

## Review Article

## Interrogating Communalism: Understanding the Paradox of National Integration in India

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**Abstract:** National integration is the feeling of togetherness and harmony among the people of a country. It denotes the cooperation among people in all respect. It is the base a country's all-round development. Peace cannot be achieved without integration. No country can survive without national integration. While understanding the very essence of national integration of a country, there is the need to trace out the factors of disintegration. Communalism is such a factor which promotes disrespect, disintegration, aggressiveness in the mind of the people. Communalism provides ground for easy eruption of communal violence. Aggressive communalism provoked them to indulge in communal riots. Communal riots always threaten the unity, integrity, fraternity and security of a nation. It increases bloodshed and destruction and put a stain on the society as the violence, hostility among the communities has been increasing, even the peace, integrity, communal harmony among the communities has been decreasing day by day. Many writers R. Puniyani (2003), B. Rajeshwari (2004), are of the opinion that, communal riots in India are not spontaneous, rather they arise out of communal politics and the conflicting political interests within the political leadership. In this backdrop, the present study is an attempt to comprehend the nature and causes of communalism in India with an overview of its negative forces.

**Keywords:** National Integration, Communalism, Communal violence, Communal Politics.

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### INTRODUCTION

National Integration is the one of the basic needs of India being multi-lingual, multi-cultural country. The question of National Integration is being served as the important viewpoint in India. With independence, the Indian State had to obtain the problems of regionalism, communalism, nepotism, catenin. The only way to overcome those challenges is to integrate people of various cultures, traditions, mores, languages, religion in to one track. National integration is the urge for mutual co-existence, cooperation, and understanding. It is the most practical humanitarian question in front of a country having diversity in cultural, religious, and linguistic plinth. It is the change in mindset from me to us, from narrow to wider, from self –interest to collective interest, from self-consideration to collective consideration. At this juncture the present study tries to interrogate communalism which changes the sentiments from us to them, from wider to narrow, from collective consideration to aggressive consideration.

This perception first generates self-centric views within the community and also develops the sense of uniqueness and distinctiveness from the other communities. With the passage of time such thinking may generate restlessness and consequently aggressiveness. It has been observed that aggressive one-sided love towards own culture, religion, community, language, contributes towards occurrence of violence. Thus, violence becomes a part of social action of human beings. Social scientists uphold the view that man as an individual is barely ever aggressive. Alone he neither commits murder nor goes for violence but a man in social contact does both. It is only after men come together, leaving their personal interests, organizing into groups that collision and conflict follow out of perceived or imagined threats towards their group interests. Group identity as a community is a significant determinant in shaping the collective behaviour of a group. If the group is bound by common objectives, then the ethics of the group will

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determine the nature of action which may produce either negative or positive results. Perceived group interests along with perceived threats direct the group actions and increases “the feeling of locating one’s own group at the centre of the universe, superior to other” (Talbot 2000:113-114). Accordingly, the ‘dominant group’ which locates itself as the centre of the universe tries to project the ‘other subordinate group’ as the threat to their identity and assume that they will be outnumbered by their enemies. Many writers such as D. Horowitz (1985:41-54), Ashutosh Varshney (2002:04), argue that ascribed group identities based on race, religion, tribe, language or caste are the roots of all forms of conflict. Asghar Ali Engineer (2004:03-04) opines that group identity plays a significant role in the process of political mobilization resulting in group clashes. In intense inter-group conflicts, the view of ‘Us’ *versus* ‘Them’ comes into forefront, that further deepen the bitterness and instigates one community against the other. It may lead to greater manifestation of resentment in the form of movement or agitation. This situation can be best exploited by the communal forces to organize communal riots that leave deep scars of pain and distress, which is difficult to forget.

