

Communal Riots and Their Solutions

After the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, the British government aggravated the politics of communal division of India. The effect of this was seen shortly afterwards, resulting in the horrendous riots between Hindus and Muslims in Kohat. Following this, a long debate ensued on the communal riots in the national political consciousness. The need to put an end to such riots was felt by all, but all that the Congress politicians did put an end to this was a lame formal agreement among the Hindu and Muslim leaders. The revolutionary movement too put forward its views to provide a definitive solution to the problem. This article by Bhagat Singh was published in 'Kirti' in 1927. Today, even after almost 90 years, the views presented here hold significance.

The condition of India has now become pathetic. The followers of one religion have become bitter enemies of the followers of the other religion. The enmity between the people of religious groups have increased so much so, that to belong to one particular religion is reason enough for becoming enemy of the other religion. If someone has any doubts about the seriousness of the situation, they should look at the recent riots of Lahore. How Muslims killed innocent Hindus and Sikhs and how Sikhs have been unsparing in their killings. These mutual killings have not been resorted by the killers to award punishment to someone found guilty of some crime, but for the simple reason that someone was either Hindu, Sikh or Muslim. For Muslims, it has been enough to kill if someone was either Hindu or Sikh and likewise to be a Muslim was sufficient argument for him to be killed. In this situation, God alone knows what will happen to India.

Today India's future seems extremely bleak. These religions have screwed India and one does not know when India will be freed from these communal riots. These riots have shamed India at the world stage and we have seen that in the deluge of superstitions, everyone gets swept away. During these riots, hardly do you see examples of a Hindu, Muslim or a Sikh who keeps his head cool while the rest pick up rods, sticks, swords and knives to maintain their dominance and eventually kill each other in this pursuit of dominance. Then

there are some who get hanged and others who are thrown in prison. After all this bloodshed, the English Government shines its rod on these “defenders of religion” which seem to cure their mental illness.

During these times, the role of communal leaders and newspapers have also been observed in instigating these riots. In these times of communal hatred, the leaders of India have decided to remain quiet. These are the same leaders who claim to pioneer the great responsibility of liberating the country and these are the very same leaders who had been talking about “common nationality” and had been vociferously demanding “Swaraj” (self-rule), and these are the same leaders who have decided to remain mum with their heads bowed down in shame. Some of them are even getting swayed by the rage of religious bigotry. There are many leaders who are hiding their faces during these times, but you can find numerous other leaders who have openly become communal. There are very few leaders who sincerely worry and think about everyone. Even these sincere leaders are unable to stop the strong influx of communalism. It appears that Indian leadership has become completely bankrupt!

The other instrument of fomenting and inciting communal violence are the people writing for the newspapers. The profession of journalism was once considered to be respectable but today it is in a dirty mess. These people write against another community with big bold headlines which provoke the constant feeling of hatred and enmity among communities. It is not a stray accusation, one can look at numerous examples where communal riots have taken place as provocations from writings in these newspapers. There were very few reporters who could boast of a balanced poise in their minds and hearts during these turbulent times.

The real duty of the newspapers was to educate, to cleanse the minds of people, take them out of the rut of narrow sectarian grooves of thought and perception, and to wash and scrap out communal feelings in order to invest them with feelings of amity and communal harmony, to bridge the gap and build mutual trust, bring about real rapprochement for advancing the cause of “common nationalism” but they have been doing exactly opposite, leading to the division in the objective of “common nationalism”. This is the very reason that makes me cry tears of blood when I think of present India and wonder “What will happen to India?”

During the time of Non-cooperation movement, the people who were known

and respected for their zealousness have become pitiable. Where are those days when we glimpsed of independence right in-front of our eyes? And look at the times today where independence has again become a distant dream! This is the third and final benefit that these riots have given to its perpetrators! During the Non-cooperation days, the bureaucracy whose existence was under threat has now deepened its roots which has become unshakable in the present circumstances.

The root cause of communal violence is probably economic. During the time of non-cooperation movement, leaders and reporters made huge sacrifices for the cause of the movement. As a result of these sacrifices, their economic conditions deteriorated considerably. When non-cooperation movement lost its steam, people lost trust on its leaders, as many of the present “communal leaders” had become economically bankrupt. Whatever happens in the world, money can easily be traced as the reason for that event. This is one of the three key principles of Marxian theories. The rise of “Tablighi” and “Shudhi” organization can be attributed to this principle of Marx and this also happens to be the main reason why we have become so indescribably pathetic.

So, if there is any solution to communal riots, it can only be achieved through improvement of economic condition in India. Actually, the economic condition of a common man in India is so bad that anyone can give quarter of a rupee to other person and offend a third person. Struggling through hunger and suffering and given an option between do or die, people often keep their principles aside and why wouldn't they? But in present circumstances, changes in economic condition is extremely difficult because the government is foreign who is least interested in the betterment of economic conditions of people. This is the very reason why people should target and protest against the foreign government until this government changes.

To prevent people from fighting each other, “class consciousness” is the need of the day. The poor labourers and the farmers must be clearly taught that their real enemies are the capitalists. So, you should be careful of their tricks and should not follow them blindly. The poor of the world, regardless of race, colour, religion or nation have the same rights. Your well-being is in erasing the discrimination based on colour, creed, race, religion, regionalism and unite together to try and take the power of government into your hands. By trying so, you are not going to lose anything but one day your shackles will break freeing you from economic despondency.

Those who know about the history of Russia, will tell you that during the time of Tsar the situation there was quite similar with communities spreading lies against each other. But the day Bolsheviks came into power in Russia, their whole situation changed. Since then there have been no reports of riots from Russia. Now, every person is considered as human and they are not limited by their religious identities. During the time of Tsar, the economic situation of people was miserable which gave rise to riots and communal violence but today the economic conditions of the Russians have improved considerably with increased awareness about economic classes. Since this change, there has been no reports of communal violence and riots from Russia.

Usually, riots bring about extremely depressing news, but during one of these riots in Calcutta there was an extremely pleasing report. The workers of trade union didn't play any part in those riots and neither did they participate in the communal skirmishes but the Hindus and Muslims would work in factories showing remarkable amity and they also participated in diffusing the situation. This happened because the workers were class-conscious and they understood their interests as a group. This beautiful example of class consciousness is a way with which we can stop communal violence.

We have heard this joyous news that the youth of India are now fleeing away from those religions which teach hatred and communal violence. They have become so open in their outlook that they don't look at people as Hindus, Muslims or Sikh but first as a human being and then as Indians. With the rise of these thoughts in the youth of India, I see hope for the future of India. Indians should not get upset at the news of these riots, but they should seek to not built a communal environment which results in riots.

The martyrs of 1914-15 had separated religion from politics. They understood that religion is the personal matter of an individual which needed no interference from other. But they all agreed that religion should not enter politics because it does not allow people to work together for a common cause. This was the reason why during the revolution called by 'Gadar Party', people remained united. Here Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims were put on gallows for the cause of revolution.

Today there are new politicians who have entered the fight for freedom, who want to separate religion from politics. This is a beautiful way to cure the malaise of communal violence.

Even though we have different religious beliefs, if we separate religion from politics we all can stand together in the matter of politics and national cause.

We hope that the true sympathizers of India will think over our solutions and will save India from following the path of self-destruction.

- *Bhagat Singh (June 1928)*

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