

Communalism and Regionalism as the Main Antagonist in Chetan Bhagat's the Three Mistakes of My Life: Postcolonial Perspective

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Abstract: Post 1947, communalism has been the major reason of riots and many fatal incidents that took place in India. The demolition of Babri masjid is a result of such destructive communalism. This paper tries to prove that how the poison of 'divide and rule's injected by British in Indians to rule India has still not left its roots even after 73 years of independence and the same can be seen in Chetan Bhagat's the Three Mistakes of my Life.

The paper is divided in four chapters. The first chapter is about author and a detail summary of the novel. The second chapter is about the dirty politics that prevails in India in which religion plays a big role. The third chapter is the application of the postcolonial theory on the novel. Finally last chapter of the paper is the conclusion chapter which tries to show the relevance of my project for further research.

Keywords: Communalism, divide and rule, demolition, post colonial theory, youth

I. INTRODUCTION

Chetan Bhagat as the new age Indian writer and detail summary of the novel The Three Mistakes of my Life Chetan Bhagat, who is also a youth icon than just an author has become the biggest selling English Language novelist/author in India till date. His writing is mostly Postmodern Indian Writing. Though he has not receive any Booker list, but he is known to all the college going students in India. While the world literaries are mostly interested in India's past, Chetan Bhagat has dwell his attention and writing on India's present and it's youth. His topics are related to harsh realities of India but in writing so he doesn't forget to add a sense of humour in his writing. His writing is a revolution in post-modern writing. He believes in showing a mirror to the society in his writing which he does beautifully. Chetan Bhagat skilfully expresses what's in his heart also articulate his point of view strongly in his writing. He starts his novel with describing a picture and the goes on to tell a real life story juxtaposed with real life incidents intermingling it with dark and grave backdrop. He uses the kind of language used by the youth which helps the youth to relate with the story and become a part of the journey. Bhagat also writes columns in newspaper; he in his writing focuses youth and nation together by discussing the development of the nation. Chetan Bhagat's simple writing offers the reader a mixed bag of ideas. It offers a reader friendly language and style so novel seems real and fresh. 2008. The story is set in 2000 to 2002 in Gujarat. These three years can be called as the black years of Gujrat's history as in these years it faced devastating earthquake and poisonous riots and communalism. For the first time Bhagat moves out from the metropolitan stories and dives into a city where entrepreneurship and religion are the driving force and predecessors for it's people. The story takes place in the city of Ahmedabad. The novel revolves around the story of three friends strying to achieve their goals and fulfil their passions in the backdrop of earth quake, politics and communal violence. According to K. Rajendra Shah, —Bhagat's The 3 Mistakes of My Life (2008) is a book for youth. The characters in the novel are young and ambitious . It is a novel written "about the Indians, for the Indians" || (4)

– The Three Mistakes of My Life: A Story about Business, Cricket and Religion- gives an idea of the major elements of the novel. The three protagonists of the novel are trying to become entrepreneurs and the plot revolves around their lives and their ups and downs in the business. The novel begins with the author receiving a suicide mail from a person named Govind in Ahmedabad. Bhagat becomes horrified and tries to locate the boy and somehow meets him. He even meets hi to know the reasons behind his attempt to suicide. The rest of the story is narrated by Govind in the first

person. Govind, Ishaan and Omi are childhood friends and are very thick as friends. Govind with no sibling or father comes from a poor family with only a mother who tries to make their living by running a small homemade food shop. He contributes to the finances by giving tuitions to students in Math. Ishaan is not good in studies. His only passion is cricket. His father is angry with him because he left Nation Defense Academy and returned home. Omi belongs to an unswerving Hindu Brahmin family; his father is the priest of a temple. Omi is expected to carry this tradition of becoming a priest from which is not in his plans.

Omi first refuses Ishaan's proposal because he is a Muslim and son of Bitoo mama's arch rival-a leader of secular party. He later agrees to help Ali but keeps it all a secret. After considerable training there is improvement in Ali's stamina. Ishaan wishes to take him to an India-Australia match and introduce him to some influential person who could help Ali become a successful cricketer.

II. POLITICS AND RELIGION AS THE BIGGEST RIVALS OF ANY SECULAR SOCIETY

Religion is a mystery among human beings. If there were no religions still humans would have fancied a belief in any supernatural entity. Man may not stay while not a creator of the fantastic world of several fold things. Since the primitive times, human behaviour and attitudes have been conditioned by several beliefs in mystical or supernatural powers and that there was no obtaining away from creative ideas or peculiar dreams, ultimately from some kind of religions that have been the very texture of human being.' According to B.R. Ambedkar, "to ignore religion is to ignore a live wire. Religion is an institution or an influence and like all social influences and institutions, it may help or it may harm a society which is in its grip." If we go into the historical background of the problem then we find that there was a close interaction between religion and politics from the Indus valley civilization to the advent of Islam, the second from the advent of Islam, to the Indian Mutiny of 1857, the third from 1857 to India's Independence in 1947 and the fourth from 1947 onwards. While there was close interplay between religion and politics during all these phases, the nature, the intensity and the dynamics of this interaction was different during each of these phases.

