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## The Ghost Returns: The New Communal Violence Bill:

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### **The Ghost:**

The ghost of the controversial Communal Violence Bill has re-surfaced in the political horizon of India as the ruling establishment appears to be determined to place it in the winter session for Parliament.

The purpose behind this Bill is to control the centuries old communal conflict between the two major religious communities in this country. But the question arises- Will this Bill be able to resolve this problem? The answer is a big NO. One may ask why? Because ever since Independence the political leadership of this country had ignored to trace the roots of this problem and understand the issue. May be, they understood, but did not want to "catch the bull by the horns".

My view is that this problem is rooted to the civilisational conflict in the region that began with the first Islamic invasion of the country in the early eighth century A.D.

### **Roots of the problem and History**

Repeated invasions since then, were not only to loot the wealth but also to completely eliminate the cultural and civilisation past of this sub-continent. Repeated attempts were made to impose the religiously motivated Arab-Persian culture and religion on its conquered people by the invaders while establishing the Islamic imperialist rule in the region.

Despite the attempts of successive Islamist invaders to destroy the cultural past and completely Islamise the people of this conquered territory as they did in Persia, Egypt and other Central Asian Countries, Indian culture survived due to the cultural unity of its over eighty percent of population. It is a fact that the people faced the trauma and stigma of the hate crimes perpetrated on them but they did not succumb to the brutal assault of the conquerors that was the norm in those days.

The natives of this land irrespective of their varied caste, sect, region, local customs, food habits, costumes, professions and languages believed in polytheistic Sanatana Dharma that originated from the liberal Vedic texts and the spiritual voices of their ascetic ancestors that permitted complete freedom to worship the deities of one's choice. With such spiritual strength and freedom they maintained the cultural unity and gradually contributed to the internationally acclaimed civilisation.

The religio-imperialist invaders indulged in destroying the temples as well as the idols of the deities and traditional educational institutions like the ancient universities of Nalanda, Takshshila and Vikramshila.

Another objective was to convert as much as possible the local population by superimposing their own religion and culture. They succeeded to some extent in the then urban areas but could not penetrate too deep into the rural heartland of country where a majority of the people lived.

### **Serious attempt to destroy Cultural Heritage**

They also forced the hapless converts to completely forget their indigenous cultural past and did their best to separate them from the mainstream society. There were told to forget the indigenous identity and look to the west for inspiration and survival. One result was that these alien conquerors even changed the name of this land from Bharat to Hindustan or Hind, called the non-converted natives and their faith as Hindu a Persian term used for the people across the river Sindhu (Indus) which was neither known to the locals nor had any reference in the ancient scriptures and literature of this country.

The idea behind such an attempt was to eliminate the national identity of the locals and Islamise them completely. Subsequently when the Islamists lost their imperial rule to the British colonialists, the latter too played a game for Christianising the sub-continent.

Both the alien rulers sidelined Sanskrit the traditional official language of the country. Known as the language of God, it was also the language of Vedic rituals, scriptures and literatures which were the cultural heritage then. While the Islamist rulers replaced Sanskrit with Persian in administration, the British introduced English as official language and medium of education.

### **Enter the British:**

Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859), a British historian, politician, and an inaugural member of a governing Supreme Council of India imported English form of education through his famous Minute on Indian Education of February 1835. He believed in creating a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect and thus successfully created a sizeable group of Anglicised native elite. The British used them as interpreters between the Empire and the subject. Popularly known as Macaulayism, the objective behind this policy was to sideline the indigenous culture and impose the Western cultural ethos on the natives. He was so confident about his plan that he wrote the following letter dated October 12, 1836 to his father: "Our English schools are flourishing wonderfully.... The effect of this education on Hindus is prodigious. No Hindu who has received an English education ever remains sincerely attached to his religion. It is my firm belief that if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respected classes 30 years hence. And this will be effected without our efforts to proselytize; I heartily rejoice in the prospect."

Another strategy the British adopted was distortion of the cultural history of this ancient land which is still preserved in Vedic texts and its associated scriptures like Ramayana, Mahabharat, various Upanishadas, Puranas, philosophy, astronomy, medical science, economics and literatures all in Sanskrit language. They utilised the services of paid European and Marxist historians who declared this rich cultural history of India (Bharath) as myth, discovered a unique bogus theory of Aryan invasion and even portrayed the historical heroes of Muslim Era like Mewar ruler Maharana Pratap (1540-1597), Maratha king Shivaji (1627-1680), Chatrashal (1649-1731) of Bundelkhand, and many other Jat leaders as rebels. In fact these nationalist icons had actually fought against the Moguls for defending their motherland.

### **Winning over the Elite?**

Gradually, the British won over the loyalty of a significant section of English educated Muslims under the leadership of Sir Syed Ahmad (1817-1898), scion of a Mogul family who bemoaned the ending of Mogul dominance. He however, believed that the British would continue to rule India for generations and accordingly propagated among the Muslim elite that the community should be loyal to the new Empire.

Similarly, sensing a new awakening among the natives brought out by social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833), Swami Dayanad (1824-1883), Vivekanand (1863-1902) and others as a danger to the imperial throne, A.O.Humes (1829-1912), a retired British Civil Servant in confidence of the Governor General formed Indian National Congress (INC) in 1885 as a platform for a dialogue between the educated Indians and the British Raj. The idea behind this move was to win over the English educated intelligentsia from the religious majority group to ensure that the dialogue between the INC and the British Government would consolidate the hold of Empire on the colony and also facilitate the transformation of the colony into the Western cultural ethos.

