

The background of the page features a large, faint, circular seal of the University of Delhi. The seal is purple and gold, with a central yellow elephant. The text "UNIVERSITY OF DELHI" is written in a circle around the elephant, and "1922" is at the bottom. The text is in English and Hindi.

Nationalism in India

Section V Partition and Independence

Topic: Rise and Growth of Communalism in British Period

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Communalism has been one of the major political issues in India. Right from the meaning and understanding of the term to causes of its genesis and the period in which it took roots in the Indian society the postulations about communalism have been deeply contested. Most people, however, agree that the British rule in India did have a role to play in shaping the inter community relations either through its knowledge systems or through its administrative policies. While the British policy in India was guided by overall colonial and imperial ambitions, in the process of pursuing these ambitions, it also recalibrated and transformed the internal social structure of India. New economic structures, professional opportunities, representative institutions, etc. all created ferments in the society. The spaces for both competitions and contestations thus opened up. Since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, these competitions and contestations became more palpable due to twin processes of consolidation of the British rule, and the organized resistances of the indigenous populations. These resistances were not always only to displace or overthrow the colonial rule but also to reshape the colonial policies and in early days to carve out the domain of social and cultural autonomy as well.

Quite often, these complex processes of consolidation of the Empire and the indigenous resistances produced vexing conflicts between the communities as well as the nationalist leaders and the colonial government on one hand, and within various constituents of the nation-viz caste, class, community- on the other. The British policies or ploy, argue a group of historiographers, were to encourage feuds between these constituents of the nation. With politics acquiring the mass character in 1920s these cleavages further sharpened, even as the nationalist leaders tried to overcome them through inter-community collaborations, as well as through a direct battle against communalism by positing it against the Indian nationalism. In the end, however the inter-community conflicts resulted in the partition of India in 1947.

In this chapter we, therefore, make an attempt to understand this process, which gave rise to the politics of inter-community conflicts in India that is largely described as communalism. Our focus shall be to cover major historical discourses, which have tried to map out the issue of communal politics in India in the British period and critically engage with them. We will also weave in the major historical events and policies alongside these debates for illustrative purposes.

Communalism generally reflects myriad forms of community life, or society organized on the basis of community. In this sense, 'the communal' may incorporate various ascriptions and affiliations, such as the caste groups, linguistic groups, sects and cults, etc..□ However, communalism has come to be identified in a specific sense in India. In common Indian usage, writes Gyanendra Pandey, communalism refers to conditions of suspicion, fear and hostility between members of different *religious* communities.¹ Antagonism and conflicts, on similar religious lines in the west and many other places were referred as ethnic conflicts. Pandey further suggests that this narrow inscription of meaning to communalism is the product of the colonial classifications and its knowledge systems, through which they captured the reality of the colonies. This British usage of communalism to describe the *antagonistic* relationship between religious groups was quite uncritically accepted by the Indian nationalists. The usage of communalism was further narrowed down to predominantly signify the conflicts between the Hindus and the Muslims.² Scholars disagree on the fruitfulness of taking a broad expansive view of the term 'communal', to incorporate social relationships between religious, non religious or sub-religious groups, or to pin down the focus to the *antagonistic* relationship between the religious communities.³ Achin Vanaik, for example, is of the view that incorporating the non religious or sub-religious communities will lead to loss of focus, and thereby, making communalism as a conceptual category too broad to be useful.⁴ In this chapter, we stick to the narrower meaning of communalism to understand the evolving (*antagonistic*) relationship between the Hindus and the Muslims in the British colonial period.

¹ Gyanendra Pandey (1990). p.6

² Idid. p.9

³ Surya Prakash etal. (2006)

⁴ Achin Vanaik (1997)

Defining Communalism

Communalism, suggests Bipan Chandra is an *ideology*, i.e a belief system or inter-related assumption through which polity or societies are viewed.⁵ The communal ideology assumes that Indian society is fundamentally divided into religious communities, whose interests not only differ but may often be opposed to each other. The opposition between the religious communities is apparent not only in their religious and cultural way of life, but also when organized for a secular economic and political purpose. To put it in simpler way, the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and the Christians form *distinct* communities or *homogeneous* groups not only for religious and cultural issues but also for secular purposes.⁶ This distinction is more stressed, specified and articulated in case of the Hindu and the Muslim community. Bipan Chandra further classifies the communalist ideology into the *Liberal* and the *Radical* Communalists. The liberal communalists underscore the opposition and antagonism amongst the interest of different religious communities. Yet, they do not foreclose the possibility of mediations and negotiated adjustments between communities for promoting some larger nationalistic goals. Therefore, during the colonial period the liberal communalist ideology, encouraged negotiation between different religious communities to forge unity and promote common nationalist goals of political independence, economic development and removal of poverty, illiteracy, etc. On the other hand, the radical communalist ideology precludes any possibility of negotiated unity and underscores that the communities are irreconcilably positioned against each other. They argue that the religious communities are distinct nations, which could not exist within the same state, or more precisely whose aspirations can be realized only when the nation is aligned to a separate territorial unit with its own sovereignty.⁷

As against communalism as an ideology, another group of subaltern historiography scholars postulate communalism as phenomena produced by the modern (colonial) knowledge systems. Prominent among them is Gyanendra Pandey, who asserts that communal consciousness is discursively forged and *constructed* in a specific manner, by underplaying the heterogeneity of a community and positing broadest possible solidarity against the group defined as the 'other'.⁸ In this subaltern discourse, communalism thus is synthetic and is

⁵ Bipan Chandra (2004)

⁶ Idid. p.7

⁷ Idid. p.8

⁸ Gyanendra Pandey (1990) op.cit.

produced by a special manner of reconstructing and positing the inter-community relationship through layers of homogenizations and essentialisations. The pre-colonial past of India in this discourse was *produced* in a specific image of *essentially* strife ridden history between *homogenized*, 'undifferentiated' communities. This served the twin purpose of legitimising the colonial rule over 'irrational' 'frenzied' Indians on one hand and increasing schism between communities on the other.⁹

The difference between communalism as an ideology and communalism as construction is that while the former locates communalism into a set of *assumptions* through which one looks at social relations in a given setting, the latter locates communalism as a product of distortions of historical events. As against both these views, some scholars consider communalism to be organic to the character of Indian society. Louis Dumont, for example, is adherent of this view, and suggests that though the Hindus and the Muslims lived together with each other for centuries; they did not develop any shared value system. Dumont definition of communalism suggests religious communities, as social, economic and political units, that have antagonistic relations to other such groups.¹⁰ This opposition is an inherent character of the religious community, and if Hindus and Muslims could co-exist, it was because of asymmetry in the power relationships between the two communities. Once this asymmetry was disturbed with establishment of British Empire, the communal riots could easily be provoked. This definition is premised upon assumptions that have been challenged by various scholars. Fundamental problem with this assumption is that it tries to draw a picture of monolithic, non-transient religious communities that are historically untenable.¹¹ Besides this, it also undermines numerous acts of inter-community solidarities as well as intra-community strives.¹²

Reasons for Rise of Communalism

The rises of communalism or antagonism, hostility and conflicts between religious communities, predominantly the Hindus and the Muslims, have been explained in various ways. However, there are four most acknowledged theses through which the issue of

⁹ ibid

¹⁰ Louis Dumont (1970) as cited in Gyanendra Pandey (1990) op.cit.

