



RELIGION IN INDIAN NATIONALISM AND INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT



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ABSTRACT :

This country was under the colonial rule of the British and after a long struggle gained freedom in 1947. In 1949, the constituent assembly enacted the new constitution which came into effect in 1950. Thus, the contemporary history of this country can be divided into two stages pre-independence and post-independence. India in these two stages has had different situation. In these two stages, the communities in Indian society have played different roles. In the first stage, Pakistan was still a part of India and a revolutionary situation existed within India which prompted most of the communities to be united against the British for freedom.

KEYWORDS : fishing, hunting, boating, swimming, Aquaculture.

INTRODUCTION:

Eventually, the inner differences gradually increased to an extent that it led to the separation of Pakistan in the days of independence. During the second stage in the absence of the same foreign enemy and separation of large part of Muslim there has been different situation with some change in the function of religion.

The subcontinent of India has included various religions. There have been many religions such as Hinduism, Islam, Christian, Sikh, Buddhism, and so on. In this research, the researcher will focus on the two important religions, i.e. Hinduism and Islam. These two religions, as has been already mentioned, have been important ones and have been practiced by larger numbers of people in the country, in comparison to the other religions. In this chapter and the following one, the roles and functions of these two religions during first stage of contemporary history of India are investigated.

A)Religious Politics of British Government

The British ruled India for more than 100 years around the 19th century. The liberal and the conservative leaders of India in this century perceived religion in terms of politics and politics in terms of religion. The social background, acceptance of the superior political doctrine and economic philosophy of the British rule, class interests and the perception of the social realities of the religious reformers and the liberal leaders made them great defenders of the colonial rule.

The Raj was described as an "act of abundant mercy of Divine Providence" and the rulers were looked upon as protectors and deliverers. The leaders supported free trade, settlement of Europeans and commercialization of agriculture. The British themselves also popularized some pro-British religious terms. It was claimed that the British made an outstanding contribution in making India modern, industrial, democratic and secular. Therefore, it was the duty of every Indian to extend support and to be loyal to this government which

was a 'gift of God' to their country.

During their reign, the colonial rulers not only insisted on describing India as a land of disparate religious communities, castes, sects and tribes, but also contributed to the consolidation of such primordial identities through the codification of Hindu and Muslim family laws, compilation of ethnographic notes, and enumeration of the 'peoples of India' through decennial censuses from 1881 onward. These measures encouraged communalism. So, 'the British deliberately created communal categories in politics as well as in administration, by encouraging Muslim communalism. A similar approach was adopted in the case of various castes.' Besides, they followed the politics of 'divide and rule' and pitched one community against the other to weaken the freedom struggle. They reinforced a feeling of anxiety among sections of the Muslim community concerning their wellbeing in a country that had a majority Hindu population and emerging Hindu nationalist voices. In the following paragraphs, some cases related to British politics are explained.

1) British and Fear of Some Primary Evidences of Unity

In the 1857 war of independence, Hindus and Muslims fought shoulder to shoulder against the enemy. The Hindus as well as the Muslims had united against the British. Since the beginning of freedom movement, also, in early 20th century, Hindus and Muslims together joined the struggle.

Although Hindus and Muslims were urged to unite in fighting the common threat that the British posed, but they did not fight as one people. On the contrary, rebel rhetoric seemed obsessed at working out a new relationship between Hindus and Muslims in which each was meant to sacrifice their own interest for the other's religious scruples without sharing these in any way. Instead of being related to one another by loyalty to the King, as had been the case with religious and ethnic groups in times past, Hindus and Muslims had created a new model of interaction, which its origin was in the rebel army. The following passage explains this new relationship from a proclamation attributed to Bahadur Shah (1775 –1862), that proposing a moral agreement between them:

They accordingly now ordered the Brahmins and others of their army to bite cartridges in the making up of which fat had been used. The Mussulman soldiers perceived that by this expedient the religion of the Brahmins and Hindus only was in danger, but nevertheless they also refused to bite them.... The slaughter of kine is regarded by the Hindus as a great insult to their religion. To prevent this, a solemn compact or agreement has been entered into by all the mahomedan chiefs of Hindustan, binding themselves that if the Hindus will come forward to slay the English, the mahomedans will from that very day put a stop to the slaughter of cows, and those of them who will not to do so, will be considered to have abjured the Kuran, and such of them as will eat beef will be regarded as though they had eaten pork: but if the Hindus will not gird their loin to kill the English, but will try to save them, they will be as guilty in the sight of God as though they had committed the sins of killing cows and eating flesh.

