

REGIONAL CONFLICTS AND POLITICAL CLASHES: A STUDY ON PARTITION NARRATIVES

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Abstract:

Partition is the current topic for discussion among many platforms of the world. Whether it is India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Lebanon, Isreal or Religious, political issues, it is evident that partition continues to be an emerging one among many places in the world. In many ways, it is the core plot in the unfolding narrative of modern, independent India. The major reasons for partition revolve around the religion on both sides indirectly involving many political and regional issues. The negotiations, theoretical issues confines to the partitions restructuring the sources of conflicts around the borders, refugees, and Diaspora. There is a dire need of new languages in dealing with the historical traumas of the past, of rethinking of partition influenced by high end political intervenes. The present paper is limited to the incidents happened in 1940s in the light of Hindu-Muslim conflicts in the light of the weakness of secular ideology. The two major religions of the country discredited it, they are badly lead and proceeded more than a match for the tepid enthusiasm of Congress secular wing.

Keywords: *Conflicts, Partition, Politics, Religion, Rethinking.*

Introduction

The Communist Party of India not only acknowledged the importance of the national question for politics, but also unequivocally embraced the principle of national self determination. The idea was drummed into the heads of the people without realising its consequences for the party itself, and the accentuation of the communal process at the level of the masses. Finally, the colonial government's conciliatory policy towards the Muslim League bore fruit during the Second World War, and stiffened Mohammad Ali Jinnah's resolve to achieve his Muslim homeland. It was the outbreak of war in September 1939 that saved the League. Even as Linlithgow put federation into cold storage for the duration of the war, Jinnah set out to exploit the British need for the support of the Indian parties for the war effect. When the war ended, the engine of communal politics could no longer be put in reverse. This is what happened, in the words of the Urdu writer, Ismat Chughatai (1991).

The flood of communal violence came and went with all its evils, but it left a pile of living, dead, and gasping corpses in its wake. It wasn't only that the country was split in two-bodies and minds were also divided. Moral beliefs were tossed aside and humanity was in shreds. Government officers and clerks along with their chairs, pens and inkpots, were distributed like the spoils of war. Those whose bodies were whole had hearts that were splintered. Families were torn apart. One brother was allotted to Hindustan, the other to Pakistan; the mother was in Hindustan, her offspring were in Pakistan; the husband was in Hindustan, his

wife was in Pakistan. The bonds of relationship were in tatters, and in the end many souls remained behind in Hindustan while their bodies started off for Pakistan.⁹ Pluralism, the bedrock of secular nationalism, could no longer contain hatred, religious intolerance, and other forms of bigotry. Some of the anxieties Indians faced while formulating strategies for political survival reappeared with a force that could not have been anticipated at the turn of the century. They came into sharp focus only a decade or so before the actual transfer of power. The League, the Akali Dal and the Hindu Mahasabha rejected the once seemingly unassailable pluralist paradigm, while religious fundamentalists, who were at any rate wary of the corrosive effects of secular ideologies, turned to the creation of a Hindu state or an Islamic theocracy. The outcome was a cataclysmic event? India's bloody vivisection. As the historian of Islam pointed out, 'a few years after the extermination camps and incendiary and atomic bombs of the Second World War seemed to have confirmed the worst condemnations Indians had levelled against materialistic modern West, Modern India, Hindu and Muslim, confronted horrors of its own making'. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was the person most sensitive to this reality, though his reactions scarcely figure in post-modernist narratives on Partition. One almost gets a sense, in the writings of many historians, of Gandhi's premature demise well before his assassination on 30 January 1948. That being the case, it is important to recover Gandhi's voice, and attach some importance to his responses in the discussions over Partition violence.

Argument: Although the literature covering his last years is rich, it is hard to comprehend how and why a man, having dominated the political scene for three decades, could do so little to influence the Congress to take firm and effective steps to contain violence. Even if this fact illustrates Gandhi's diminishing political influence, we can still ask why he became, as he told Louis Fischer, 'a spent bullet', and what turned him into 'a back number'. What led him to conclude that he could not influence, much less lead, India on the eve of Independence? Why tell the Mahatma to shut up at a time when the nation's unity was at stake and the eruption of large-scale violence widely anticipated? Was it because, as Acharya Kripalani pointed out, that Gandhi had found no way of tackling the communal problem, and that 'he himself is groping in the dark?' This is an extraordinary comment from a man who had himself displayed little political sagacity during his long years in public life.

