

Communal Disharmony, Violence and Human Relationships in M. J. Akbar's *Blood Brothers: A Family Saga*

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Abstract

In the multicultural country like India where there are more than thousands of communities, it is quite normal for them to have minor disputes among themselves. But the major problem that has plagued the country for many centuries is the dispute between two major communities i.e. the Hindu-Muslim rivalry. From the middle age in history till the twenty first century, people are in constant fight with one another. Great many wars have been fought among the two communities and many lives have been taken. But the conflict cannot be resolved till the twenty first century and the disharmony among them is still going on. The communal conflict has become major problem for the integrity of the country. India, though secular country faces the problem in the name of religion. Even in the twenty first century, people fight in the name of religion and community creating public disturbance.. After independence, two countries emerged; India and Pakistan. This was meant to solve the problem between the Hindu and the Muslim. But it could not make any solution. Instead it created major rivalry between the two which led to many wars between two countries.

The novel *Blood Brothers: A Family Saga* (2006) by M.J. Akbar deals with the problem and the consequence of the communal disharmony. The hatred between the two communities has been passed down generations after generations as a legacy. Instead of solving the conflict between the two communities, the flame of hatred burned still ablaze destroying both the communities and the relationships that they had with each other.

Key Words: Communal disharmony, Human relationships, Violence, Riot, Conflict, Hindu-Muslim Rivalry

Introduction:

This paper tries to study human relationships in the midst of communal disharmony in India through the novel *Blood Brothers: A Family Saga* by M.J. Akbar. The way in which human relationships changed because of violence and disharmony is studied in the paper. Communal disharmony has created major problem in the country. The Hindu-Muslim

rivalry has hampered in the development of the country and also destroyed the peace of the nation. The concept of India as a secular country is challenged by such dispute in the name of religion. And in such crucial time, human relationships has also undergone through drastic changes. Friendship and brotherhood has turned into enmity during the time of riot and violence. Majority of people faced severe consequence because of the violence in the name of religion and community. This paper tries to study the difficulties in maintaining the bond in the high time of violence and also its impact in human relationships. The way in which peace of society was disturbed by the people who fought in the name of religion is also brought forward for study. The suffering of minority in the hands of majority is also dealt in the paper. The spread of intolerance between the communities that came because of violence is also studied.

Communal disharmony and Human relationships

Communal disharmony is a major problem faced by the multi cultural country. The existence of various communities and different culture challenges the integrity of nation. The difference of culture and the belief system has become reason for the division of people living in the multi cultural country. The cultural difference has brought in forefront the problem of identity crisis and marginalization. The cultural difference also brought division among the people. This issue has made vast difference in the relationships that the countrymen share with one another. The difference of culture also brought forward the concept of dissociation among one another. It has also questioned the idea of brotherhood and co-existence of the communities simultaneously. The disharmony among the people has changed the human bond that they share with one another. The hatred for each other has passed down to the generations after generation.

Communal disharmony among the people has challenged the integrity of country. Various separatist movements have come into being and this separation from one another has created disunity among the communities. The intolerance to other's culture has divided the communities and the people in the country. The dissociation from one another has given rise to disharmony and the age old rivalry of Hindu and Muslim has become problematic. The two communities have been fighting each other for years and their feud has become never ending process

Communal disharmony in India started many centuries ago. And this disharmony has taken ugly turn in the twenty first century. Instead of eradicating this evil, people passing down the hatred as a legacy generation after generation. The age old Hindu-Muslim rivalry has created many problems in the development of nation. Partition of India in 1947 gave boost to the communal disharmony as the two nations emerged in the basis of religion. The creation of Pakistan for the Muslim majority did not solve any problem. Instead it created more violence and the endless enmity among the two nations. Dr Pachanan Saha in his book *Hindu Muslim Relation in New Perspective* (2007) states, "The Hindu Muslim relations are too complex. In pre-partition India, most of the Muslim believed that they were not only economically exploited by the Hindu but also subservient to them in education, culture and politics." (9) The hatred for each other has

created major problem for the development of nation. The rise in terrorist attack has strong base of communal disharmony in India. In the name of community and religion, many people are brainwashed by the organization and are made to do inhuman act. Bruce Bongar et al. in *Psychology of Terrorism* (2007) states;

Terrorism of the religious sort still very much includes a social influence component, but also because the objective of political or social change is reduced and the element of religious change (martyrdom, apocalypse) is introduced, the aspect of social influence is generally narrowed to polarization and rallying. (95)

The intermingling of politics and religion has given spaces for the spread of terrorism. The suicide bombing and killing people mindlessly have become major problem of the century. The thoughtless killing has challenged the security of people. The hatred towards certain community has further worsened the situation. Hence, this has created distance among people and intolerance among each other.