These evidences and the fear of unity between two communities prompted the British to use the policy of 'divide and rule' from the beginning of their governance. By following this policy, the British began to instigate the Hindus against the Muslim and vice versa.

2) Policy of 'Divide and Rule': Towards Pro-Muslim Policy

There is the premise that the British colonial policy in India was based on the policy of "Divide and Rule." It implied that the policy of English rulers was to uphold in full force the so-called separation which existed between different religions and not to endeavour to amalgamate them.² It has been one of the routine politics in British India that power at each level and especially across levels is attained by dividing the opposition, not by oppressing it.³ So, during British government religion became a handle in the hands of rulers for the application of this policy. In first war of Independence, 1857, the Hindus as well as the Muslim had united to throw the British imperialism out but after the British followed this policy, they began to instigate the Muslims against the Hindus and vice-versa. Thus, in this era, clearly, religion was used in favor of British and had a negative function as a segmenting element for Indian.

In the colonial period, according to some writers, it was the divide-and-rule politics of the colonial state

that first created the religious communities and then set them up against each other. By dividing Indian civil society along religious lines, the state had a perfect *raison d'être* – to ensure order. Some of the British authors such as Steel, Croker, Philip Mason and Greenberger by their writings revealed a distinctly pro-Muslim bias and a veiled attempt to encourage the Muslims to look down upon the Hindus. They tried to sow the seeds of communal dissension all over India.

The colonial rulers found that religion could be profitably exploited in their approach to the Indian people, although the colonial rulers were not always responsible for all religious or communal feuds. They were not the authors of religious divisions but they utilized the division of religious feelings and the element of race to their advantage. They found Divide and Rule to be a useful motto and division of the Indian people along religious lines the bulwark of British rule in India. The following statement confirms this policy well. As far back as 1821, a British officer writing under the name of "Carnaticus" in the *Asiatic Review* of May, 1821, declared that "Divide et impera should be the motto of our Indian administration, whether political, civil or military." In 1862, Charles Wood pointed out to the Viceroy that: "If all India was to unite against at how long could we maintain ourselves." Thus, the motivation of the colonial rulers was to maintain and to preserve the British Empire, rather than protecting or promoting one community and its interests against another community. Their object was "to check the politicization of the Indian people, to end their consolidation and unification and to disrupt the process of the Indian nation in the Making."

The British rulers extended support to any movement or agitation, which could drive a wedge among the Indians and weaken their unity. Of such supports Shakir mentions some instances: 'Support to the Aligarh movement in the last quarter of the 19th century, encouragement to Hindi and Hindu recruitment in the United Provincial administration in the beginning of the 20th century, deliberate attempt to strengthen anti-Congress Governments in different provinces after 1920, and acceptance of all the demands of the Muslim communal leaders in the Communal Award.' Willingdon described this approach in 1932, as following: "We cannot afford to be wholly without friends."

This politics is well shown in the late of 19th century especially after foundation of the Congress Party. The attitude of friendly neutrality, which the Government had assumed towards the Congress at the time of its birth very soon, gave place to one of active hostility. In 1888, during the fourth session of the Congress at Allahabad, the change in the attitude of the Government was quite apparent. For the Government, its future line of action was obvious. If they were to counteract the growing power of the Congress, they must find friends among the Muslims and start the policy of divide and rule. This policy was started through Beck, the principal of the Aligarh College, whom Sir John Strachey described as, "An Englishman, who was engaged in Empire-building activities in a far-off land." In 1889, Beck sponsored a memorial of Muslims against the Bill introduced by Charles Bradlaugh with the object of introducing representative institutions in India. In 1893, the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental Defense Association was formed with the active help of the Government to counteract the growing popularity of the Congress.