A section of the native leaders of the INC understood the game of the British and the party got divided into moderates (soft towards the British) and the radicals (forceful in their nationalist approach) popularly known as "Naram Dal and Garam Dal".

Although, the British patronised the moderates to sideline the nationalist voices raised by the radicals the slogan - "Freedom is our birth right" raised by Tilak gradually became the key word of the freedom movement for full independence of the country.

### **Cultural Heritage given the go by:**

Death of Tilak was a big jolt to the nationalist forces. The cultural heritage and the treasure of ancient India was given the go by and there arose a group of anglicised left-liberal intellectuals and the political class that had no emotional attachment to the cultural wealth of this country. There is a view that this cultural slavery has continued to this day thus offsetting any chance of restoring a unique national identity for the country.

Despite the violent cultural assault of the foreign rulers, the people fought all through the ages and preserved their ancient cultural past. It is my considered view that the heroic fight of the locals even at the cost of lives and humiliation gradually led to a perpetual communal conflict and religious hostility in this inherently secular society.

The nationalist forces within the Congress argued for restoration of the ancient name of Bharat on the ground of its antiquity. Traditionally, the spiritually rooted Vedic name Bharat was the foundation stone of the socio-cultural history of this ancient land. The hymn "Bramhmidam rakshati Bhartam janam" from Rig-Veda suggests that the name Bharat dates back to the Vedic period..

### **Naming of Independent Country as Bharath or India?**

There was a long debate in Constituent Assembly on 18 September 1949 over naming of the newly born republic of Bharat. Prominent suggestions like Bharat, Hindustan, Hind, Bharatbhumi or Bharatvarsh came up for discussion. Leaders like K.M.Munshi, H. V. Kamath, Sampurnanand and many others strongly argued in favour of the ancient name Bharat, Bharatbhumi or Bharatvarsh which dates back to the Vedic era. They however, failed to convince the influential members who were committed to the flawed vision of European and Marxist historians about Bharat.

Arguing in favour of restoring the sole name of Bharat in the constitution, Kamalapati Tripathi said, "There is no country in the world which has been able to preserve its name and its genius even after undergoing the amount of repression, the insults and prolonged slavery which our country had to pass through. Even after thousands of years our country is still known as 'Bharat'. (Constituent Assembly Debate on 18 September, 1949 Volume IX OF Constituent Assembly. (<http://www.indiankanoon.org/doc/1314788/>)). [1]

Finally, the amendment "Bharat, or, in the English language, India, shall be a Union of States" was put to vote. The Assembly decided by show of hands. With Ayes: 38 Noes: 51, the amendment was negated and India, that is, Bharat shall be a Union of States was declared as the official name of the country.

### **Destroy history and thus destroy People:**

The writings of internationally acclaimed poets like Mahakavi Bharati of Tamil Nadu and Ravindranath Tagore of West Bengal who had revered Bharat in their poetry were thus ignored. Even the name of Bharat echoes in the national anthem. The mischief created in the constitution by the then anglicised political leadership allowed the civilisational hostility of the past moghul era to continue which is the major reason behind the repeated communal conflicts in the country.

According to George Orwell (1903-1950) a noted British political writer and journalist, "the most effective way to destroy the people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history." This is what happened in India post independence when the legacy of a a divided country on communal lines that began in the Moghul era, continued by the British and allowed to continue in the name of vote bank politics until this day!

Actually, the minority leaders with a few exceptions remained quiet on the inclusion of Minority rights in the constitution as they were aware that their ascendancy to political power in democratic India was only possible by cultivating instinctive fear psychosis among the community members. They exploited the complex dynamics of vote bank politics with resources and trained Islamists from within the country as well as from the oil rich Muslim countries. This in my view was the beginning of a successful project that was created and continued unabated and unchecked communal discord in the country.

Instead of following the footsteps of our ancestors who carried forward the legacy of the struggle all through the ages to defend the cultural and civilisational history of the country successive governments ignored the civilisational legacy of this country. Arnold Joseph Toynbee (1889-1975), the British historian of civilisations` rightly observed that "Civilisations die from suicide, not murder" (The way to save Hindu civilisation by J G Arora.)

### **Vote and vote bank greedy politicians and the politics of negativism:**

Encouraged with the politics of negativism played by the joint team of vote greedy, vote bank politicians, secularists, and caste-ists, the Islamists revived their pre-partition communal politics in the name of religious identity. Similarly, taking advantage of the Anglicised mindset of the political leadership, Pope John Paul II during his visit to New Delhi in November, 1999 gave a call of civilisational conquest of Asia in guarded language. He said:- "Just as the first millennium saw the Cross firmly planted in the soil of Europe, and the second in that of

America and Africa, so may the Third Christian Millennium witness a great harvest of faith on this vast and vital continent."

In this slide from our glorious cultural history, it is not only the successive governments that are to be blamed but also many others in the civil society including the media. It was refreshing to see in Delhi that one of the parties that contested did not take into account the communal background of the electorate in a particular constituency, but to the competence of the candidate selected!

What is needed now is an honest national debate on the flawed history of the country that will continue to haunt us no matter what kind of communal bill the government intends to place before the parliament in the coming days.

*Note: The views expressed are author's own and not necessarily that of South Asia Analysis Group.*

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