¹¹ Gyanendra Pandey (1990) op.cit; Mushirul Hasan (1997)

¹² Mushirul Hasan (1997) op.cit.

communalism and its rise has been approached. First, the colonial thesis, which suggests that communal strife is organic to the feature of the Indian society and that, it is the British who mediated through various measures and reforms to restore order in the strife ridden society. The second thesis suggests that social economic and political churning even in the pre-colonial period spawned inter-religious rivalries and conflicts, which occasionally led to communal confrontations. The third view underscores communalism to be the product of various policy measures adopted by the British that created a wedge between otherwise peacefully coexistent Indian communities. Fourth way in which the rise of communalism is explained is by attributing it to various administrative measures of governance that led to rise of communal consciousness. Let us discuss these one by one at some length.

Communalism as Pre-British in Origin

The pre-British origins of communalism are stressed in four divergent ways. First, the colonial discourse in which communalism was assumed to be the basic feature of the Indian society. It depicted India's religious bigotry and its fundamentally irrational character. Therefore, in the colonialist discourse "the phenomenon of communalism in India is age old; it flows from essential character of people in India, and it affects more or less the entire population," writes Gyanendra Pandey.¹³ British historiographers and the administrators thus categorized Indian society, to be inherently communal in character. James Mill's writings on Indian history suggested that, the Indian history can be divided into three broad periods, the Hindu civilization, the Muslim civilization and the British period.¹⁴ Such writings reduced the layered reality of the communities into a uniform, homogeneous fiction. This was followed by scripting different forms of social antagonisms as religious conflicts between the Hindus and the Muslims. It is therefore, a simultaneous act of homogenization, de-contextualization and reinterpretation or inscription of meanings. So, for example, all 'pre-Islamic' indigenous religious movements like Bhudhism, Sikhism, etc. were seen as part of Hinduism. Social or economic conflicts between practitioners of distinct religious faiths were termed as the communal conflicts despite them on several occasions being distinctly non religious in origin. Thus, a complex, amorphous social existence of communities is metamorphosed into a homogenous distinct faith, which is a historical perversion according to Romila Thapar.¹⁵ Sir

¹³ Gyanendra Pandey (1990) op.cit. p. 11.

¹⁴ Romila Thapar (1990)

¹⁵ Ibid.

Hugh McPherson, a British civil servant, who served in India on different posts for 35 years, asserts that the Hindu-Muslim antagonism is organic to the social characteristic of India. He also maintains that this rivalry is essentially religious in character, and has persisted over centuries before the consolidation of the British rule.¹⁶ British intervention according to advocates of this thesis, like that of McPherson, was to set up processes and institutions that would allow fair mediation and appropriate reconciliation of the communal antagonism.

Secondly, C.A. Bayly's work on the *Prehistory of Communalism*, on the other hand, suggests that the manifestations of communalism were evident in India even in pre British rule period.¹⁷ Bayly argues that there are three main indicators of communalism- i.e. a) the conflict between religious groups over religious issues; b) the conflict between religious groups over secular issues, such as distribution of economic, social and political benefits and c) the communal consciousness viz. the self-identification of religious communities as homogeneous groups having shared interest and antagonist relationship with the similarly placed other religious community. All these three indications, according to Bayly, were evidently present in India even before the consolidation of the British rule.¹⁸ Bayly argues that the above mentioned indicators are pre conditions for communalism. These indicators according to Bayly, however, may be necessary but not sufficient conditions for the rise of communal conflicts. Rise of a full-blown communal conflict Bayly puts forth, was dependent upon acute changes in the political or the economic structures that affected the society.¹⁹ Bayly argues that economic and political churning even in the pre-colonial period spawned inter-religious rivalries and conflicts, which were communal in character. Thus, according to this thesis, there is a remote linkage between the consolidation of British rule and rise of communalism in India. Communal conflicts in India, pre-date the British Empire, although the manifestations of communalism may have been different in the pre-British period, as compared to the British rule era. Thus, there is no rise of communalism in the British period in India.

Thirdly, some of the Indian historians like R.C. Mazumdar, advocate that inter-religious rivalries and communal antagonism did not first originate with the consolidation of the British Empire. Mazumdar is of the view that the medieval India remained permanently divided into

¹⁶ Hugh McPherson in Sir John Comring (1968)

¹⁷ C.A. Bayly (1985)

¹⁸ Ibid pp 177-181

¹⁹ Ibid, p.203.

two powerful communities of the Hindus and the Muslims each marked with its own individuality and consciousness. Furthermore, there was no amenability or coordination between these two communities. So, while Bayly sees communal antagonism as dependent variable or phenomena that can be understood and explained by outlining the changes in political and economic structure of society in a given period, Mazumdar suggests communalism is *constitutive* of the very relationship between the Hindus and the Muslims. Although quite different in their understanding of the issue of communalism, they converged on the idea of it being pre-British in origin.

Fourthly, the view that there are no or very weak linkages between the British rule and rise of communalism, is also recognized by many scholars, who advocate intense struggle against communalism. Saroj Giri, for example, alerts us to the inherent weakness of the approach, which links communalism to modernity or the British rule. According to Giri, this approach reduces communalism to epiphenomena, thus suggesting that dissolution of the phenomena would simply manage the issues related to the epiphenomena.²⁰ In other words, either the escape from modernity or the dissolution of the British rule would automatically put an end to communalism.²¹

The views explained above, which turn down any correspondence between the British colonialism and the rise of communalism however, have divergent political purposes. The British historians and administrators, including James Mill, justified the colonial government and its civilizing mission by presenting the barbaric and communalized image of Indian society. C.A. Bayly, on the other hand, saw communal violence being configured upon certain pre conditions, that develop within the social structures due to cumulative events of shifts in social, economic and political relations (of power), and thus contingent. Communalism, therefore, according to Bayly is a dependent variable, to be explained and remedied through negotiating the arenas of local power, and the changes that they are going through. Some Indian historians, by presenting the organic nature of conflict between the Hindu and the Muslim communities made the case for the Hindu revivalism. On the other hand, views like that of Giri, urge that acknowledging the inherently communal character of the Indian society, is the first step towards launching a well-directed political battle against communalism.