Thus, the government applied the policy of divide and rule. After founding of the Congress, the traditional anti-Muslim policy of the government was gradually reversed and it became anti-Hindu. When the Extremists, began to make their weight felt in the beginning of the 20th century, the government was exasperated more and they adopted the Machiavellian game, even more blatantly. In 1905, the government partitioned the Bengal Presidency for reasons of administrative efficiency. But it was realized as a clever move to drive a wedge between the two communities and to weaken the forces of the Bengal nationalism by weaning away Muslims from the Congress. The Congress saw in it the imperial design of divide and rule, but Bengali Muslims generally welcomed the measure as a means of escaping Hindu economic domination. The policy of divide and rule was intensified after the entry of the Extremists. It was natural that the British government felt the danger, as the Extremists like Tilak led the Congress to pass in 1906 the resolution asking for self-government like that of the United Kingdom or Colonies. The Extremists had openly challenged the government. For the nationalists, the idea of separate Hindu and Muslim identity had no natural basis and also the two communities were politically separated through the maneuvers of communal forces and imperial divide and rule.

The British officials treated the Muslims as a distinct political group in India. They were nominated to serve on the Imperial Legislative Council and on the Education and Public Service Commissions. Before the introduction of the elective principle into the constitution of rural local governments as a result of Ripon's Reforms (1883), the Muslims were officially nominated to such bodies. The government of India resolutions of 23 October 1884 (which spoke of it being desirable to give Muslims exceptional assistance in some respects) and of 15 July 1885 (which assumed that the Muslims as such aspired to rival Hindus in State employment) "helped to endow the Muslims with a separate social as well as religious personality, which needed to be recognized in British policy."

The British government saw clearly that the game of politics could no longer be played in India without helping the Muslims. By then, Punjab, Maharashtra and Bengal had emerged as vibrant regions of nationalism, and the government had no intention to tolerate any further consolidation of national aspirations. For Lord Curzon, it would serve plural objectives. First, the partition would appease loyal Muslims; second, it would effectively break-up integrated and united nationalist forces in Bengal; third, in turn, it would adversely affect Congress objectives of secular, national integration; and, finally, it would pave the way to Muslim unity and organization. It was, thus, the step to culminate the process of institutionalization of separatist, divisive and sub-nationalist forces. He did not hide the major purpose of the scheme of partition: it not only relieved administrative pressures, it also helped create a Muslim province, 'where Islam would be predominant and its followers in the ascendancy.' Lord Curzon's favorite, Bampfylde Fuller, the first Lt. Governor of East Bengal, 'openly announced a policy of preference for Muslims and prejudice against Hindus and deliberately embarked upon a campaign of repression and humiliation of the Hindus.'

The motives of the partition of Bengal, allegedly administrative, were really communal and religious and a beginning was being made by an imperial Christian power to drive a wedge between the two major communities of India, the Hindus and the Muslims. The reaction against the partition, also, spontaneous and universal, was largely religious—Swadeshi, Boycott, Sankirtan parties, temple worship at Kalighat and Nat Mandir, prayer, fasting, Rakhi Bandhan and so on and so forth.

After the foundation of the Muslim League and Minto's concessions of separate electorates, weightage and reservation of seats to the Muslims naturally poisoned Hindu-Muslim relations. It was quite on the cards that the thought of Syed Ahmad dominated the Muslim community in spite of occasional opposition by individual Muslims. They were all Muslims first and Indians afterwards. The gulf thus created between two communities was further widened by designing Englishmen interested in the politics of divide and rule. Bampfylde Fuller, Lt. Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam, narrated a parable, "I said that I was like a man who was married to two wives, one a Hindu the other a Muhammedan—both young and charming—but was forced into the arms of one of them by the rudeness of the other."

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