

CHAPTER - IV

Communalism

1. Indian Social Context :

Communalism is born of secular issues and communal parties are led by or communalism is promoted by, secular leaders. Communalism is all about secular issues without involving any religious sectarian doctrine. The class nature of the society and the under development of the economy and scarcity of resources are responsible for communalism. The uneven development community-wise leads to a situation; where inter-communal cohesive class structure doesnot develop whether it be the development of capitalist class or proletarian class structure.

Communalism is an urban phenomenon rooted among the petty bourgeoisie. In a backward society; it is among this class that traditional religion has the greatest appeal. The petty bourgeoisie class has its tendency towards submission to authority. Socio-economic changes, especially in a tradition-bound society bring about a deep sense of insecurity among those strata of society which are affected by communalism. The working as well as petty bourgeois classes are the worst affected in such a situation. Assertion of communal or regional identity is direct result of conflict over the share in the limited economic

resources. An important ingredient of the theory of communalism is the hypothesis that where the sense of regional and cultural identity is strong, the communal conflict tends to be weaker. Thus communalism and conservatism in our country is no longer the monopoly of traditional communal parties.

The Hindus and the Muslims should not be treated as homogeneous or unstratified communities. Often specific castes or biradaries from amongst the Hindus and Muslims are involved in actual conflict although retaining the broad sympathy of their respective co-religionists. As a result, economic competition results in communal conflict. All it indicates is that in a backward capitalist economy and in a country like India with its multi-caste and multi-communal socio-economic formations, straight class conflict is bound to be replaced by caste-class and community-class conflict, sometimes the class factor becoming predominant and at other caste or community factor. In addition to class conflict; the complexities and uniqueness of the Indian situation is reflected through caste and communal conflicts. In this connection, G.A.Bavly remarks: "The phenomenon of communalism and communal violence face a similar fate in the hands of social scientists, politicians and social activists. Muslims are not loyal to this country is an usual refrain in explaining this phenomenon by even otherwise sensible people." 1

Another communal-gives reason is that the Muslims do not accept Indian culture nor are they willing to become part of the 'national mainstream'. Communalism is fundamentally a political and socio-economic phenomenon, religion being only an instrument of political and socio economic interests. A Hindu in India has come to perceive that his community has been 'besieged' by the by the aggressive minorities and they must fight back to protest their interests. During the Shah Bano agitation the muslims in India perceived that their religion was in 'danger' and that they must pour out themselves on the streets to defend their religion. This agitation played a great role in communalising the situation in India.

Mrs.Gandhi, began to fall back on upper and middle caste Hindu support when she perceived that the Dalits and Muslims were getting alienated from her. She is reported to have carefully cultivated the Vishwa Hindu Parishad which has been quite instrumental in Formenting Communal violence since the early 80's.

The Tamil - Muslim riots in Sri-Lanka in 1985 were ascribed to the Sri-Lankan government, which in order to drive a wedge between the Tamils and muslims whose unity could have posed a formidable challange to the Jaywardhana Government formented the riots. The Rajiv Government, wary of socialism and

unable to solve the people's problems within the capitalist framework unabashedly surrendered to the fundamentalist forces, both among the Muslims and Hindus. Rajiv Gandhi, in order to mollify their feelings, is supported by reliable sources, to have signalled opening of the Babri Mosque for worship of Hindus and the Ram-janam Bhoomi - Babri Masque controversy acquired much sharper edge. This controversy became very intense and greatly accelerated the process of communalisation in north and western India.

It is also important to note that communal violence in India is largely an urban phenomenon though occasionally villages also come under its sway. Development within the capitalist framework is essentially uneven and creates an ever widening gap between different communities, castes and regions.

Communalism is a highly complex phenomenon like any other social phenomenon, some of the mutual attitudes, beliefs and stereotypes formed beginning from the time of the struggle between Aurangzeb and Shivaji and had their roots in the conflict between them (this conflict was essentially of political and not religious nature) are transferred to the present situation which also tends to be conflict oriented. The stereotype that the Muslims are in general polygamous and tend to produce a large number of children irrespective of their social and class aspects is still prevalent. Another stereotype prevalent about

muslims is that they do not practice family planning and strongly resist and attempt in that direction. Acceptance or rejection of family planning very much depends on one's socioeconomic status rather than on one's religion. The image of a Muslim, as a fanatic, aggressive resistant to any change and inherently communal has persisted too long. The colonial rule created conditions to transform medieval religious consciousness into communal consciousness. It is the colonial rule of the British that produced the political phenomenon of communalism. Communalism aroused deep passions and brought about the sharpest divisions between the two religious communities.