M.J. Akbar's novel *Blood Brothers: A Family Saga* narrates the generations of hatred among the two warring communities i.e. Hindu and Muslim in India in the name of religion. The age old hatred and the various obstacles in the process of time are depicted in the novel. The narrator narrates the story that begins with the generation of his grandfather and comes to his own age and the violence in the name of religion. The communal disharmony that engulfed the peace and the concept of brotherhood is shown through the narration of Mobashar. The story of violence started with the misunderstanding and by the influence of misguided people who ruined the human bond.

The story starts with narrator's grandfather Prayag, a Hindu boy who converted into Muslim Rahmatullah because of love. His conversion to Islam for the love of 'Mai' woman who adopts him and give him shelter in the time of need is also the proof about the tolerance and the freedom of choice over the choice of religion.

“My caste? What's wrong with you? We are Muslims. How can a Hindu boy marry a Muslim girl?”

Prayag looked steadily at her, conscious that she should understand that this was deliberate, considered decision. “Mai,” he said, “you are my mother. Your religion is my religion.” (18)

The conversion of Prayag to Rahmatullah is the witness of religious tolerance and the harmony that existed in 'Telinipara' before people get corrupted in the name of religion. People in Telinipara in the beginning of the novel are a microcosm of Indian society where two communities co-existed simultaneously. Life in Telinipara was simple as people were hard working people. Hindu-Muslim co-existed with harmony and peace. People shared different type of relationship in Telinipara. The possibility of co-existing and maintaining peace among each other is portrayed in the novel.

“...The supreme God of the Vedas is Brahma. Brahma has no form; Allah also has no form. The Hindu philosophy of *mimansa* says that idols are only a means to assist the mind towards Brahma. The Hindu seeks release from life in nirvana, I seek assimilation in Allah. Both sufi and sannyasin reach God through meditation. The Hindu’s *kravana* is my *sama*, we both listen; his *manana* is my *muraqaba*, we both obey; his *nididhyanasana* is my *tawajjuh*, we both contemplate. The *buddhi* of the Brahmin is my *ilm*; we both learn; his *jnana* is my *marafat*, we both seek emancipation through knowledge. What you call *maya*, illusion, I call *alam-i-khyal*, the world of fancy.” (75)

But this harmony and peace did not last for long. When the corruption started in the name of religion, people were easily divided. The old issue of cow sacrifice by Muslim was not tolerated by the Hindus which started hatred among each other. The influence from outside as well as the fire of hatred created major problem for the harmony of the two communities’ changing the relationships that they shared for many good years.

The bond of friendship among the Hindus and the Muslims was the reason for the peace that they maintain for many years. The bond that Rahmatullah shared with his Hindu friends was strong, inseparable and beyond the division of religion. People protected the harmony of Telinipara. The incident of cow sacrifices on the occasion of the Bakr’ Id was sorted out when Muslim women took step to keep the harmony by checking their man and stopping them from cow sacrifice.

Independence of India and its partition became the dawn of new form of violence. The creation of two countries started the never ending rivalry. The partition became the end of all the tolerance as Muslim in the Muslim minority areas came under the wrath of Hindus. Many Muslim fled to the Pakistan on the west as well as the east. The division of country on the basis of religion did not sort out the problem of communal violence. The fire of violence and disharmony burned so ablaze that it swept whole country. The British policy of ‘divide and rule’ became the main reason for the communal dispute among Hindu and Muslim. When the country based on religion was created it was expected that the Hindu-Muslim conflict would be solved. But it did not solve the conflict rather it made worse. The displacement itself became problem. Thousands of people were killed in the process of migration to the respective country based on religion and other thousands were killed because of the hatred that arose after the partition.

Akbar Ali narrator’s father was forced to seek asylum in Bangladesh when people framed him and called him traitor. The displacement of Akbar Ali’s in-laws to the Pakistan and the letter from Pakistan gave many Hindu the notion that Akbar Ali was a traitor and his wife as a spy. And this became reason for him to run away and seek refuge in Bangladesh. There was fear and suspicion everywhere.

“Who persuaded Bukhari to send you to jail? That Telinipara crook who gave Satyajit Baboo a small loan and stole a large estate, Rahmatullah. Who is his daughter-in-law? Bukhari’s neice! What does that mean?”