²⁰ Epiphenomena is an entity, act or event that does not has its own independent standing, but finds its meaning within a more fundamental entity called the phenomena. So epiphenomena cannot be explained, or can only be erroneously explained without establishing its linkages to the phenomena.

²¹ Saroj Giri (2009)

Communalism as the British Policy of Divide and Rule

The 'divide and rule' thesis perhaps, is the most widely accepted one on the rise of communalism in the British period. This view was developed in the course of the nationalist struggle against the colonial rule in India.²² According to this view, sensing the resistance against the colonial rule by the rising tide of Indian nationalism in the third quarter of 19th century, the British encouraged sectarian tendencies on communal lines amongst the Indian Muslims. Such British endeavours created wedge between the Hindu and the Muslim communities, which otherwise cohabited quite peacefully. The widening gulf between the Hindu and the Muslim community due to sectarian tendencies obfuscated the growth of Indian nationalism, thus benefiting the colonial rule. Under this view, communalism is seen as a challenge to nationalism, and therefore, a problem to be overcome to build national solidarity against the British.

The nationalist historians, including Bipan Chandra advocate this view, and suggest that during the early phase of national, awakening the political consciousness of the Indian Muslims lagged behind. Though the British were harsh on the Muslim community after the 1857 revolts, whom the British largely felt were responsible for the revolt, yet in the face of consolidating Indian nationalism, the British maneuvered the Hindus and the Muslims against each other. Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan's reformist initiative to encourage English education and rationalist thinking amongst the Muslims, thus, got support from the British. The anti Hindu competitive tinge, in Sayed Ahmed Khan's initiative was perhaps the reason for his campaign being endeared by the British. Sayed Ahmed Khan's campaign was centered on encouraging rationalist thinking and necessary technical skills amongst the Indian Muslims, so that they could gain administrative positions in the British Empire. He argued that the Muslim community had suffered huge reverses by withdrawing from the colonial education and administrative system, and ceded their once dominant position to the Hindus. According to Sayed Ahmed Khan, India had always been a federation of ethnic communities united under a centralizing authority.²³ Earlier, it was the Mughal Empire and thereafter the British. Being the decedent of the erstwhile ruling ethnic community argued Sayed Ahmed Khan, the Muslims were entitled to greater representation in the administrative systems of the empire. This philosophy of Sayed Ahmed Khan was quite contrary to the philosophy of the Indian National Congress, which

²² For a lucid and elaborate discussion on this see Bipan Chandra et al. (1989) ; Sekhar Bandyopadhyay (2009) op.cit; and A.R. Desai (1948).

²³ Sekhar Bandyopadhyay (2009) Pp. 270-272.

believed India to be one nation. The entitlement in this nation according to the Indian National Congress shall be premised on individual citizen rights, and no decedent claims and privileges shall be admitted. The Congress thus viewed ethnic affiliations and communal solidarity to be inimical to the unity of India. Sayed Ahmed Khan, on the other hand, campaigned amongst the Muslims to pledge their loyalty to the British and maintain distance from the Indian National Congress. Sayed Ahmed Khan founded Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh in 1875 to encourage modernization of the Muslim Community. However, Sayed Ahmed Khan's fondness for the English education and modernization of Muslim community was deeply contested by large sections of the Muslim elites.

The demand from the British to make the governing bodies more representative too was marred with communal motivations. The Congress demand for an elected council was configured by the Muslim leaders, including Sayed Ahmed Khan, as proxy to entrench the Hindu majority rule. The Morley Minto reforms or the Indian Council Act 1909, therefore, while conceding the demand for elected seats to the Indians in the council in a limited manner also reflected the concerns of the minority community. Seats were reserved for the Muslim candidates in imperial as well as provincial legislatures.²⁴ The percentage of reserved seats exceeded the population size of the Muslims in the provinces. Moreover, it was only the Muslim electorates that would vote and elect candidates from the reserved constituency for the Muslims. It thus ensured, separate electorates for electing the candidates from constituencies reserved for the Muslims. This step to grant separate electorates to the Muslims, has been seen by many nationalist historians as laying the foundation for exacerbating communal polarizations and possible first step towards the partition of India.

Earlier, the intent of partitioning Bengal into East and West Bengal in 1905 was subject matter of contested interpretations. While the British officially projected it to be an administrative matter to facilitate efficient governance, the communal motives were quite conspicuous.²⁵ Lord Curzon's remarks outlining the prospect of 'unity for the Muslim community' in East Bengal, which was an unprecedented move since the decline of the Mughals gave certitude to the communal motives behind the partition of Bengal. Some historians thus see the move to partition Bengal, as integral to the 'divide and rule' policy of the British. The administrative measure to partition Bengal into the Muslim majority East Bengal and the Hindu majority West

²⁴ Idid p. 275

²⁵ Sumit Sarkar (1983, 2009) Pp. 106-111

Bengal, laid material conditions to harness and aggravate communal consciousness.²⁶ Furthermore, in the West Bengal, the Bangla speaking people were reduced to the status of linguistic minority as they were outnumbered by the Hindi and Oriya speakers. Thus, the partition of Bengal underlined both the religious and linguistic basis to imagine the nation. It is therefore, also viewed as a measure by the British to encourage sectarian tendencies, to undermine the unified nationalist challenge to the colonial government. H.H. Risley, the British ethnographer and administrator oft-quoted remark: 'Bengal united is power; Bengal divided will pull in different ways... One of our main objects is to split up and weaken a solid body of opponents to our rule,' is a pointer to the manner in which the British played upon socio-cultural plurality to fuel antagonism.²⁷

The partition of Bengal had far greater acceptance in the Muslim dominated East Bengal. The challenge to partition emanated from the predominantly Hindu leadership from West Bengal, which had support of the elite Hindu population of the East Bengal. The rise of the *swadeshi* movement that contested the partition of Bengal had significant Hindu revivalist overtones.²⁸ However, Hindu-Muslim unity was also sought in the name of Bangla linguistic nationalism. The politics of Bengal in between 1905-1911, has underlying messages of multiple possibilities of imagining a nation. It also reveals, the manner in which any nationalism contains within its fold several subdued nationalities. The vision of unified Bengal while projected as the 'nationalist' vision raised the anxiety of Muslims, who thought that their interest would be more secure in the East Bengal that gave them the space to escape subjugation under the Hindu majority. On the other hand, the Bangla speakers in the West Bengal were insecure due to declining dominance of Bangla language to the Hindi and the Oriya speakers. It is quite noteworthy, how the religious and communal divide takes a backseat even as language emerges as primary political cleavage. The British deployed administrative strategies to heighten communal anxiety and convert social and economic pluralism into political antagonism.