#### **Statement of the Problem:**

Indian society is a diverse society. Though these diversities have contributed towards establishing a mosaic culture in India, in a number of times it generated bitterness among the communities leading to communal riots. While understanding the very essence of national integration of a country, there is the need to trace out the factors of disintegration. Communalism is such a factor which promotes disrespect, disintegration, aggressiveness in the mind of the people. Communalism provides ground for easy eruption of communal violence. Engineer said, “If communal tendencies become stronger in the society it is much easier for communal forces to organize communal violence. Spread of communalism is a necessary condition for communal violence. To organize communal violence, communal atmosphere needs to be generated” (Engineer 2004:4). After years of struggle, India attained independence giving rise to new rays of hopes for millions of people. However, the joy of independence marred with an endless pain of partition. Conflict at political level entered to community level that divided the Hindus and the Muslims in India. Hence, it can be said that the historic event of partition not only gave birth to Pakistan but also communally divided the mindset of a large section of people. Aggressive communalism provoked them to indulge in communal riots. Communal riots always threaten the unity, integrity, fraternity and security of a nation. It increases bloodshed and destruction and put a stain on the society as the violence, hostility among the communities has been increasing, even the peace, integrity, communal harmony among the communities has been decreasing day by day. Many writers R. Puniyani (2003), B. Rajeshwari (2004), are of the

opinion that, communal riots in India are not spontaneous, rather they arise out of communal politics and the conflicting political interests within the political leadership.

#### **Rationale behind selecting communalism as the biggest challenge in front of India’s National Integration:**

Communalism develops partisan outlook and intention. It is an orthodox perception, and develops intolerance, dislikes, hatred among the minds of people. Communalism has appeared as the central problem in the development of a self-governing national and democratic polity in India (Pandey 2006:5). It is the belief that in India Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs form different distinct communities which are independently and separately structured, that all followers of a religion share not only a community of religious interest but also common secular interest and also develop a sense of identity based on religion. Religion has to become the basic determinant of social relationship. Consequently, communal ideologies possess the inherent tendency for easy eruption of communal riots.

Many writers argue that communal riots are closely linked with communal ideologies. Writer Mohsin Iqbal Najar argues that communal violence is always linked to communal ideology comprising three elements, these are:

- i. According to communal ideology, people who follow the same religion having common secular interest have common political, economic, social and cultural interest.
- ii. In a multi-religious society, secular interest including economic, social, political and cultural beliefs among the followers of one religion is different from some of the interests of the followers of another religion.
- iii. The interest of the followers of different communities cannot have common, economic, social, political interest. Their secular interests are bound to be opposed to each other (Najar: 2014:5).

These interests widen the religious differences among the followers of different religions. In this backdrop, people with religious differences may use religious identity to mobilize people to indulge in conflict. The present study tries to understand how the religious differences worked to instigate people towards communal riots. “When power is sought on communal and caste lines, diversity becomes a source of conflict rather than a source of strength” (Engineer 2004:2).

Therefore, it is very important to understand the link of communalism and communal ideologies, with the occurrence of communal riots. In this regard we may refer Najar and Asghar Ali Engineer who together put forwarded the link between communalism and communal riots.

Communal violence is only a concrete conjectural manifestation of the communalization of society and politics. Communal ideology leads to political and psychological differentiation, distance and competition along religious lines. Sooner or later, it leads to mutual fear and hatred and ultimately to violence” (Najar 2014:5).

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Conflict is part of human society. Writers like. S. Cheldelin, D. Druckman D, Larissa Fast, Kvin Clements and R. Rubenstein (2003) argue that conflict and cooperation as the heart of all communities and both are very important for running the societies. Sometimes conflict may be beneficial for society. However, it may not be so all the time. When we talk about conflict, hostility, war and crime, most of the time we see the destructive forces behind these phenomena. Communal riot is always destructive in its nature, as it destroys the age-old relationship among communities. It also destroys the values of cooperation, harmony, social values, and morals of social institutions. Communal riots generate aggressiveness which leads to transformation at the socio-economic, cultural and political levels. In this background we may refer to Richard Rubenstein (2003: 55-62) who identified the followings sources as the destructive outbreak of a conflict.

- i. Personal-aggressiveness: Aggressive behavior gives birth to aggressive and destructive activities.
- ii. Situational-aggressiveness: If the situation is totally against the conflicting groups, then it may generate frustration in the minds of the members of the group. This ultimately develops anti- social behavior.
- iii. Transformation: Changes in the socio-economic, political and cultural spheres may generate aggressiveness which may destroy communal harmony (Rubenstein 20003: 55-62).

