of India was proposed on the basis that Hindus and Muslims are two separate nations. Muhammad Ali Jinnah had said in the Lahore session that 'by any definition, Muslims are a nation, so they should have their own place of residence, their own state and their own state.' He believed that Hindus and Muslims were not just one religion but two separate and distinct social systems. These two (Hindu and Muslim) can never live together as one nation. If this happens then it will cause many troubles for us.²²

One of the reasons behind the demand for 'Pakistan' was that some Muslims had come to India as invaders. They destroyed thousands of temples in India, demolished Idols of Gods and Goddesses, converted temples into mosques and built other mosques from their material. By these invaders, the people of Hindu religion were made Muslims on the basis of the sword and those who were not ready for this were put to death. Because of this, Muslims believed that Hindus have never forgotten the atrocities and will never be able to forget them. It is clear that the old enmity between these two sects still persists. Therefore, these two sects should be divided into separate nations.²³

In 1942, the Congress started the Quit India Movement, but Jinnah and the Muslim League supported the British. Due to which the British were inclined towards the Muslim League and the demand for Pakistan got a boost. Cripps Mission came to India in March 1942. The Congress had objections to this mission (1) the provision of a local alternative in which the demand for Pakistan was implied. (2) The selection of the representatives of the state by the Indian kings. That is why Congress opposed it. Before leaving India, the Cripps Mission deepened the communalism even more.²⁴ Cripps Mission misled the minorities by saying from All India Radio that Congress wanted to establish oligarchy rule. India's Secretary Emery personally acknowledged on 2 May 1942 that this was "the first acceptance of the possibility of Pakistan."²⁵

Meanwhile, in July 1944, Gandhiji proposed to meet Jinnah. In December 1944, Jinnah and Gandhi held talks in which Jinnah reiterated the demand for the formation of Pakistan by joining 6 provinces of Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, West-North Frontier Province, Bengal and Assam. Gandhiji accepted this demand with some conditions. Areas where Muslims have a majority will be merged with Pakistan, but where it is not, a plebiscite will be held. Jinnah told Gandhiji on this subject- "Gandhi has given Pakistan like a louse and straw eaten by insects."²⁶ Jinnah opposed the plebiscite.

In February 1944, Viceroy Wavell said that India would get the right to decide its fate, but for these Indian leaders would have to cooperate with the government. Wavel organized the Shimla Conference on 25 June 1945 to solve the communal problem. In this, there was a difference of opinion between the League and the Congress regarding the formation of the Executive Council, and this conference also failed.²⁷

After the Second World War, a Labour Party government came to England. It followed a different policy towards Indians. The Conservative Party's policy was "divide taxes and rule" while the Labour Party's policy was "divide and go".²⁸

In the general elections in 1946, both the parties got more seats than in 1937. Congress got 57 seats out of 102 in the Central Assembly. The performance of the Muslim League was also better in these elections. The Muslim League got 87% of all Muslim seats that was 425 out of 492. Anita Inder Singh says that "The League presented these election results as a plebiscite for Pakistan and this victory certainly gave it to Indian Muslims."²⁹ constitutional representatives of Now the League and Jinnah had become supreme. This hurt national unity. Now Jinnah started strongly raising the demand of Pakistan. The Cabinet Mission came to India in March 1946. Its purpose was to condition India's independence and to make internal arrangements. He placed three plans before the League and the Congress. 1 To unite the provinces 2 Formation of the federation 3 Establishment of legislative machinery. Nehru and Jinnah expressed their disagreement on this and the immediate formation of internal government was said by Nehru.³⁰

Nehru formed the Interim Government on 12 August 1946 at the behest of the Viceroy. Nehru tried to include Jinnah too but he did not agree. Jinnah ordered to celebrate 'Sidhi Action Day'. Due to these communal riots spread in the country. Communal riots spread in Calcutta, Naunakhali and Bihar. Thousands of people died in these and the cabinet mission failed.³¹ Jinnah announced that 2nd December would be observed as 'Day of Mourning'. On 15 October 1946, there was a horrific riot in Noakhali and Tipra. Here the communal riots took a horrific form. In this the government, police and army did not help the people. In view of these riots, partition was considered necessary.³²

On 20 February 1947, Attlee announced that the emperor's government wanted to hand over the governance of India to the leaders of India. And on 3 June 1947, the partition of India and independence was declared. This was called the Mount Baton Plan. It is known. But Gandhi ji opposed the partition of India, but by March-April 1947, many Congress leaders had made up their mind to accept the demand of Pakistan against their wishes. They argued that independence was accompanied by communal violence. There are better alternatives than this. In April 1947, the decision of independent Pakistan was also accepted and the condition was that by dividing the provinces of Punjab and Bengal, Hindu majority districts would be made provinces of Hindustan. Hindus and Muslims were killed. Sikhs became the biggest target of this riots.³³

Due to the communal riots, the British government extended the date of partition and independence to 15 August 1947. On this Mount Baton had said that "Government did not make any hurry by fixing the date of 15 August, but it has left India already."³⁴ The Indian Independent Bill was passed in the Parliament from 4 to 16 July and it came into force on 18 July after receiving royal assent. Under this act, on the midnight of 14 -15 August, two nations named India and Pakistan were created by partitioning India.³⁵

Conclusion:

Thus, when the colonial economy was established in India, traditional industries were deliberately destroyed, unbearable burden was imposed on agriculture, due to which the Indian economy collapsed and hunger, unemployment attacked the people. Now his hopes were set on government jobs etc., which were already limited. Thus, in the situation of 'one

pomegranate hundred sick', communalism flourished as a convenient 'shortcut', which was adopted by the British Empire to weaken the growing nationalism and the high elites continued their exploitation unabated. Syed Ahmed first asked for reservation in government jobs, legislatures for Muslims. This was followed by the demand for separate constituencies, which eliminated the possibility of inter-mingling of social groups and encouraged separatism. These separatist forces later demanded greater autonomy, self-determination and ultimately division for power-pleasure. The Congress kept on giving concessions to them to satisfy the Muslim communalism and its demands kept on increasing. Considering communalism as a negative ideology, no one has shown the courage to refute it. On the contrary, the Congress accepted their existence by talking to the communal leaders, which increased their importance among the people. With the weakening of communalism at the time of the rise of the nationalist movements, British imperialism continued to feed it with the need to pull its power further. When the career of the communal leaders reached the verge of ending when all the communal demands were accepted by the British Empire under the Communal Award, they started demanding a separate nation by raising new fears, threats, and crises. Any possibility of agreements, treaties was deliberately eliminated. The poison of fear, hatred, malice and greed was spread all around, due to which countless lives were lost due to communal riots. The chaos and anarchy all around brought the nationalist forces under pressure and they surrendered to the separatist forces. Teaching each other a lesson on the occasion of partition, demonstration of power, plundering proceedings put to shame the pride of freedom.

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