

Communalism and Casteism are the two sides of the same coin.

Communalism and casteism are the two most important problems today which are really destroying the fabric of united India. The two being different in nature and scope but at the base of the things both promote hatred and ill-will towards the other communities or castes. That results into very pernicious trends affecting the nation-building process and growth of the nation.

Communalism is not thinking about their own communities. It is also not being conscious of their own identities and doing something which pursues its interests. But communal feelings start when one community thinks in a hostile manner towards the other communities. It is also when the communities or religion is used to further the political interests of the vested groups. When one religious group tries to prove its dominance over the others and at the same time feels that others are bad, the real communal feelings grow in.

Similar is the case with casteism. Everybody is born to a particular caste or community. It is predestined. But the feeling that my caste is superior to others is really very bad which ultimately promotes ill-will and hatred. In India there are more than 5,000 castes. Caste composition in different States is different. If the feeling of hostility towards each other increases, the days are not far to see another Bosnia or Lebanon even in this country.

In modern times communal passions have been aroused for one reason or the other. There is no doubt that British rule was responsible for 'divide and rule' policy by which one community was used against the other. It created divisions in the minds of the people which was reflected in sharing or distribution of the limited resources, e.g., in employment and education. The feeling of majority and minority developed and got sharpened which is relevant even today. Both the types of communalism whether majority or minority are equally dangerous for society. One feeds on the other and reinforces each other.

Religion is a personal affair of the people and it should remain so. But when the political parties started using for their own personal ends, religion became a mobilizing factor to secure votes. BJP, Akali Dal and Muslim League directly or indirectly started mobilizing people on religious lines. Even the State could not remain neutral and hold the concept of secularism in practice. During the riots, the police does not remain impartial which further aggravates the tensions. Once a riot takes place in an area, it leaves scars of divisions in the minds of people

which remain for many years to come. The people have not forgotten even the trauma of 1947 partition is a case in point.

The other major failure has been on proper education. The right education has not been imparted to the children which carry a particular mindset which is very inflexible hampering the real progress towards communal harmony in this country. In past even a rumour has led to the riot which shows total ignorance towards knowing the truth and rigid attitudes. The real education in understanding others' religion, clearing doubts and changing attitudes has been missing right from the family to school levels. In addition to this, the communal feeling got aggravated by the balancing role played by the ruling party at Centre against each other to secure its vote banks. This ultimately resulted into disastrous situation culminating into destruction of Babri Masjid which is really condemnable.

Equally worse is the situation of the other side of the coin. There was a time when modernizing influence were influencing lives, it was felt that caste was losing its hold or influence. Untouchability was on wane and interlining, inter-caste marriages were increasing, at the same time the mobilizing influence of caste was gaining ground. Anti-Brahmin Movements in the South were in the forefront. Caste solidarity among the lower castes against the upper castes was assuming political overtones. Candidates were selected on the basis of caste composition of the constituency. It went on increasing. It touched almost all the states in the country. Soon the northern states were inflicted with this malaise. The feeling of upper castes vs lower castes was on ascent. Many caste riots have been seen in Bihar and U.P., the most caste politics ridden states.

Finally the politics of reservation started playing havoc with the social fabric of the nation. Caste consciousness was at its peak during Mandal agitation when Mandal Commission report was announced to be implemented. JD and BSP openly play the caste politics. BJP is also not left out of it. In every political party caste composition is taken into consideration at every level. If JD plays the politics of OBCs, then BSP plays the card of Dalits. It has become a number game. It has become so alarming that even protection of statues had become greatest challenge for security personnel as well aftermath violence resulting out of it. This feeling of one against the other has vitiated the atmosphere of goodwill and harmony amongst the people. The people become the victim of petty politics of politicians who very swiftly try to manage the affairs to serve in their own ends. The administration is also not keeping to be neutral in their action. It is alleged that in U.P. the administration has become casteist.

Here again the real education is missing which can really make citizens wise and not to fall in the trap of politicians and criminals. The problem of limited resources will be there but if distributional policies become biased and communal and

casteist, it is going to be a real threat to the survival of the country. The solution comes from sacred feelings that no religion or caste is bad. One should not think of superiority or inferiority regarding any religion or caste because basically this country is multiethnic, multireligious and multilinguistic. We have lived for so many years together in peace and harmony. So it is not difficult to be in the same harmony provided we are tolerant towards others and united and cautious against the vested and bad elements.