India was never like this in fact India was a place with pride and people with dignity. In 1835, before British invaded India, Lord Macaulay was sent to India to analyse the people of the country and figure out how to enter India and invade it. A letter sent on 2nd February, 1835 by Lord Macaulay in which he addressed British Parliament about his findings and analysis of India, he stated: " I have travelled across the length and breadth of India and I have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief such wealth I have seen in this country, such high moral values, people of such calibre, that I do not think we should ever conquer this country, unless we break the very backbone of this nation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage and therefore, I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture, for if the Indians think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self esteem, their native culture and they will become what we want them, a truly dominated nation"

India has a history of fragile intercommunity relationship. Secular and communal political forces have continuously been in struggle for power against one another for several centuries. The religion based politics ideology and mass mobilization have always challenged secular forces in Indian society. As a result it's been a major component of India since the day of independence, India determined to ascertain a secular state with its own characteristics of religious and spiritual tolerance, liberty and equality. Religious tolerance is a vital in the construct of Indian secularism because it has been a significant element of the country's historical tradition. Secularism in India is a way of life. In a country where there are at least 12 religions, over 300 castes, nearly 4,000 sub-castes, over 100 major languages and more than 300 dialects, the sole way to scale back internal tensions and increase communal harmony is to instil tolerance and co-existence. But looking back at India's history after independence, India has failed to set an example of a country with secularism. Many incidents that support this statement are:

- The Ranchi-Hatia riots, August 22-29, 1967: 184 people were reported killed and 195 shops were looted and set on fire.
- Gujrat riots, – September-October 1969: The most deadly Hindu-Muslims riot after partition, 430 people were killed and 592 were injured.
- Worli riots, 1974: Regular clashes between Dalit Panthers, the Shiv Sena, and the police which continued for several months. Six people were killed in the riots and 113 were injured; widespread damages of properties occurred in the tenements.

- Moradabad riots, August, 1980: Partly Hindu-Muslims Muslims-pol conflict which started when a group of Muslims pelted stones at the local police for their refusal to remove a pig from the local Idgah, which led to over one hundred deaths.
- Nellie massacre, February, 1983: It took place in central Assam during six-hour period. The massacre took claimed the lives of 2191 people (unofficial figures run more than 10,000) the victims were mostly Muslim immigrants from east Bengal (now Bangladesh)
- Bhiwandi riots, May, 1984: It left 278 casualties and 1,118 were wounded in which mostly were Muslims.
- Anti-Sikh riots, 31st October, 1984-3rd November, 1984: Also known as the 1984 Sikh Massacre, was a series of organised violence against Sikhs in response to the assassination of Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards. Government estimates project that about 2,800 Sikhs were killed in Delhi and 3,350 nationwide. (Independent sources estimate the number of deaths at about 8,000-17,000)
- Gujrat riots, February, 1985-October, 1986: initially the riots were an intra Hindu caste issue which later turned into communal riots between Hindus and Muslims and resulted in 275 deaths and thousands were injured.
- Meerut Communal riots, 1987: It was a series of communal disturbances between Hindus and Muslims which resulted in the deaths of more than 50 people.
- Delhi riots, 1987- it was the longing aftermath of 1984 riots due to demolition of Babri masjid which led the deaths of 60 people leaving 84 Injured.
- Aurangabad violence, 17th-20th May, 1988: Violence erupted in the city after a Shiv Sena mob started looting and burning parts of the city; even Muslims criminal stabbed Hindus. This violence resulted in 20 deaths and many were injured
- Muzaffarnagar violence, 8th-11th October, 1988: It starts when some Muslim shopkeepers refused to close their shops during a rally that was scheduled by the BMAC (Babri Masjid Action Committee). Around 140 people were killed, mostly Hindus.
- Hazaribagh (Bihar) 16th-20th April, 1989: Communal tensions arose regarding the route that the Hindu Ram Navami procession was to follow. On April 16th, during the procession, a bomb exploded, igniting the riot that resulted in deaths of 19 lives. (Around 100 deaths by unofficial accounts)
- Kota (Rajasthan), 14th September, 1989: Riots took place in the city of Kota a Hindu Anant Chaturdashi procession stopped near a mosque in Ghantaghar area, Muslims rioted. Many criminal activities took place which resulted in 48 deaths.
- Badaun (Uttar Pradesh), 28th September, 1989: Tensions built over the issue of Urdu-slanted to become Uttar Pradesh's second official language. Arson and killings began, with armed men firing at passers-by, it caused 60 deaths and many were injured.
- Indore (Madhya Pradesh), 14th October, 1989: When a political procession led by 25,000 with maximum Hindus interfaced a procession led by 30,000 Muslims for celebrating their festival, some criminals took advantage of this and started a riot which resulted in deaths of 23 deaths.
- Gujrat, April-October 1990: Several people lost their lives in April and in October in Ahmedabad due to spark led by L. K. Advani-led Ram Rath Yatra and ignited violence in several towns in Gujrat along the way.
- Hyderabad (Andra Pradesh), 7th-17th December, 1990: A gruesome violence occurred when apparently dead bodied of A woman and child were found in sabzimandi area. The toll was possibly amounts to 200 or 300 deaths.
- Aligarh (Uttar Pradesh), 7th-10th December, 1990: It started when karsevaks were shot by police on 30th October; 17 Muslim were set on fire till death and many violence and riots took place resulting in deaths of more than 200 people.
- Bombay (Maharashtra), 6th-12th December, 1992: Following the demolition of the Babri Masjid, Bombay was scene of serious Hindu-Muslim violence. More than 400 was the death toll in the riots.