No wonder, therefore, that conflicts around the class lines, which pertained to use and control of material productive assets like land and other economic matters, viz. the employment opportunities too were instilled with communal concerns. The conflicts between Hindu landlord

²⁶ Sekhar Bandyopadhyay (2009) op.cit., Pp. 251-255

²⁷ Partha Chatterjee p.147 in Kaushik Roy ed. (2012)

²⁸ Sekhar Bandyopadhyay (2009) op.cit. Pp. 256-262; Sumit Sarkar (1983,2009) op.cit. p.106

and Muslim peasantry in many regions, including the East Bengal, though emanating from class antagonism was given communal dimension. Similarly, in other regions Muslims were projected as encroaching upon the resources that should 'legitimately' belong to the Hindu community. Inter-religious rivalry was fostered to create intense competition for scarce opportunities of public employment.²⁹ With more and more people moving out from traditional occupations, particularly the well-off peasants and small landlords the social basis for communal competition was further widened. These new segments of professional job seekers sought, as well as were given encouraging signals by the government to compete on communal basis and seek communal reservations and nominations.³⁰ A.R. Desai thus notes.

Communalism was only the disguised expression of the struggle between the vested interests belonging to different faiths who gave communal form to that struggle. It was also the form within which the struggle of the professional classes of different communities over posts and seats were carried on...there were other types of struggles which though mainly economic in origin, took communal form. In provinces like Bengal...the landlord-tenant and moneylender-debtor conflicts were misdescribed as communal conflict...*the British along with the dominant classes of Indian society both Hindus and Muslims exploited these contradictions arising out of the political economy of emerging capitalist relations in India to pit one community against the other thus giving it a communal form.*³¹

Critique of the Divide and Rule thesis

The divide and rule thesis is a plausible method to explain rising communal antagonism, yet it has not gone without contestations and has its own limitations. Firstly, the scholarly works like that of Bayly present to us that communal antagonism has two broad aspects. First, conflict between the religious groups over symbols, rites, and precedents; and secondly, the conflicts between religious groups over social, economic and political issues. In both these dimensions,

²⁹ Bipan Chandra (1989) op.cit.

³⁰ Idid. and Kaushik Roy, op.cit. p.10; Sekhar Bandyopadhyay (2009) op.cit. p.268

³¹ A.R. Desai, (1948) op.cit. Pp. 407-409

communal conflicts existed in the Indian society prior to the consolidation of the British rule in India.³²

Secondly, the divide and rule thesis treats masses of people as gullible agents with little agency. People here are seen to be responding to the signals dropped by the administration exactly in the manner in which the administration seeks their responses. It can no doubt be delineated that the British administration through its administrative policy incentivized communal competitions, encouraged communal protections to one group over the others thus preparing ground for communal antagonism. However, it cannot be said with equal conviction that the British ensured that Indians responded to these incentives for divisiveness exactly in a manner in which British contemplated. The reasons for why people did pick up communal competition over other forms of associations viz. the class solidarity has to be located elsewhere.

Sekhar Bandyopadhyay notes how the inner core of abstract Indian nationalism created fear and anxiety amongst the minority community. This is evident for both its Hindu revivalist phase of the late 19th and early 20th century and the 'secular' phase in the 20th century in general.³³ In the late nineteenth century, the Indian nationalism clearly came to be associated with the symbols of the Hindu icons like Shivaji and Ganesh festivals as well as the Arya Samaj invocations of the superiority of the *Vedanta* tradition over all other faiths alongside the *suddhi* campaign for (re) conversion of Muslims and Christians into the Hindu fold. The campaign for protecting cow by demanding legal interventions to ban cow slaughter was another chief issue of mobilization. All these issues either directly or in a subtle manner imbued Indian nationalism, in this phase, with the Hindu revivalist ideas. More so, it also poised the Muslims as the 'other' and inimical to the interests of the Indian nationalism.

Even in the 1920s when the Congress discouraged bringing in the community views to the public life, the minorities, particularly the Muslims remained apprehensive. The Muslim minority according to Ayesha Jalal rather wanted political space for articulating the community interests; they were not against united India but were apprehensive of losing their particularity to the generalized voice of Indian nationalism.³⁴ This generalized voice of the Indian nationalism aligned the interest of the majority Hindu community to that of the nation which

³² Bayly (op.cit.) p.201

³³ Sekhar Bandyopadhyay (2009) op.cit.234-247 and 334-341.

³⁴ Sekhar Bandyopadhyay,(2009) op.cit. Pp.334-335

the minorities abhorred. Gandhi's invocation of *swaraj* as *Ram Raj* and the presence of leaders, like Madan Mohan Malviya in the Congress, who believed in racial supremacy of the Hindus impressed that the Indian nationalism is inherently Hindu in character.³⁵

Thus communalism was as much an effect of the inner dynamics of Indian society- both in its inter-community relationships in the context of emerging structures of modernity and in forging resistance against the colonial rule-as it was the product of administrative signals intended to create fissures in the Indian society. Therefore, if the British policy of separate electorates and communal nominations encouraged communal antagonism, so did the Hindu revivalist politics, invocations such as the *Ram Raj* and cow protection crusades, which aligned the interest of a community to that of a nation.

Another point of contention against the divide and rule strategy is that it assumes communities to be homogeneous entity. There are significant internal differentiations within all communities. The Hindu community is differentiated along caste lines is an obvious example. But the very idea of the Hindu as an organized community with essential core is deeply contested. Therefore, there was no already formed community to be communalized. Communal identity had therefore, first to be consolidated before communal antagonism can play itself out. The Hindu revivalist trends from the last quarter of the nineteenth century through its campaigns of cow protection, supremacy of Vedanta, the image of Muslim invader, the construction of a narrative of a glorious (Hindu) past, the Shivaji and Ganesh *utsav* celebrations, the resistance against the colonial interference in indigenous tradition such as the raising of the age of consent of girls for marriage, etc worked towards consolidating the Hindu communal identity.³⁶ In its very constitution, this consolidation of the Hindu identity was anti-Muslim in character. Similarly, significant heterogeneity was discernable amongst the Muslim community as well. Not only, their status as minority varied according to the geographical locations but there were fine distinctions of regional philosophical orientations. Mushirul Hasan, in his work *The Myth of Muslim Unity* points out how the discourse of homogenization was utilized by the Muslim elite and the British administration to foster their respective ends.³⁷

It is therefore, important to both appreciate and understand the limitation of the divide and rule thesis to explain the rise of communalism in colonial India. There were several factors that

³⁵ Sumit Sarkar, op.cit. (1983).