With the Shah Bano Case, Ramjanam Bhoomi/Babri Mosque agitation, the situation goes on getting more and more communalised, threatening the unity and integrity of the country. Communalism is a political phenomenon in India.

After 1947, the major communal riots embittered Hindu-Muslim relations. The balm of secularism can hardly heal the wounds inflicted by repeated communal violence. Communalism thus is generally perceived as a negative value by and large. In terms of embitterment of Hindu-Muslim relations, the end of 60^s was no less worse than early 80^s of the 20th century. Then the Jana Sangh had raised the slogan of Indianising the Indian Muslims. The implication of this slogan was that the Indian

Muslims were an alien community in India having their religiopolitical focus outside the country. The terms 'Islamic fundamentalism', 'Sikh-fundamentalism' and 'Hindu fundamentalism' became political currency in India.

Fundamentalism is used only for those religions which are in confrontation with each other and have been heavily politicised. It is highly regrettable that in contemporary India not only politics but even secularism has been to a large extent communalised. In short, casteism or communalism, cannot be done away with without establishing a just egalitarian set up. unjust, uneven, imbalanced growth and distribution of resources, is bound to create caste and communal conflicts. A socialistic set up therefore is a must for India to be free of Communalism at least in its political expression.

It is also interesting to note that the rumours are usually based on certain stereotypes and are grounded in our socio-cultural and historical processes. The usual rumour spread among the Hindus is that 'they slaughtered a cow and threw it into a Hindu locality and among the Muslims the rumours that 'they' slaughtered a pig and threw it inside a mosque. 'Their; goondas raped 'our' women. Because of their socio-cultural roots, the violence erupts among Hindus and Muslims.

There is one more problem with Hindu culture. It is caste-ridden. The Shudras or Dalits can hardly take pride in the upper caste (Brahmanical) culture. In fact many Dalit organisations violently reject this culture as oppressive and exploitative. However, in the psychological milieu of confrontationist politics of communalism in India today, the Hindu identity is being aggressively asserted on one hand, and, the minorities are being pressurised on the other, to assimilate themselves with this 'Hindu identify'. The Hindus and Islamic 'fundamentalist' movements are thus not only reinforcing religious Orthodoxy but are also creating an atmosphere of communalism. The word 'fundamentalism' was coined by the western media to discredit the Khomeini's movement against the Shah of Iran a movement which was essentially anti-imperialist in its basic thrust. The Indian media borrowed this term and applied it to all the movements which are either revivalist or which laid stress on political use of religion.

In post-independence India, too, both the communities have been struggling to maintain their separate identity. Religion has been misused most by crafty politicians. These politicians are largely responsible for promoting and strengthening communalism. Communalism is condemnable whether of the majority or minority variety. It is the very antithesis of variety. It is the very antithesis of secularism. It is also true that majority

communalism feeds and fattens itself on minority communalism. In country like India, with a variety of religious, cultural and linguistic groups living together. Communalism, whether of the majority or the minority community can lead to dangerous consequences minority communities like the sikha, muslims and Christians and some lower Hindu caste who perceive them serve as oppressed and deprived are emphasizing their religious and caste identities with their religious and caste identities with ever greater tenacity which causes warm among the upper caste Hindus. This is thought to be an increasing trend of aggressive communalism among the minorities. It is often held against the muslims that they are not well integrated with the mainstream of Indian life and that they refuse to identify themselves, with Indian culture and don't accept Indian religious figures like Rama, Lord Krishna and others. It will be seen that more pride of common heritage, religious or cultural assimilation are not sufficient conditions for the elimination of the aggressive form of communalism.

Communalism in India before independence had become an ideology which emphasized as the social political and economic unit, the group of adherents of each religion and stressed the distinction and even antagonism between such groups. Communalism was a shifting and changing phenomenon. Communalism, as we generally use the term is concern of community about its

secular problems. Concept of Indian nationalism' does not inspire all sections of the nation alike and to the same degree Muslim 'Communalism', in its origin was essentially a reaction against this concept. Hindu 'Communalism' is an extreme form of Indian nationalism while Muslim communalism is reaction to it.

