

Congress and Communalism

Bharat Jhunjhunwala writes :

British rulers of India used communalism to divide and rule the country. NCERT textbook declares: "As is well known, British administration was interested in exploitation of India and not in its welfare. Reaction to this was emergence and growth of nationalism posing a serious threat to continuation of colonial rule. It served the colonial administration to divide and rule. They, therefore, nurtured and promoted religious differences. They first projected social and cultural variations and then promoted political divisions by playing up rival social, economic and political claims of Hindus, Muslims, tribals and lower castes. The communal award, separate electorates, recognition of communal demands, etc.. can be taken up as examples of this policy."

The Congress has been a key player in these machinations of the British. This organization was established by Alan Octavian Hume because he was afraid that revolutionary fervour among native Indians may blow up into a full scale rebellion against the British rule. He wanted to provide local leaders an opening to let off their anger. Lord Dufferin said in a speech in 1886: "Amongst the natives I have met, there are a considerable number... upon whose loyal-cooperation one could undoubtedly rely. The fact of their supporting the government would popularize many of its acts which now have the appearance of being driven through the legislature by force; and if they in their turn had a native party behind them, the government of India would cease to stand up, as it does now, an isolated rock in the middle of a tempestuous sea..." Surendra Nath Banerjea, President of the Indian National Congress, said in 1892: The ideal of the INC was to "work with unwavering loyalty to the British connection-for the object was not the suppression of the British rule in India, but the broadening of its basis, the liberalizing of its spirit, the ennobling of its character and placing it on the unchangeable foundation of a nation's affections." The British were more opposed to Bhagat Singh and Netaji Bose than Gandhi, whom they tolerated benignly. Perhaps Indians are overplaying Gandhi's role in India's Independence because many other colonies were similarly liberated after the Second World War even although there was no Gandhi there. It is not an accident that India has remained in the Western orbit after Independence. More recently, the Congress has been implementing economic policies beneficial to Western countries since 1991. Indian economy is being opened to foreign goods and capital. Like the British rulers, the Congress harps on the threat to the country from communalism, and keeps mum on the repatriation of profits by Multinational Corporations.

There are three political groupings in the country presently—Left, BJP and Congress. The ability of Congress to remain in power is predicated on division between Left and BJP. Just as the British divided Indians among Hindus and Muslims, similarly the Congress is dividing the opposition between the Left, and BJP. The trick lies in projecting communalism as the biggest danger and remaining quiet on imperialism. Thus the Congress is now proposing religion-targeted budget just as the British made the communal award.

Congress does not want to eliminate poverty and hunger just as the British. Economic policies are being made that kill employment. The price of wheat produced by domestic farmers is being kept low while that imported from foreign countries is paid for dearly. Government servants are due to get another bonanza through the Sixth Pay Commission so that they can keep the 'natives' from rebelling against these economic policies. Religion-based budgeting is proposed to alleviate the poverty so created. When BJP reacts to these policies, the Left is told that communalism is rearing its head and Left must support the Congress to contain the BJP. In this way the Congress is ruling the country by making BJP and Left fight with each other just as the British did by dividing Hindus and Muslims

Presently CPM is supporting the Congress to keep 'communalist' BJP at bay. In the process, by default, CPM has become junior partner of Congress' anti-people and pro-imperialist economic policies. The Nuclear deal with the United States is a part of this overall strategy. The aim is to cold-storage programmes of energy security such as conservation, peak-load pricing and generation of power from thorium; and to promote India's dependence on imported uranium. These policies are directly opposed to the 'anti-imperialist' orientation of the CPM yet it is supporting these because it has bought Congress' harangue on communalism.

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