³⁶ Sumit Sarkar op.cit. (1983) Pp. 70-76

³⁷ Mushirul Hasan (1997), Pp.25-52

encouraged communal antagonism in colonial India. The British administration's policy of course was one of them, but so were other factors like political and economic changes that opened up the space of social reconfiguration on one hand and the very nature of Indian nationalism with its communal undercurrent on the other.

Communalism as Construction

In his celebrated book *Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, Gyanendra Pandey writes, 'communalism in India is another characteristic and paradoxical product of age of Reason (and of Capital) which also gave us colonialism and nationalism.'³⁸ Pandey, along with his other subaltern historiography colleagues externalise the rise communalism to the source of reason and capital accompanying the British colonial rule in India. However, unlike the divide and rule thesis which blamed the colonial administrative policies, the subaltern historians argue that it is the colonial knowledge system which transformed the understanding of the community, thus laying down the fields for communal antagonism. A sense of community argued subaltern historians in the pre-colonial and early colonial period was much more apprehensive viz caste, sub castes, regional, linguistics and religious groupings. The boundaries of these communities were cluttered, not neatly defined and fuzzier. The pre-colonial communities were also not enumerated nor were these greatly concerned with numbers.

The colonial knowledge systems, reconstructed the notion of community, transformed its fuzziness and gave it a concrete numerical form. Sudipta Kaviraj, classifies this transformation of community as one from a 'fuzzy' to an 'enumerated' community. The act of enumeration in India was done by head counting in the Census that started towards the last quarter of the 19th century. The enumerated community is more defined, certain of its boundaries and numerical strengths. John Zavos highlights the process through which fuzziness of the communities, belonging to different caste, sects, devotional groups following distinctive styles of worships and peculiar gods, etc. were obliterated by clubbing them all together as the Hindus.³⁹ Classification of the Indian society on such a basis of rigidly defined, identifiable and impermeable communities suited the colonial interests as it justified their rule based on the principle of 'difference'. Indian society was thus characterized as 'different'-irrational and ridden with religious bigotry- than the rational west and as a result incapable of ordering itself.

³⁸ Gyanendra Pandey, (1990) op.cit. p.5

³⁹ Zavos (2009),Pp.74-76

The reconstructed communities emptied out with their internal differentiations, and fuzziness was already always formed into antagonistic blocs. For example, the construction of a homogenous Hindu community was always anti Muslim- again another reconstituted homogeneous community-in character.⁴⁰ Besides, the enumeration also informed the communities about their exact numbers in terms of 'majority' and 'minority' both at the regional and wider national levels. The heterogeneous practices of the communities were standardized as per the perceptions of the colonial officers, thus a Hindu had to fit into one of the definitional traits assumed by the census records, be it the way of worship, identification of gods, acceptances of hierarchy or even the eating habits. Concerns of the community's interests were also reflected through the numbers viz a declining population of the community was aired as 'a threat to the community being swallowed up', thus giving an edge to the feeling of antagonism.⁴¹

Not only this, with communities being reconstituted into set of homogeneous, mutually impermeable, insular categories almost definitionally antagonistic to each other, their past too was reproduced as strife ridden. Gyanendra Pandey demonstrates the manner in which narrative of community conflict in Benaras in the early 19th century was reconstructed in colonial records. This reconstruction produced the picture of perennially hostile, barbaric and strife ridden history of Hindu-Muslim relationship in the northern India.⁴² The class conflict involving the Hindu Zamindar and Muslim (or a Sikh) peasant or vice-versa was also subsumed in the narrative of the communal strife.⁴³ The British quite clearly did this for self-serving reasons of justifying the colonial principle of 'difference' to augment its authority by projecting Indians as barbaric and uncivilized. It is however, amusing that even the nationalists did little to contest this narrative of communal reconstruction.

The nationalist engagement with this communal reconstruction argues Gyanendra Pandey, remained confused.⁴⁴ They did not actively contest the communal articulations in the fear perhaps of antagonizing the religious communities support base in the run-up to elections during the last leg of the colonial rule. However, nationalism 'pure' was abstracted of all

⁴⁰ R.B. Bhagat, (2001).

⁴¹ Ibid, p.4355.

⁴² Gyanendra Pandey (1990) op.cit.

⁴³ Partha Chatterjee (1999) and Sumit Sarkar (1983), op.cit.

⁴⁴ Gyanendra Pandey, op.cit.

religious articulations and posited against communal 'sectarianism'. This argues Pandey was neither enough nor appropriate as 'communalism' was reproduced through nationalism both demonstratively and discursively. Congress member's vacillation between Hindutva, soft Hindutva and secularism is the best example of it alongside shared membership of some the leaders like Madan Mohan Malvia and Lala Lajpat Rai et al of Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha. Moreover, the nationalist's reconstruction of Indian past to counter the colonial reconstruction was also as much flawed according to Gyanendra Pandey. The nationalist's reconstructions tried to resolve the issue that confronted the present through invocation of 'glorious' history of syncretism. Such reconstructions produced a hierarchy of cultures almost normalizing the 'greatness' of the Hindu civilization. The ambivalence of the nationalist forces towards such communal articulations led to a discursive reproduction of communalism.