As Hinduism doesn't owe allegiance to a single book or prophet, Gandhi " found not the slightest difficulty in Hindu circles about evoking reverence for the Koran and the prophet". But he disappointingly " found difficulty in Muslim circles about evoking the same reverence for the Vedas or in the incarnations". Religion and region are the two most important factors of the Indian communalism. In most cases, regionalism would remain a lesser evil than communalism. In the case of Punjab, Collapse of regional identity opened flood gates of communal violence.

Communalism refers to a dominant ideological theme of this perverse state behaviour. It represents communitarian articulation of political formations whether in ruling or in the opposition, whether of dominant classes or of the dominated classes. In other words, communalism represents a specific manifestation of the political and ideological domination which is an essential defining feature of the modern state. As such, communal contradiction is constituted at the political level which mediates between its ideological manifestation and its

concrete class basis. As Asghar Ali Engineer's Central finding is : " Communalism in modern India is product of competition between petty-bourgeois class in medium - sized towns"³.

The problem of national integration is being encountered by every country-socialist developed and developing. In the developing countries, the problem of integration is becoming more and more acute. In India, the problem of muslims scheduled castes and the tribals still awaits solution. The assam agitation and the demand for Khalistan underline the gravity of the problem of integration. Here a distinction should be made between political integration and national integration. Political integration means a shifting of the loyalties to the newly created centre in the system. In this connection, Donald Rothchild remarks : "It demands a creation of new loyalties and devotion to the claims of the State".⁴ National integration is something more than political integration. It follows political integration. Its essence is an agreement among the different nationalities, minorities and other groups for making, the political community and striking an equilibrium between the "Communal" identity, and the 'national' identity. In India, The problem of national integration is generally perceived in terms of the role and aspirations of the different minority groups. The Hindus and Muslims are different in everything. They differ in religion, Civilisation and Culture, in history, in language,

in architecture, in music, in jurisprudence and laws, in food and society, in their dress, in their every way, they are different. The outcome of communalism in the form of group prejudices, communal struggle for control over the resources.

Communalism is the phenomenon of regions differences between groups often leading to tension and even rioting between them. Bipin Chandra observes : " It is the belief that because a group of people follow a particular religion, they have, as a result, common Social, Political, economic and cultural interests ----"⁵. In other words the problem of communalism in the modern history of India has grown and shifted, changed and developed and is still changing and will continue to develop. It is focused on in terms of socio-economic variables.

2. Mulk Raj Anand

2.1 Coolie

In Coolie M.R.Anand's famous novel we read of separate cups and sources for Muhammadan visitors Munoo, the main character, sees the Hindu, the Muslim and the Sikh Coolies taking hubble-bubble together. This merely indicates that cast has lost its prominence and that they rub shoulders with each other because they all belong to the class of labourers and their common interest lies in earning their daily bread. But

their communal feeling is deep within and it manifests itself in primitive forms towards the end of the novel.

Anand gives, in this novel, a vivid description of the bitter communal riots that follow on the heels of the meetings that the trade union leaders hold to discuss the decision of the factory owners to go on short work. These meetings are abruptly disturbed by the rumours that some Hindu children have been kidnapped by pathans. When Sauda uses all his oratorical skills and sows the seed of protest in the minds of the coolies, the politicians make use of the inherent communal hatred between the Hindus and the Muslims to create riots. People run helter-skelter to see to the safety of their children, while the cries 'Allah ho Akbar', 'Kali mai Ki jai' and 'Siva ji ki jai' rend the skies.

When Munoo, worked in Babu Nathoo Ram's house he had not been allowed to use their latrines. In Nathoo Ram's house separate cups and saucers were used for Muhamadan visitors. Nathoo Ram's wife was an orthodox Hindu, and knew that her husband's and brother-in-laws muhamadan friends had drunk tea out of the cups and saucers.