Explanation: Writers poignantly detail Gandhi's heroics in riot-torn Noakhali in East Bengal and dwell on his fasts unto death in Calcutta that began in September 1947 and 13 January 1948, respectively. But most pay scant attention, especially during this period, to his moral dilemma resulting from the Congress party's de sire to achieve freedom at all cost. It is fair to argue that the colonial context, the complex legacy of history, and the potentially explosive legacy of social and economic inequalities between the two communities handicapped him. Nonetheless, we also need to understand the dialectics of the Partition movement, and not so much the consequences that enfeebled the Mahatma's initiatives to resolve the Congress-Muslim impasse, and in the end, hastened his political death.

Finding peace amidst turmoil became an integral part of Gandhi's inner quest, his inner journey that had a goal but no destination. Pacifying enraged mobs was relatively simple, for

the Gandhian charisma still worked, as in Bihar, where his presence did much to reassure local Muslims. But Jinnah, as he had discovered during the course of his many previous encounters, was a hard nut to crack. Allaying his apprehensions proved to be a nightmare for his political adversaries. Meeting his demands was doubly difficult. With their conflicting visions and perspectives surfacing during their talks in the autumn of 1944 (the talks started on 9 September) and later, the main stumbling block remained Jinnah's insistence on having his 'Pakistan', and Gandhi's moral indignation at the very idea of India's 'vivisection'. 'What made his demands even more incongruous,' wrote Madeline Slade (Mira Behn), was that he maintained that the Muslims as a separate nationality had the sole right to decide, in the areas he chose to describe as Muslim-majority Provinces, whether to separate from India or not, regardless of the rest of the population which, except for the North-West Frontier regions, formed only a little less than half of the total population.

Meanwhile, the colonial government - the 'third party' - nursed its wounds. Bruised and battered by the impact of World War II, it had little or no interest in curbing violence. As the sun finally set on the empire, the imperial dream was over. It was time to dismantle the imperial structures and move to the safety of the British Isles. "Your day is done", Gandhi had written. The British, having read the writing on the wall, had no desire or motivation to affect a peaceful transfer of power. Having bandied round the view that Hindu-Muslim violence resulted from a civilizational conflict between Islam and Hinduism, they now put forward the thesis that it could not be contained once Pakistan became inevitable.

In this context, three points are salient. First, the Congress agrarian programme and the responses of the Awadh taluqdars; second, the middle class perception of the Congress Ministry in UP, and the insecurities generated by some of its policies; and finally, the concern over future social alignments in a federal polity with adult franchise. The fear of being overwhelmed by the masses had prompted Jinnah and the Muslim League to reject the Nehru Committee Report in 1928.⁸⁰ The same anxiety gripped the Muslim elite once the process of devolving power to Indian was consummated in the Act of 1935. The symbols of Islam, howsoever evocative, played a limited role in translating their anxieties into forging a coalition with the Muslim League.

Conclusion

However, gender narratives and personal and collective memories can at best enrich partition debates and not constitute an alternative discourse to the existing ones. Oral interviews can only go that far; they cannot be a substitute for archival research, especially because they are conducted over space and time by writers who have a agenda of their own. Historians, too, have their agenda, but their script can be read and interpreted differently. Though sensitized to alternative discourses, most people in the subcontinent discuss not so much the high price for freedom or the enormity of the tragedy in 1947, but the factors leading to the country's division. They want to know about the intractable stubbornness of one or the other leader, and make sense of the ill-fated talks in Delhi and Simla. In short, they wish to unfold the great drama being enacted, with the spotlight on their 'heroes' and the 'villains'. They want to



learn how the principal actors - Gandhi, Nehru, Patel and Azad on the one side, and Jinnah, Linlithgow, Wavell and Mountbatten on the other - fared during the negotiations.

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