The Symbolic Production of Communalism

If communalism was discursively produced through various administrative acts and historical reconstructions as mentioned above, it is also important to underscore the materialization of communalism through the religious symbols and practices. The significance of cow protection movement of the Hindu Sabha, the religious processions on Muharrams, the playing of music before the mosques and the role of the local administration with regard to these issues are particularly noteworthy. It has been argued that adherence and participation in these religious practices were at the core of essentialising the religious identity. Thus in due course, it became obligatory to vow for cow protection in order to be a true Hindu. Similarly, the sacrifice of the cow was invoked as being part of the 'tradition' of the Muslim community. In this way, the amorphous culture of the communities acquired the solid, marked identifications. The British administration, on the other hand, conspicuously withdrew itself from mediation allowing the communities to continue with their 'customary' practices that were prevalent in distinct regions. Therefore, in the regions where cow sacrifice was not in practice, it was prohibited and where it was prevalent, it was allowed. As a result of this British policy, there ensued contests and conflicts between the Hindu and the Muslim communities in different regions for cementing contemporary practice with regard to cow sacrifice in the name of ancient traditions.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Reece Jones (2007)

Similarly, the religious events like Muharram *Tazia* procession and Hindu religious procession were marred with communal conflagrations. One of the major issues here was regarding the route to be taken by the procession and if music was to be permitted along with the procession. Both these issues generated emotive disputes often leading to inter-community riots. If the *tazia* passed through the Hindu neighborhood or 'tress passing' the Hindu property or through the route where the electric wires and even the branches of the trees belonging to the Hindu community were found to be obstructing the height of the *tazia*, it could become a matter of communal conflagration.⁴⁶ Likewise, the Hindu community's demand and obduracy to play music in their procession even when it passed through a Mosque was an irritant to the Muslim community. Gandhi's relentless pursuing to convince the Hindu community that the music in the religious procession was not the core belief of the Hindu community and therefore, could be shed to respect their Muslim brethren's faith could hardly bear any fruit.⁴⁷ Historians suggest that this strict abhorrence to music in Muslim tradition as vow to protect cow in the Hindu religion was the product of the religious revivalist movements in both the communities.⁴⁸ The British government left the decision to resolve these conflicts to the local administrations. The local administrations on their part declared that they would follow past precedence and traditions in their respective regions. In actual practice, this meant opening up avenues for communal contestations and conflicts to establish the zones of traditions. One may, for example, consider this; if a new mosque is constructed in a neighborhood where none existed how would the past tradition and practice be of any help in convincing the Hindus not to play music near it. In a sense, these contests between communities to determine what constitutes the tradition in their respective areas laid the ground for struggle for power and domination of one community over the other. The colonial administration on its part oversaw and allowed such contestations and inter-community rivalry to be played out even while they tried to control the communal violence.

Growth of Communalism in the Age of Nationalist Mass Movement

⁴⁶ See <http://www.yale.edu/macmillan/ocvprogram/licep/3/wilkinson/wilkinson.pdf> accessed on May 14.2014.

⁴⁷ Bipan Chandra (2004a)

⁴⁸ Reece Jones (2007) op.cit. p. 61

By 1920s, the religious identities got sufficiently coiled and driven into the emerging modern institutions, structures and networks of politics that came to be established after the British crown took over the direct administration of India. Issues and practices like the conduct of the census, the partition of Bengal, Swadeshi movement, religious revivalist trends, changes in the economic, political, educational, professional fields and its communal fallout, the matter of a separate electorate, etc had already set up the communal discourse and made communal discord almost a common sense in India. The age of mass participation in the national or the anti-colonial movement enhanced the possibilities for deepening the communal divide amongst the people on one side and on the other, it also opened the space for engaging with and overcoming communalization.

The 1916 Lucknow pact between the Congress and the Muslim League was one such attempt to overcome sectarian barriers. The objective of the Lucknow pact was to press a joint demand to seek administrative reforms and meaningful representation in the provincial and the national councils as well as appointment of Indians to the governing council of the viceroy and provincial governors. A broad coalition of the moderate and the extremist elements in the Congress was put together, and compromise was struck between the Congress and the Muslim league, to make constitutional and administrative reforms a basis for the support to the British war efforts during the First World War. Sumit Sarkar notes, how both Tilak and Gandhi would raise 'money and men' through village tours in hope that major political reforms would be granted in return for such loyalty.⁴⁹ The Muslim League which felt beleaguered by undoing of the partition of Bengal in 1911 too got persuaded to put a joint effort. One of the exceptional features of the Lucknow Pact was the Congress recognition of the separate electorates for the Muslims. Alongside this, agreement was also drawn on seeking fixed proportion of seats (reserved seats) in provincial and all India legislatures for the Muslim community.

However, the expectation of the Hindu-Muslim unity based on the Lucknow Pact was soon belied as the Congress revisited its decision in the post-war period and opposed the principle of communal representation, including that of the Muslims. The Montagu-Chelmsford reforms 1919 coming in the post-war period acceded to some of the demands of representations in the provincial council as well as extended the provision of communal representation to not only Muslims but also to Sikhs. Abhay Datar argues that it was a pragmatic move by the Congress to lay off the League by backtracking on the Lucknow Pact. A persuasive reason for this backtracking by the Congress according to Datar would have to be located in the structure of

⁴⁹ Sumit Sarkar, (1983) op.cit. p.150

administration proposed by the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms or the Government of India Act 1919.⁵⁰ Datar maintains that the Congress did not expect any substantive power-sharing arrangement from the British. However, the post-war Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms proposed effective scheme of power sharing in the provinces through 'diarchy'. Congress, thus, was surprised by this arrangement, which gave substantial power to the elected representative in the provinces. In the Hindu majority provinces, the Congress could easily command a majority without the Leagues co-operation and thus there was no incentive for co-operation. In fact, the Lucknow Pact's proposal of reserved seats for the minorities in the provincial and legislative council as well as the proposal of the separate electorate now became of thorny issue. Therefore, no doubt that the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms granted liberal concessions to the demands for representations in provinces and also gave some real powers of holding the executive accountable to those who could command a majority in the provincial legislature. Yet, these reforms by granting separate electorate to the Muslims and the Sikhs ensured that the inter-community cooperation was not made necessary as far as the electoral politics are concerned.

Gandhi's attempt to bridge the communal divide, took him to support the Ali brothers-Maulana Mohammed Ali and Maulana Shaukat Ali. The Ali brothers led the Khilafat movement in India, which was an anti-imperial movement with a religious undercurrent. The immediate causes of the Khilafat movement were not rooted in Indian soil but were distinctly international. The defeat of Turkey in 1919, in the First World War, paved the way for dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Emperor was regarded as the Khalifa, or the spiritual head of the Islamic world. This created the specter of Islam in danger. This feeling was further compounded by several developments on the domestic front like the watering down of the Lucknow Pact, arrest of Ali brothers who were championing the cause of Turkey in war which they categorized as 'religious war' etc. The unfolding of events around the Khilafat movement also saw the consolidation of the radical anti British, Muslim leadership. The Khilafat movement argues Sekhar Bandyopadhyay was first major attempt to build all India solidarity amongst the Indian Muslims who were otherwise divided along linguistic, class and regional lines. Gandhi's support for the Khilafat movement was to build inter-community solidarity against the British imperialism by integrating the Muslims into the mainstream of the Indian nationalism. Besides his steadfast conviction, that religion and nationalism can rest together held him to throw his weight behind the Ali brothers. The Gandhian non-cooperation