At Bombay, on Monday morning Ratan was not allowed to enter the factory because he was discharged. He rushed to the office of the All India Trade Union Federation. Lalla Omkar Nath

was its president. He was busy and asked the clerk to write an application. The news of his dismissal was spreading far and wide. Three Red Flag Union Officials Sauda, Muzaffar and English man, Stanley Jackson visited him. The president of the All India Trade Union Congress was persuaded by Sauda, Muzzafar and Jackson to make representation to the Sir George White mills on behalf of Ratan. When all the coolies go to the meeting, Sauda reached the platform pushing the president aside. No pointed out : " The members of the Trade Union Executive Committee are here. I am one. We will decide the question here with Lala Omkar Nath has too much faith in the mill owners.... In fact, there is a world of difference between the mill owners, the exploiters and you, the exploited."⁶ He pointed out their tragic situation. But at that time, some of the coolies reported: "Kidnapped by the Muhammadans" and a riot between Hindus and Muslims broke out several are killed, many are wounded and the rest flee for life.

By giving a touching and realistic description of these riots, Anand points out how men are made the victims of communal jealousy and religious fury.

When Mrs. Mainwaring stops the car to save him, the Muslim chaffeur recognising Munoo to be a 'Hindu-dog' feels that he could have killed him had he met him alone.

2.2 Death of a Hero :

M. R. Anand's next novel, Death of a Hero (1964) focuses our attention on the question of existence, at the crucial time of the invasion of Kashmir by Pakistan raiders, which accelerated the process of accession of Kashmir to India. This small novel doesnot give the detailed picture of the political development, as it is concerned only with the effect of the crisis on peoples mind. This is shown through the reactions of a young poet of fine sensibility, who thought that Pakistan or Jinnah was wrong in the attempt to grab Kashmir the way it was done - a view held by most of the Muslims of Kashmir and by their major political party, Kashmir National Conference. While facing death , 'the hero' Maqbool Sherwani reviews his past and tries to assess whether his life had been meaningful in any sense.

Anand projects in this novel, the evils born of communalism - namely, hatred, fanaticism, intolerance and even inhumanity. In this connection, Brij Mohan observes: "Communalism is nothing but staunch allegiance to one's own ethnic group rather than to society as a whole. The Hindu-Muslim adjustment is a gigantic national problem in India and it is a horrid mockery of our repeatedly ardent values of national integration and the blessed assurance enshrined in our constitution."⁷

Maqbool, a Muslim by birth, is a member of the Kashmir National Movement. He is sent to rally the people of Baramulla which is in the grip of the Muslim fanatics. Maqbool questions the existence of God, and if at all he exists, His benevolence. When Babu Ishaq said, "deign to join our reception committee, Maqbool Sahib. You will see that your leaders will also accept the inevitable, at that time Maqbool answered: " It is a question of principle. Do we believe in Kashmir first or religion first."⁸ This controversy leads to bitterness and bloodshed. In this connection, M.K.Naik remarks : " In the case of Death of a Hero, the entire action is rooted in a set of real historical incidents which constitute its framework, and by its very nature, this frame work needs a great deal of elaboration, in terms of historical perspective, situation and character. Derived of this elaboration the narrative was bound to appear sketchy and superficial, and covered in a miasma of vagueness."⁹

The Pakistani bigots donot hesitate to resort to meanness or brutality of any kind. They begin to massacre the Kashmiri Muslim brethren without even conducting a parley when they suspect them to be loyal to India. Maqbool, who takes up the cause of the Nationalists, is dubbed an infidel and those who profess to uphold the cause of religion are found indulging in sacrilegious deeds. The situation is exploited by the politi-

cians who do not hesitate to make their Muslim followers set fire to the presentation convent.

Maqbool, also wants to fight, but for a different reason. His fight is directed against the Muslim invaders, the destroyers of peace and life. It is a fight against violence, and for freedom, freedom in its true sense, because he, unlike Ahmed Shah, does not want to force any government on the people of Kashmir. He makes his stand clear to Ishaq, another pro-Pakistani : " ... I am for Kashmir. Not for its usurpation by force, but for its freedom to choose where it wants to go."¹⁰ But Maqbool is more rational in his outlook, and so thinks differently. As Anand says : "he knew that this sudden descent of murder on his land was not an act of God, but all planned brutality to cow people down to submit and resistance to it was the only virtue."¹¹ He has actually seen too much of misery and destruction to believe in God or fate. He is all for resisting the aggressors and fighting violence. Even in the face of death he hopes for a new morning for Kashmir. Maqbool moves about like a 'sleep walker'. Mahmood sees in him a useless unpractical fellow. Rathi points out "Brave words are not bullets."¹² He is not in pursuit of fictitious honour, "No one is better than another in the face of death."¹³ As D. Riemenschneider observes : " He admits his fears and feels envious of those who are living outside the prison cell. Nor does he exaggerate the part

he is acting.... Maqbool attains the status of greatness because in his heart he remains humble."¹⁴

