

Religious Fundamentalism

Religious fundamentalism is increasing in the entire world including India. It is rampant in Islamic countries like Egypt, Algeria, and Pakistan. Even China is not bereft of it. Pakistan was created on the basis of religion. Hostilities between two major communities in India is not a new thing. In recent years since the demolition of Babri Mosque feeling of mistrust has increased between Hindus and Muslims. Hindu fundamentalism has also increased due to the aggressive policies and postures practiced by Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal, Shiv Sena and Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP).

Fundamentalism is basically going back to the fundamentals of religion which is really good because all the religions preach noble ideas like universal brotherhood, peace and compassion. But the different religions follow different doctrines. *i.e.*, their paths are different which make the real difference. When historically seen, two world religions, *i.e.*, Christianity and Islam fought crusades for domination having serious doctrinaire differences. Islam was referred as conquering religion. It conquered even India and ruled for five centuries. Mahmood Gazni attacked India seventeen times, destroyed temples and looted the wealth of India. Similar has been the case with Arabs and Israel. They had serious difference. Even the basis of creation of Israel was separate land for Jews based on the religion of Judaism. Whenever the main religion has been in minority in a country, the religious fundamentalism had increased in that country to assert its identity, culture and language.

Religious fundamentalism is very dangerous. It propagates the use of violence. It is involved in terrorist violent almost all over the world. Middle East countries are mostly affected by religious fundamentalism. The countries practice the rigid religious practices of *purda* system. It is the women who suffer the most. They are very particular about the Allah or God. If anyone does not follow the true teachings of Islam, he/she is forced to do. If he/she refuses to do, he might be killed also. People are forced to live life in strict accordance with religious fundamentals. There are lot of restrictions on liberty in this sense. Religious fundamentalists take extreme step of issuing *Fatwa* if somebody says blasphemous against God. They issued *Fatwa* against Salman Rushdie and tried to kill him for blasphemy. Iran is a leading country in pursuing the policies of religious fundamentalism. Other countries are Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Egypt, Pakistan, etc. Sometimes the great secular leaders or those who oppose these policies become the easy target of fundamentalists. Turkey used to be very progressive and secular nation but effort have been made towards driving it under the influence of fundamentalist leaders.

Ethnicity has also contributed towards religious fundamentalism. Every nation has differences on the basis of race, language, culture. Different identities coexist in various countries. They are heterogeneous in nature. If differences start cropping up, it immediately leads to violence. Bosnia, Lebanon are the worst victims. Sometimes it takes such an extreme step that ethnic cleansing takes place. Ethnic cleansing is not a good sign of civilized society. Natural respect for other's religious differences is missing which needs to be taken care of. The countries of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) are no exception. Ethnicity has been on increase and ethnic tensions are quite old. But the religious fundamentalism can be seen in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, etc. due to its proximity with Iran and Afghanistan. In Iran and Afghanistan religious fundamentalism and related terrorist activities are already there which can spread to these neighbouring CIS states. This can disturb the security conditions in south and south west Asia. That is why even United States also consider religious fundamentalism to be a threat to security. Its security can be in danger if religious fundamentalism and related violence and terrorist activities increase in third world countries. So it has become a serious security threat for the developed countries. They have started on strategic lines to contain this threat in the post-cold war era.

India too cannot be left out from its influences if disturbances keep on cropping on either side of border, that is Pakistan and Bangladesh. Both the countries are theocratic states but India is a secular state. Muslims in India constitute 12% of Indian population. Indian Muslims are influenced by what is happening in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Kashmir is still an unresolved issue. Serious disturbances are there on the border. Pakistan keeps on flaring the issue. It helps in training the militants to fight in Kashmir and create conditions which weaken India. ISI is often involved in subversive activities like bomb blasts and terrorist activities. Religious fundamentalism is growing in India. Muslims are very conscious of their religion and identity. In Shah Bano case, the Supreme Court gave judgment for giving maintenance to divorced women. But fundamentalists made hue and cry and pressurised the Rajiv Gandhi government to change the decision by legislation. Hindu fundamentalism have also grown in recent years due to Hindutva politics which is again very pernicious for the country.

In order to overcome religious fundamentalism, we have to give a lot of emphasis on education. Education among Muslims is very low. Education can broaden the outlook and can look for change in orthodoxies prevalent in Islamic religion. Efforts should be made towards giving due recognition to religious identities so that problems do not crop up. Anything should not be imposed on their culture, language and religion and feeling should be created in such a positive way that they are fully integrated into the mainstream.