⁵⁰ Abhay Datar, (2012).

movement in 1920s had at its core agenda the support for the demands of the Khilafat movement besides issues concerning absolving of General O' Dyer in Jalianwala carnage by the British Hunter commission enquiry report and also the demand for 'swaraj'. In fact, the call for non-cooperation to the British Empire was first advanced by the radical Muslim groups led by the Ali brothers, argues Sumit Sarkar.⁵¹

Yet, the Hindu-Muslim unity forged by this alliance remained tenuous. It was clear from the beginning that the Khilafat volunteers and leaders as well, did not have absolute faith in non-violence. Even at the peak of the Khilafat-non cooperation movements there were several instances of the Hindu-Muslim conflicts. The worst being the Moplah riot in the Malabar region. In the political economy of this region, the Muslims were generally the leaseholders and peasants and the Hindus, the landowner and the moneylender class. In the Khilafat meetings throughout the Malabar region, the Moplah peasants were encouraged to air their grievances against the landowners and the money lenders. The conflict which actually found its genesis in the political economy of the region appeared or got manifested as the communal confrontation more so because the Khilafat platform was used to vent the class anger. In this environment of protest, a rumor was floated that the British rule was coming to an end thus opening up space for establishing the Muslim rule. The British cracked down on the Khilafat leadership and Moplah peasant. In ensuing rebellion the Moplah peasant attacked the police, seized control over certain parts of Malabar region and attacked the Hindu landlords and moneylenders, burned their records, etc, venting their anger against the exploitative relationship towards the class which they described as the collaborators of the British. Gandhi who had earlier argued about the seamless bonding between religion, and nationalism was soon compelled by these experiences to review his understanding. He declared that we were Indians first and Hindus and Muslims thereafter, thus, putting nationalism outside and above the religious belongings and sectarianism.

The 1920s and 1930s saw a more aggressive assertion of the Hindu identity. During this period, organizational coherence was brought about around the Hindu identity by playing upon the anxiety of the majority community. Issues of divisiveness such as those related to caste were avoided and undermined, projecting the Hindu as one community. Thus social solidarity and organizational coherence were constructed even if it simultaneously meant surreptitious reproduction of the power and influence of the 'high' caste. Views that the Hindustan (*Aryavarta*) is the natural homeland for the Hindus, who have lived here for centuries, were

⁵¹ Sumit Sarkar, (1983) op.cit. p.196

insistently propounded. It was further maintained that Hindustan is both the *pitra bhumi* and the *punya bhumi* for the Hindus. The Muslims like the British were projected as invaders. The membership of the Hindu organisations grew sharply in between 1938-1948 from around forty thousand to six hundred thousand. In fact, the Hindu organizations during this period began questioning the Gandhian methods and ideology, including the secularist ideology of the Indian National Congress. More militant and calibrated approach was witnessed during this period by the Hindu organizations to transform the consciousness within the Hindu community.

Socio-economic and political changes in 1920s and 1930s provided a mass dimension to the issue of communalism. Such conflicts became much more frequent in the context where antagonistic and mutually hostile relationships between the Hindu and the Muslim communities by now had been discursively forged and acquired a common sense character. With the suitable communal ideology in place, economic, social and political tensions acquired distorted communal form. In Bengal, the conflict induced by tenancy reforms granting favorable terms to the leaseholders and sharecroppers was opposed by the Congress, including the known leftist faces like Subhas Chandra Bose.⁵² They stood up in the defense of the Zamindars. This led to considerable Muslim alienation although many Muslim Zamindars-though quite less in number than the Hindus were also opposing the tenancy reforms. An attempt to overcome the communal divide was as well apparent. The Praja party was formed in Bengal 1929 with predominantly Muslim support base but also with some Hindu radical leaders in it, marking an attempt to seek inter-community collaboration, by overcoming communal polarization, on issues of common concerns.□ In Punjab too the peasant question took a distorted communal form. Attempts to protect the Sikh and Muslim peasants from urban moneylenders, predominantly Hindus here were resisted by the Congress-Hindu Mahasabha combine. The Congress here too failed to take up the cause of agrarian reforms thus losing considerable support base amongst the rural population, predominantly the Sikhs and the Muslims. Political reforms in Punjab- a Muslim majority province- enhancing representation of Muslims in the municipal board too provoked communal hatred. The Hindu Mahasabha under the leadership of Madan Mohan Malviya took a cudgel against the Muslims. So intense was the communal hatred that when Gandhi visited Lahore in December 1924 to promote communal harmony, the Hindus cold shouldered him.⁵³

⁵²Sumit Sarkar(1983), op.cit.

⁵³ Sekhar Badyopadhyay(1989), op.cit. Pp. 336-337.

In 1920s and 1930s when communalism was acquiring mass character, there were also spur in the growth of communal mass associations. Within the Muslim community, the spread of *tabligh* (propaganda) and *tanzim* (organisation) is well known. It saw the emergence of communal rigidity and articulation of separatism that culminated into the Muslim leagues demand for Pakistan. Similarly among the Hindus, the *sudhi* (purification) and *sangathan* (association) campaigns picked up pace during this period. Besides, the formation of Rastriya Swyam Sewak Sangh and activities of the Hindu Mahasabha established the discourse of the Hindu exclusivism. It is in this context that the two nation theory proposed by Agha Khan as 'nation within a nation' way back in 1905-1906 and eminence in the role of political organization like the Muslim League or the Hindu communal associations became important.

Communalism and the Communal Organisation

The Muslim League

The league as political organization came to its own in the first decade of the 20th century. Several political events, including the partition of Bengal, introduction of the separate electorates for the Muslims, etc. brought the League into relevance. In its initial years, the League had remained a loyal political organization to the British and had cooperated to seek benefits to the Muslim community in the social, economic, professional and political spheres. It is in the 1920s that the Muslim league under the influence of the Khilafat movement started getting radicalized. It was in late 1930s after Legaue's dismal performance in the elections of 1937 that the organization got shaken up. Until then even in the Muslim majority provinces of Bengal and Punjab the League was seriously contested by class based, or the regional solidarity based party like the Krishak Praja Party in West Bengal and the Unionist Party in Punjab. Both these parties fared well in the 1937 elections even in the face of rout of the League.