The horrors that the Pakistani intruders commit in Baramulla are an obvious instance. It is in the name of religion, Islam, that they indulge in all manner of violence; they loot, they kill, they molest women and destroy even holy place like chapels. The old mother of Juma Qadri and Saleem Bux said: "They looted the carpet factory, Maqbool. And then set it on fire! The sons of Eblis!... They even came here!... They have burnt the factory from which came our living, and now ask as to be patient!... What has happened to you all?"¹⁵ Ahmed Shah admits that he cares more for religion - the religion of the prophet and of the holy Koran - than Kashmir, and justifies his violence saying that it is a holy war, a war of liberation. He explains his wild intentions and ambitions to Maqbool : "In order to destroy anarchy, we will also resort to anarchy and violence... I want union with Pakistan ... I believe in a Central Muslim State, which will be a counter to Communism in the north, and to the Bania Hindu Raj in the south... And we can connect up with our brethren in the middle east and revive the glory or ancient Islamic democracy in a world ridden with unbelief!"¹⁶ When Maqbool asks various details about the struggle of Kashmir to Ahmed he says : "This is a war of liberation! A war!

An historic event! we are passing through time which will decide our destiny forever. And everyone has to choose now!..."¹⁷

The Pakistani aggressors are ruthlessly carrying on their terrorist activities, disturbing and destroying the quiet life of Baramulla and several other villages of Kashmir. But strangely enough, most of the villagers fail to think of the possible ways of resistance. On the contrary, they docilely acquiesce in their fate and suffer all tribulations as a God-sent punishment. For some misdeeds they must have committed. This is how Begum Jilani philosophises on the situation : " Life is cruel. As a woman I have known this truth. We have to accept, because, in the eyes of Allah, we deserve the punishment."¹⁸ But Maqbool is surprised that people should attribute the devil's destruction to Allah and fate. He finds out soon that his father himself is a fatalist hardly different from Begum Jilani in his ideas about their critical plight. The father tells his son in a desperate tone: "What can we do against such odds, I ask you! The salvation of our souls lies in the hands of Allah and his prophets. If we pray perhaps Allah and his prophets. If we pray, perhaps Allah will hear our prayers..."¹⁹

It is highly ironic that the so-called 'war liberation' liberates only the souls of the people from their 'corporal frame' and that the savage fight is termed 'Jehad', a holy

war. This bloody war, intended to save their religion, provides an occasion for betraying their savage nature since it takes in reality, looting, indiscriminate killing and molesting of women. If it had been just Muslim crusade to own Baramulla or to convert the people to their religion, looting and killing were uncalled for. Maqbool points out : "We cannot save the soul of a person without saving his body..."²⁰

Maqbool stood up to organise resistance and breast the wave of aggression in a memorable, death-defying feat. He died a hero's death, his martyrdom blessed the freedom of his country. He sacrificed his life rather than his cause. As Riemenschneider points out: " Death of a Hero, indeed, is not only the deepest probe into the potentiality of man but also the most satisfying artistic achievement."²¹

Communal hatred and violence which Anand fervently depicts here, are inherent in the historical situation around which the story is built. Religious fanaticism and communal hatred are subjects which could easily make a novel partial and sentimental. The passages describing the atrocities of fanatic Muslims are brief, devoid of exaggeration, and historically factual. Anand presents here an imaginative re-enactment of the drama of a courageous soul resisting brute violence through sheer love and compassion for his land and men.

2.3 Other Works:

In 'A Dark Night' (From Reflections on the Golden Bed and Other Stories) Anand presents the Hindu Muslim riots, responsible for a man's death. In this short story, Anand hinted at, through a repeated reference, to the violent, hoarse war-cries and slogans of the conflicting communities.

In Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts, Anand resents the inept practices of Islam. Nur resents the idea of praying in different postures under compulsion. Anand is unsparing in his exposure of the strain of brutality in the nature of the Muslims. The unclean habits of the Muslims are also referred to in many of his novels.

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