Sanyal had lost the measure of his tones and was half-screaming. “It means that Rahmatullah’s son Akbar has married a Pakistani! The first letter from Pakistan has come to his family. What does this make him? A traitor! Chaterjee: what is your duty?” (219)

The hatred among the two communities brought violence and disharmony. Minority community was targeted by the majority. People were uprooted from their home and were to settle elsewhere. This displacement also became death of the thousand. When Akbar Ali took refuge in Dhaka he was little aware that he would return to Telinipara. Unlike other Muslims Akbar returned to Telinipara. The return of Akbar Ali also shows his strong bond with his friends and his homeland. The fear of death could not jeopardize his love for his origin. Though the Hindu-Muslim conflict continued but Telinipara Rahmatullah and his family was surrounded by friends from both the communities.

Birth of narrator became another event in Telinipara. As Mobashar grew up, he befriended grandson of his grandfather’s friend. The visit to Pakistan resumed. Mobashar went to Pakistan with his mother to visit his grandparents and mother’s relatives. Even after the violence and the conflict, the bond that people shared along the borders was not severed. People kept visiting one another despite of all the problems they faced during the partition.

Two communities could not solve their dispute. Violence and riot became common for people. People who were intolerant towards one another kept the flame of hatred alive, while other who believed in brotherhood and peace continued to live in harmony. Time went by but the fire of hatred among the two communities could not be extinguished. People lost their friends and family because of this dispute. With the certain interval there was always riots and violence in the name of communities and religion. There was no safety for people living in the minority. The spark of violence always set ablaze the roof of minority community.

The environment was already acrid. Riots had returned to Calcutta that winter, sparked by reports of violence against Hindu in Dhaka. Bengali newspaper began to publish lurid accounts picked up from travelled fed on rumour of refugees thirsty for revenge at Sealdah station, where train from Dhaka stopped. Reaction was inevitable. Muslims in Park Circus, Beniapukur, Beliaghata and Taltola areas in Calcutta were attacked. Landlords who wanted to drive Muslims out of cheap tenancies, hired thugs to set fire to their homes. (285)

With the return of riot, Mobashar’s family once again faced the assault on the basis that his mother was from Pakistan. The arrest of Akbar Ali chattered the peace that was maintained in Telinipara. Ram Chaterjee and his age old rivalry framed Akbar Ali as a traitor who leaked the secret information to Pakistan through his wife. Personal dispute lit the fire which turned into communal conflict. From the time of Rahmatullah, the communal dispute affected the family. The incident of Bakr’ Id and also their dedication to maintain peace was disrupted when Rahmatullah’s family was branded as traitor.

Every generation faced the violence and assault. The friendship among the Hindu and the Muslim were question every generation and same kind of incident took place every time.

During the event of Muharram, the conflict started among the Hindu and Muslims in Telinipara. The Muharram procession was attacked by Hindu. And the chaos started again. The topic which was closed for a while was reopened with this attack. The tension started before Muharram. Murder became common thing in Telinipara. One community saw other community as their enemy and people started to get killed in the blind of the night. Many people left the place because of the tension that started in Telinipara. "Hindus and Muslims in adjoining huts quietly began to distance themselves. Most said that they were going to Bihar, and many of them did. Others took shelters with their relatives." (339)

Friends who protected each other during the time of difficulties were separated in the name of community. There were no longer friends or friendship. The only identity was Hindu or Muslim. People killed each other in the name of community. "Anonymous Hindus were searching for Muslim blood; anonymous Muslims were thirsty for Hindu blood." (342) The bloodshed and violence engulfed Telinipara changing the relationships of the people living on the region.

Mobashar's friendship with Hindus was unbreakable but the situation was such that there was lots of doubt. The death of Kamala, Mobashar's friend remarks the consequence that common people suffer because of the communal disharmony. The bond that Hindu-Muslim shared was questioned. Kamala was killed by his fellow Hindu because he befriended Muslim. People tried very hard to maintain peace among the two warring communities in Telinipara. But the violence that swept Telinipara had different consequence. The cost was the death of Kamala who died trying to protect his Muslim friend. "Get out of the way, you filthy Muslim-lover. Where were you when my brother was killed?"(344) The hatred among Hindu and Muslim was so intense that only thing that they wanted was to shade blood.

Communal disharmony not only destroyed the peace in the society but it also destroyed the relationships that people shared with each other. It severed friendships and the bonds that people shared with each other. It became major problem for country and also for the people living in the country. The conflict among each other in the country hampered the development of the country. It also challenged the democratic principle of the country. India being a secular country is facing such violence in the name of religion. And this has challenged the integrity of country. The disharmony among the communities and the people has changed the relationships and the bond that people shared with each other which further created distance among people.

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