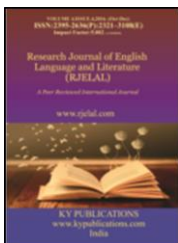**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

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INDIA: THE NEW CULTURAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE COMMUNAL INTOLERANCE

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ABSTRACT

According to the Cosmopolitan conception, 'Cultures' are dynamic, continuous and interchanging phenomenal creations. Cultures consequently overlap each other and the exclusive properties attached with it merge or transforms in the process and becomes difficult to distinguish. When the assumed superiority of the White race, gave birth to the fatalistic phenomenon called colonialism, a large scale flux in the world cultures were initiated. As a result, in the Third World countries, the colonial culture has infiltrated into the native culture quite efficiently and is now inseparably fused.

India, a country known for her rich diversity is in a hunt for its real roots today. Some unfortunate incidents over the last few months are an indication of the repressed intolerance of the culture of the majority, to violently question the culture of the minority when the political background seemed silently favourable. However the merging has taken place, somewhere a collective quest for the original identity still throbs. There is a prominent attempt to walk back or to rewind the tapestry of mixed culture to unveil the actual identity of the land.

This project tries to understand the collective unconscious of the members of the major culture and argues that the segregation of elements of the foreign culture from native culture is a violent phenomenon. Jeremy Waldron's "What is a Cosmopolitan?" will also be used as a theoretical framework to analyse the present communal situation of India.

Key words: - Communal Intolerance, Cosmopolitanism, Multiculturalism, Cultural Consciousness, Ethnic Consciousness.

INTRODUCTION

India, predominantly a multicultural society from time immemorial, a mass of land, with no fixed territorial barricades has always been a favorable destination for invaders across the centuries. With its polytheistic religious orientation India was conducive for various religious experiments. The supreme spirituality and self-actualisation, surpassing the communal frameworks was a part of the Indian conscience right from the Vedic Age. In the words of the Dr.S Radhakrishnan,"Religion is not a mere intellectual conformity or ceremonial piety; it is spiritual adventure" (Radhakrishnan,*12*).

An amalgamation of six major ethnic groups makes this country a poly-genetic population. The major religion of the country, the Hinduism, itself is a mélange of numerous major, minor and tribal denominations. It has also

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accommodated other Indian religions like Buddhism, Sikhism etc. into itself. However, a sense of unity that transcends the innumerable diversities is profound in this religion. The advent of Islam and Christianity, though violently, added shades to this tapestry. Over the time, there had been cultural exchange among each other.

It is only in the latter pages of history that is during the 1920s that this religion was politicised according to the ideology of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. Against the British definition of the term 'Hindu' as a geographical entity, Savarkar redefined it as, 'a person born of Hindu parents and regarded India as his motherland as well as holy land'. This was further codified into the idea of Hindu Nationalism which finally inspired K .B Hedgewar to form Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in 1925. When Savarkar considered Hindutva as a cultural identity and religion, a part of it; Golwalker, who succeeded RSS, on the other hand, considered culture, to be a by-product of the religion ("History of Hinduism", 2). This can be considered as a point where patriotism was redefined in terms of the religion, and the attitude of exclusion followed. In others words, it was a rebuke of the long repressed religious identity of a mass which laid dormant under the assumed superiority a foreign religion on one's own land. The 'colonised' began with a revolt against the mongrelisation of the native culture and in the post-colonial phase they tend to project an assumed superiority over the 'coloniser'. Revamping the lost culture, revisiting the ethnic centers etc being the ways.

This project will try to examine the amplified cultural and ethnic consciousness of Indian population today through psychoanalysis, with reference to the recent communal outrages in the country. In addition, the ethnic hierarchy within the country will also be studied as a microcosm of the cultural hierarchy of the world with respect to their similar state of oppression.

The New Cultural Consciousness and the Communal Intolerance

The psychological aspect of an immediate post colonial phase was perfectly depicted by Franz Fanon in his *Black Skin, White Mask.* With respect to the situation of Africa, he observed that the long denigration of the black culture has led them to a psychological dependency and inadequacy of the black in the White world. This in turn led them to a blind imitation of whatever was White. The socially higher classes of the colonised society attempted the process of equalising through education and mastering the foreign tongue. Whereas, the lower class was left in an ever darkling void of colonial supremacy and hence the higher amount of repression had a violent manifestation later.

This situation replicated independently in India which proved the oneness of oriental attitude. The nature of the world cultural conflicts when juxtaposed with the ethnic conflicts within a country, exhibited a similarity in operation. The classes that came below the ladder of class hierarchy in India were doubly colonised. The struggle for independence was also a struggle for freedom from the stereotypes of the class segregation in India. The lower social strata were for a long time under the stranglehold of the Brahminical forces; an era of imitation followed and now has come to a phase of new ethnic awakening.

Unfortunately, the reclamation of cultural identity has taken a violent alternative in the country by projecting a sense of superiority and prominence of the native culture and religion over the existing mass of foreign cultural elements. The communal intolerance in the recent times is an indication of a saturation point in the process of search for the roots of religious identity. The beauty of India should be conceived only as a multicultural potpourri in which foreign cultures are, but another flavour. A deliberate segregation of the cultures to uphold the original is a violent process.

The ethnic consciousness is also on its peak now, where almost every group is on the road, showcasing their identity through sloganeering and processions. These types of public acts where read as a projection of the inferiority in the collective unconscious of the mass. But, things moved into complication when even the Brahminical classes came down the street for the same. As a matter of fact, the supreme ethnic sense of the higher class is also threatened by the cultural awakening of those classes of people who were till then under them. In the process of going back to the roots and

attempting to know the identity is also a process of self confinement into the frame work of one's own cultural constitution.

The mixing up of different cultures especially in a country like India which has stood through multiple invasions, is inevitable indeed. Hence, a Cosmopolitan outlook is a perfect alternative for us. According to Jeremy Waldron, Cosmopolitanism "…is supposed to indicate a way of being in the world, a way of constructing an identity for oneself that is different from, and arguably opposed to, the idea of belonging to or devotion to or immersion in a particular culture" (Waldron, 227).

Dr. S Radhakrishnan while discussing about the relevance of religion in an age of science, states that, "Religions which are insensitive to human ills and social crimes do not appeal to the modern man. Religions which make for division, discord and disintegration and do not foster unity, understanding and coherence, play into the hands of the opponents of religion" (Radhakrishnan, *9*). Religion or ethnicity thus, should stay in the spiritual realm of an individual, politicising which is definitely fatalistic.

CONCLUSION

The third world countries and the lower ethnic groups within these countries have come a long way from the oppression of an imperial body. A phase of self understanding followed and it is now time to disintegrate the differences and diffuse into one universal whole, respecting the multiple intelligence of the mass. The ultimate aim should be the improvement of the country through a nationalistic spirit and there by contributing to the harmony of the world, and not merely a blind confinement to any particular culture.

It is about deconstructing the root purpose and goodwill behind customs and not simply imitating it in order to fit yourself into a cultural frame work. It is about adapting yourself to the multiple cultures and enjoying its aesthetics, and definitely not adamantly sticking on to ones norm which has seized relevance in the situation.

And most importantly, religion is for pruning ones spirituality and politicising it leads to violence.

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