After Mohammand Ali Jinnah took over the reins of the Muslim League post 1937 elections the party was revived and revitalized. In the aftermath of the resounding Congress victory in 1937 elections the League was completely written off as the representative of the Muslim interests. Jawaharlal Nehru had declared that the Congress rather than the League was the representative of all sections of the Indian population, including the Muslims. Muslims in the meanwhile started growing apprehensive of certain political developments like the comprehensive domination of the Congress, growing capacity of the Hindu Mahasabha to steer

the Congress policy and programmes and the dwindling influence of the League. The Muslims were particularly afraid of living under comprehensive domination of the Hindu rule produced through democratic majority and abstract notion of individual citizenship advocated by the Congress. In order to counter this, League and other Muslim organizations focused on campaigns based on the separate electorate as well as the demand for the minority veto over legislative provisions that affected the interests of the Muslims. In 1930s such assertions of the minority community gained new momentum, particularly as the prospect for the self-government and possibly independence grew. The second round table conference of 1932 yielded to such assertions leading consequently, to the 'communal award.' Ramsay MacDonald, the British Prime Minister acceded to the demands not only of the Muslims to provide special representation but also extended it to other religious as well as secular categories. Thus, Muslims, Sikhs, Anglo Indians, Indian Christians, depressed classes, tribals etc. all were given special measures of representation. Jinnah at this stage started campaigning for equal partnership of the Muslim community in any further constitutional scheme for India. Symbolic issues like the passing of the Shariat Application Act in 1937, that granted autonomy to the Muslim community from being subject to any other law or custom in personal matters led to galvanization of All India Muslim support for the League as well as Jinnah-its forceful advocate.

The idea of a 'nation within nation' nurtured since as early as 1905-1906, by the Muslim elite was now forcefully articulated. In 1930, Mohammad Iqbal as Leagues' president proposed carving out centralized territory of Islam in India out of four states of Punjab, north-West Frontier provinces, Sind and Baluchistan. This was further refined in 1933, by Rahmat Ali as he demanded 'Pakistan' carved out of the four Muslim majority provinces and Kashmir. However, it was at the Karachi meeting of the League presided over by Jinnah that the demand for "political self determination of the two nations, Known as the Hindus, and the Muslims" was passed and the Muslim League resolved to work for its realization. Finally, the Lahore resolution of the Muslim League in 1940 proclaimed the Muslims as a nation without however, mentioning partition or Pakistan. It simply declared independent state to be constituted of the Muslim majority provinces without giving any timeline for such formation.

The Hindu Mahasabha

Unlike the Muslim League the Hindu Communal organizations were not separatists. Their aim simply was to align Indian nationalism to the interest of the majority community. It thus

reproduced communalism surreptitiously through the secular nationalist forms. However, more often than not, they explicitly generated communal fervors. While the Hindu Mahasabha was formed in 1914 to uphold the interest of the Hindus in the wake of developments like the granting of the separate electorate to the Muslims, its leaders were active through various forums like the Hindu Sabha and the Indian National Congress. Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya and Lala Lajpat Rai were its early members. The anti British militant trend in the Indian nationalism, it has been argued was induced by the sympathizers of the Hindu sabha. In fact, the very basis of Indian nationalism was protecting its sovereignty in the inner cultural domain. It is here that the contest emerged as the early nationalists strongly resisted the colonial intervention in remolding the cultural practices. Bal Gangadhar Tilak's act of resistance to raise the age of consent by two years- from 10 to 12 for girls' marriage is looked upon as the site of nationalist resistance.

The issues like cow protection, (re) conversions of people from Islam and Christianity through *sudhhi* campaigns, etc. were first promoted by the Mahasabha to unify the Hindu community against the Muslims. The Hindu Mahasabha had considerable influence over the Congress policy and programme. The Hindu Mahasabha also took up the battle for political leadership inside the Congress. In fact, until late into 1930s, there was no prohibition of Congress members simultaneously having the membership of the Hindu Mahasabha. It was, however, in the 1920s that the Mahasabha emerged as a discreetly political actor with its focus on the *suddhi* and the *sangathan* campaign. While the *suddhi* movement was for reconverting the Muslims, the *sangathan* campaign was articulated as the means of consolidating the Hindu society, of unifying Hinduism in face of perceived unity of the Indian Muslims argues John Zavos.⁵⁴ It is noteworthy how even leaders like Gandhi could be undermined at will by the Mahasabha and its leadership when he went to Punjab to promote communal harmony in 1924.

Concluding Observations

We have focused in this chapter on various approaches through which the issue of communalism in colonial India has to be gauged, studied and understood. We have also noticed how the category of 'communalism' has been deeply contested. It perhaps emerged as a self-serving colonial invocation to mark the 'difference,' barbaric, irrational nature of the

⁵⁴ John Zavos (2009) , op.cit.

native society as against the civilized, rational character of the west. The nationalist response to this communal construct was too lacking. They counter posed the category of 'pure' nationalism based upon the construction of a harmonious glorious past. This led to reproduction of communalism through 'secular' nationalism. Communalism thus characterized is an ideological battle of discursive frames, and 'constructions' through which both the British, and the Indian nationalists *produced* the Indian society. On the other hand, communalism is also seen as a British ploy to divide the Indian society over social, economic, professional and political issues. This perhaps is the most established theory supported by the nationalist historians although it has not gone uncontested. A.R. Desai and other Marxist historians have suggested that socio-economic changes effected by the colonial regime engendered class conflicts in the Indian society which got distorted as communal conflicts. In short, there are divergent views on the rise and growth of communalism in colonial India. However, one can see an underlying discursive continuity in all the arguments that they all *externalize* communalism to either specific form of colonial knowledge system or the impact of colonial policy or the specific nature of colonial intervention in the social and economic sphere of the tradition-bound heterogeneous Indian society.

Communalism however, survived the end of colonial rule in India. One may argue that it is the residue of the colonial rule. But this does not address the problem fully. It lacks any approach to flush the residue out. Bhagat Singh way back in 1926 argued that communalism is as big an enemy of the Indian people as the colonialism.⁵⁵ He further argued that communalism creates smoke screen, which evades real issues from the people. The way forward to overcome communalism therefore, according to Bhagat Singh is to bring the real issues of deeper social transformation that touches people's life on the forefront of the political agenda.

⁵⁵ Bipan Chandra (2004), Pp. 76-77

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Some Questions:

1. Discuss various reasons for the rise of Communalism under the British Colonial Rule.

2. 'Indian politics was communalized since the last quarter of the nineteenth century under then British Colonial rule.' In the light of this statement outline the colonial policies that encouraged communal conflict in India.
3. Examine the circumstances and reasons under which the 'two nation theory' was pronounced.
4. Does 'divide and rule theory' adequately explain the genesis of communalism in India?