Rubenstein argued that transformation in cultural sphere created most connected atmosphere for creating destructive conflict.

He said, “The most profound of the changes connected with the transformation of the cultural norm-the ensemble of conscious and unconscious images, philosophical assumptions and ethnic ideas, habitual behavior and emotional experiences that determines to a large extent, how people view themselves and each other” (Rubenstein 2003:62).

The present study highlights the view of Rubenstein to understand the factors and forces of destructive outbreak of a conflict.

#### **Research Questions:**

Post independence period witnessed many harmful sings, and disorderly forces to destroy national integration and solidarity. Communal polarization and eruption of communal riots in most parts of the country taught us the lesson to rethink the principles of self-sufficiency. Self-support and co-existence. It anticipates the questions:

- 1) Are we united?
- 2) Why communal forces are the stronger than any other forces?

Indian State has undergone socio-political transformation under different regimes. All those regimes had used different measures to tackle turmoil of those times. The Britishers deployed many more techniques to keep people divide. They persuaded communal issues, endorsed communal representation and distorted the very course of Indian history. Gradually disputes, communal disharmony, fighting became more firmed and prominent. With communal forces, other linguistic, cultural disputes were found more effective. Steadily communalism became the most challenging threat to national integration and took its root into the minds, hearts and actions (Siddique, 1971:20). We are still divided in opinion and action. Lack of faith still prevails against each other. Sometimes we give up differences but suddenly distrust, political mishap sweeps a way the entire good will and the very basis mutual existence. Prevailing discrimination, exploitation, lack of resources, lack of education further complicates the problem of national integration.

The social scientists have to depend more on approaches and concepts to find the root cause of the problems. In our study, it is essential to understand communalism or communal identity before going a step further. “Indeed, the concept of communalism/communal identity can better be understood by referring to another related concept, ethnicity and ethnic identity” (Singh 2016:95). The study of ethnic identity is very relevant to understand the background of communal riots as it helps us to understand the communal differences among people of different religious background. Though it helps to understand the differences, yet it always carries a negative dimension. Sometimes excessive concentration on ethnicity or ethnic identity leads to untold sufferings. An ethnic group always consider themselves to be different or distinct from other groups. Morgan argued, “An ethnic group is a group of people who consider themselves to be distinct from others because of a shared belief of common ancestry, ties with a specific territory, a perception of a shared culture, and belief in common destiny” (Morgan 2004:193). This sense of

differences and distinctiveness creates the ground for hostility towards other groups. They do whatever is essential for preserving their distinctive identity. Thus, the ethnic identity increases the fanatical differences among the people of different communities. Under such circumstances, violence may easily erupt. Therefore, in studying communal riots the study of ethnic identity plays a very crucial role. Another important area is the development of communal ideologies which has a direct link with the eruption of communal riots. Communalism provides ground for easy eruption of communal violence. Communalism is the belief a group of people follow a particular religion has common social political and economic interest. The religious distinction is the most fundamental distinction among Indians. This distinction overrides all other distinction (Chandra, 2016:16). While analyzing communalism and communal politics, the religious aspects is being emphasized more than the issues such as political, cultural, economic or sometimes they are ignored.

Mutual hatred and hostility between communities have to become usual and perpetual element, whereas; trust, respects, tolerance, integration, become the temporary things. Communalism destroys secularism and national integration. Communalism in India is the sarcastic misuse of religion for political ends. Violence is espoused and used to achieve political gains. That's why in Indian society the communal politics is being regarded as the most important content of communalism. It is the dangerous manifestation of communalism. It is communalism of politics and ideology which can be and maybe the area under discussion and analysis of ideological-political struggle in modern India.

## CONCLUSION

There cannot be national integration without understanding the very nature of the state. There cannot be national integration without understanding mutual co-existence and good will. We have to overcome the fanatical identities based on caste, class, language, religion and then only solidarity, prosperity progress could be achieved which are the survival of country's integration. For the sake of national integration, we should bring the various people together in a common bond. Education is one of the powerful weapons for national integration. Through education we can impart the necessity of national integration without which country's progress cannot be achieved in the real sense of the term. Communal polarization should be shrunked.

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