- Gujrat riots, 2002: This mass Genocide in Gujrat also knows as Godra Hatyakaand, started when a group of 58 Hindu Karsevaks died in a burning train and the blame was put on Muslims which led the worst riots in the independent India . More than 2,000 people were killed, 2,500 injures and 233 went missing.

All these incidents of violence and communalism are example of non-secularism prevailing in India. Indians claim of being tolerant and that they area okay of co-existence of different communities. The politicians use communalism to benefit their own ends. They put the poison of religion and communal intolerance in the minds of people. Young people are easy target in these kind of hypocrisy. Politicians wash the minds of young people and fill it with communal hatred. The Muslims, by posing for restorative justice, were sabotaging the dream of a unified and equal nation; by extension, being anti-national. Philippa Williams in her 2012 essay “India’s Muslims, Lived Secularism and Realizing Citizenship,” noted that secular nationalism left India’s Muslims a choice between revoking their claims to political representation or being labeled communalist. On top of this, there exist normative discourses that project Muslims as “violent, criminally inclined, bigoted, anti-national and Islamist, with a voracious sexual appetite.” consistent with academics, such discourses are the place of genesis for the propaganda of the Hindu right aimed toward othering of the Muslims. Same quite bothering is faced by Muslims within the novel. Muslims became very easy victim for violence mainly due to little hierarchical power. Especially in politics the amount of Muslim are hardly anything. for instance in 2014 among 543 MPs only 23 were Muslim which isn't even 5% of the MPs within the parliament.

III. CONCLUSION

To conclude the second chapter religion and communalism plays and important role as vices of the society. Bittoo mama and Parekhji are the face of the prevailing communalism in India. The novel focuses on the various issues of contemporary Indian society which are challenging the social integration of India. The social peace and harmony in Indian society are immediate issues which should be looked into, or the society would be broken into thousands groups and segments. The Indian society is not homogenous in nature in fact it is quite heterogeneous. People of all races and religions, caste, community, sects and status live in it. They have their individual worries and issues. The progress of any society is directly related with the peace and harmony maintained in the society. In the present time, the social atmosphere is neither healthy nor fit and fine. Political and religious hypocrisy, prevailing in the society, can be considered as one of the prime reasons behind the prevalent social tensions in India. Frequent communal tensions of the past have left lasting effects on the minds and the hearts of the people and the gap of misunderstanding is becoming wider and wider. Opportunist political leaders and parties keep on burning the flames of communal tension among the people so that their selfish aims are fulfilled. The non-secular forces are still not under the control of the authorities and the results are frequent communal tension communal riots and death of many innocent people in the present society. Who are these sources? Who is letting them to do such cruel actions? Why they are not being stopped? Why they are not being caught? All these questions must be answered. To give an answer we can imply that all these things people who raises communal hatred in the society has some kind of very strong backup. This backup is the political backup. Without the backup of the eminent people and strong ministers these communal criminals cannot do anything.

During Gujrat riots in 2002, there was an incident happened where few Muslim victims who were in the middle of the riots and were just trying to save themselves from the communal hatred prevailing that time. In order to save themselves they went to police to seek help but the answer they received was, “We have got no orders to save you”. It is very difficult to even comprehend such statement. People see police as not only community helper but also as the one who will guard them from any such tensions and problems. Alas! They had to listen to this. When they said they got no orders that means no instructions from the higher authorities to save those people. People expect politicians to govern them but in India politicians are busy in spreading communal hatred and tensions in the society. Whatever happens politicians force people to look at it as a communal angle. In the book the 9/11 incident is mentioned. When it is confirmed that the attack was done by a Muslim terrorist organisation Parekhji think it as opportunity to degrade Muslims and turned the people against them.

The amalgamation of religion and politics in society is always very dangerous for society and it’s peace is in danger. India being a plural country there is lot of religions and castes. People are multilingual and religious. These two aspects of society is for the betterment of the society however the result of the two is very different. The use of religion not only by politicians but also by the priests for their own selfish benefits can be hazardous for people and their being in society

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