

Essay on Communal Harmony

“A house divided against itself cannot stand together” is an old saying and it holds true in the present context of increasing communal disharmony in the society. These dividing forces weaken and mutilate the society.

The culture, civilisation and tradition of India is approximately 12,000 years old. The spirit of tolerance and assimilation has made it possible for our civilisation to survive the test of time. But with the passage of time, the growing attachment to one's own ethnic, religious, racial or cultural group rather than being a part of a wider circle of the entire social milieu, has posed one of the gravest problems of modern times. Somehow with the increase in science and technology, the man who should have opened up to assimilation and integration has instead receded into his own cells and has become more conservative and protective towards his culture and community.

Fear, suspicion and a sense of insecurity towards the other communities have given rise to hatred, which acts as fuel, feeding the flame of communalism. Communal harmony can be achieved by making people realise the significance of oneness. People should be awakened to the fact that the differences of ethnic and religious origins have no foundations at all and these feelings should be discouraged if a nation has to survive, and on a larger scale if humanity has to survive. Roses alone cannot make a garden. It is the variety of different coloured and perfumed flowers that lends beauty to a garden.

Fostering the spirit of brotherhood and mutual trust is the most challenging task that our country needs to accomplish. We have to make every possible effort to eradicate vestiges of communal hatred and prejudice. One way of accomplishing this huge task in India is by promoting scientific temperament and removing the cobwebs of caste and religious prejudices.

We also need to encourage the educated strata to continually participate in the work of social integration by educating the masses. It is the illiterate masses that fall an easy victims to the anti-social forces as they are gullible and in turn render the entire society vulnerable. India has had a long and proud history of mutual cooperation and trust. People belonging to various ethnic groups, races, religions, creeds, cultures have come and settled on this land and since centuries have made it their home.

But the divide and rule policy that took its roots deeper than what the colonial masters could have imagined, shows its predatory signs time and again. These seeds of communal divide, sown to meet short-term selfish political ends, are now deep-rooted and threatening to uproot the century-old harmony and unity of the country.

This hatred was at its worst during the ill-fated partition of the country. The articulation of two-nation theory and creation of the state of Pakistan implied that the enmity between the two communities was so great that it was virtually impossible for them to live together in peace as one nation.

Even today India's fragile peace is shattered by communal riots every now and then. During the British rule, riots were triggered to either distract the attention from the growing freedom movement or else to dilute and weaken the unity of Hindus and Muslims who were fighting jointly against the British. In the history, Hindu-Muslim unity has always been one of the essential pillars of any progressive national movement.

India's valiant attempt to build a secular polity in a desperately impoverished nation was a step of profound importance and key to the rehabilitation of the Indian people. But the task of reconstruction has not been easy at all and from time to time the unity of the Indian people has been challenged by the anti-social and anti-secular elements of the society. They feel their purpose is

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defeated in the face of growing unity and understanding among people of different communities and cultures; hence they try to instigate the hatred of a common man to serve their own selfish and ulterior motives.

The recent communal violence of Gujarat, the anti-Sikh campaigns during the mid-80s, the Mumbai Riots, the Ayodhya episode, the evacuation of Kashmiri Pandits, the attacks on the pilgrims on their way to pilgrimage are all blots on the secular fabric of the country. Now-a-days, any controversy even if it happens in a remote village reaches all over the world due to the advanced communication technology and vibrant media. Social networking sites, mass messages etc., proves both a boon and a bane to the society in the times of riots. But the nation should take lessons from its past and pledge not to let the demon of communal violence ever rise again.

We, as responsible citizens, should continuously and ferociously guard our great secular heritage. Communal differences should be nipped in the bud itself and not be allowed to rise and flourish. The children should be taught to appreciate the diversity of the country. They should be taught to learn divergent cultures and ways of living. Also, youths are the country's power, whose participation is very important. They are the strong forces in the movements, who recognise problems and solve them. Religious snobbery, fanaticism and conservatism should be discouraged and scorned at.

One cannot and should not make a sweeping judgement about India's secular nature just by browsing through a few shameful incidents of hatred, which are registered on the pages of history. One cannot ignore that in difficult times the secular minded citizens of the country have joined hands together to fight against the forces of dissension. Media, which is known as the fourth pillar of society, has always played a significant role for the betterment of society. Role of media in the coverage of Communal Riots in the past, riots of late 60's, the violence of 1980-81, the separatist movement of mid 80's and early 90's, the incidents at Ayodhya, Mumbai, Gujarat can't be ignored by any means.

Media always moulds the public opinion on correct lines in regard to the need of friendly and harmonious relations between various communities and religious groups and thus has promoted national solidarity. Although, a handful of anti-social elements try to create an atmosphere of turmoil, turbulence and fear, yet time and again, the entire nation has risen against those handful to guard and protect the peace and harmony of the country. Moreover, a few power hungry political parties, sects and communities, for their vested interests try to use diversity as a weapon to maintain their status-quo. Their greed makes them so short-sighted that they fail to see that they are in turn digging their own graves.

The road to peace and harmony can never be smooth. Every nation has had its share of violence in order to create a society where all can have equal rights and can live with respect and dignity. Who can forget the bloody Civil War of America, the division of Germany and Korea, the Bolshevik Revolution, the violence after the French Revolution, the prevailing disturbances in the Middle East, Israel-Palestine problem etc, the list is endless and the instances bloodier and more violent than the other.

India has emerged as a stronger nation, every time these communal forces have tried to test their secular foundation. One cannot sit back and relax at such times rather one has to work persistently against such forces that pose danger to the idea of a United Nation. This cannot happen by waving a magical wand.

It is we, the people of the nation, who have to rise above these forces of dissent and division, so that India becomes a nation where religion of humanity is superior to every other religion.

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According to the Census data 2001, India is the home to 80.5% Hindus, 13.4% Muslims, 2.3% Christians, 1.9% Sikhs, 0.8% Buddhists, 0.4% Jains and 0.7% people of other religions. These are the other major religions followed by the people of India. Yet, as Mahatma Gandhi said:

“All great religions of the world inculcate equality and brotherhood of mankind and the virtue of tolerance”.

India being the largest democracy in the world with a civilisation more than 5000 years old, boasts of multiple cultural origins. Despite multiple religious, linguistic, cultural, regional and caste identities, modern India presents a picture of unity in diversity where people of different faiths and beliefs live together in peace and harmony.