CHAPTER - III

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Communalism in the loose sense of the term can be defined as a "feeling of belonging to a particular community, which has a sense of exclusion towards all others and an unfair preference" for one's own community. It implies not only identification on the basis of religion but also hostility towards the followers of other religions.

Prasad considered communalism an infectious disease which creates factionalism in all the organisations and constricts itself in a small and narrow circle. He considered his duty as a writer to "bridge this ever widening gulf." He gave it utmost priority in his

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programme and launched an all-out struggle against this disease. 4

He made an effort to analyse the multiplicity of forces which were responsible for the growth of communalism and also suggested antidotes to cure this malady. But in the process of this analysis, he at times, unconsciously gave contradictory arguments. This chapter is an attempt to study Premchand’s ideas on communalism.

4. Premchand wrote to Jainendra “We will have to wage a fierce battle against communal propaganda”, ibid, p.33.
I

CONCEPT OF COMMUNALISM

(A) ROLE OF COLONIAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

One of the major causes for the spread and growth of communal consciousness among Indians, was the role played by colonial historiography.5 "The severest blow" said Premchand, "the British as victorious community" gave to the vanquished India was "to poison its history".6 They contaminated "our past with malice and prejudices".7

The colonial historiography created the myth that the mutual hostility and hatred between Hindus and Muslims had been the perpetual element of Indian history. This notion had been propagated

7. Ibid.
by colonial rulers through school text books.  

Another myth propagated by the imperialists was the notion that Islam was spread in India with the help of sword. Premchand removed these historical misconceptions and stated that

8. Ibid. "By studying distorted history we have developed misunderstanding of each other and we make no efforts to remove this as if our entire life is based on those distorted facts".

This article was published in Nov. 1931. It is interesting to note this point was made by historians themselves only very late.

Also see Premchand Samriti, op.cit., p.115.

One of Premchand's ex-students, Manjoorul Haque recalls:

"He taught my class history. Often, he would read a passage from the text book and cite evidence from other sources in order to controvert the given version. He would also point out that several of the episodes narrated in the book had been included merely for the purpose of creating divisions between the Hindus and the Muslims... And, before the bell rang, he would clarify that all that he had said was for our personal benefit and not to be reproduced in the examinations, unless we wanted to fail!" -

In Amrit Rai (ed), Premchand Samriti, English translation by Harish Trivedi, op.cit., p.115.

the medieval politics were not communal. He stated that "no religion can ever flourish with the help of sword and even if it does it won't last long". The Indians embraced Islam on account of "the diffusiveness of its religious principles, for its emphasis on equality". The low caste Hindus oppressed by the upper caste, welcomed Islam as a redeemer. In this respect Islam uplifted the oppressed castes and thus simplified the rigidity of caste restrictions and made a positive contribution to the evolution of our civilization.

   "The battles between Hindu and Muslim Kings were waged not on religious grounds but on political power. As the Hindu kings fought amongst themselves so did the Hindu and Muslim kings amongst them. In the later case the Hindu soldiers participated in war on behalf of Muslim kings and vice-versa."
   Stating further Premchand declared "It is significant fact that it was the effete emperor of Delhi who was accepted as their leader both by Muslim and as well as Hindus during the revolt of 1857." - Also see Vividh-prasang, Vol.III, p.381.
14. Ibid.
Premchand pleaded for discarding beliefs bequeathed by colonial historiography since nourishing such views resulted in mutual discord.\(^{15}\)

"The hatred bequeathed by history" he thought "dies hard but it does perish and is not everlasting."\(^{16}\) He went even to the extent of declaring "it would be a very auspicious day when the history as a subject would be scrapped from our institutions".\(^{17}\)

Premchand launched a vehement attack on those writers who injected communal feelings through their writings. One of these writers who became Premchand's target of attack was Chatur Sen Shastri, the author of "Islam Ka Vish-Vrikash".

\(^{17}\) "Sampardayikata Aur Sanskriti", op.cit., p.235.
He felt that such books should be discouraged since it spread poison in the society.\textsuperscript{18}

Although Premchand gave the argument that history as a subject must be scrapped from the curriculum, yet he himself had recourse to Islamic past in order to search for precedents and symbols of Hindu-Muslim unity. Thus he wrote a historical play Karbala with the purpose of cementing the bonds of

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Vividh-prasang}, Vol. II, pp. 414-416.


He wrote: "It is mean and mischievous attempt to spread communalism and it would have to be exposed. After having read this book I had been intending to write on it and since you have taken up this issue, I would support you wholeheartedly. Do not be disquieted by the fact that we are in minority. Our objective is noble."
Hindu-Muslim unity. He introduced some Hindu characters participating in the battle of Karbala fighting along side Hazrat Hussain. In this regard Premchand wrote in his preface:

Some readers may be surprised to find Hindus entering the fray but we can assure them that this is not an invention on our part but a historical fact. As to how and when the Aryans reached there has been open to controversy. Some believe that after the battle of Mahabharata, the descendants of those Hindus whom Alexander the Great had captured and taken away. In any case, it is a historically proven fact that some Hindus had also joined Hussain at the battle of Karbala and laid down their lives for him.

"The implication" states Amrit Rai "obviously was a contrast between this past episode in which our ancestors had shed blood together in a common cause, and the present times when the two communities...

19. See Premchand to Munshi Daya Narayan Nigam, 17 Feb, 1924, Chitthi Patri, Vol.I, p.141. Also see same to same. He wrote: "I read the life of Hazrat Hussain. His zest for martyrdom moved me and I felt like paying a tribute. The result was this drama...The aim of the drama, and of the Principal character's portrayal is to make Hindus pay a tribute to Hazrat Hussain, that is why this drama which, apart from being religious, is political also."

were after each other's blood. 21. The Hindu characters, Singh Dutt, Bhirudutt and Ram Singh, support

21. Ibid, p.171. When Karbala was written communal tension in India was prevalent. Premchand hoped to ease this tension through his works: Thus Madan Gopal quotes from a note appended to the Karbala's first instalment in Zamana (July, 1926) "the preacher of Love" laid emphasis on the fact that

'Communal tension does not reflect the natural state of Society. On the contrary, it is a social or political illness which is a temporary phenomenon in its life. Just as a human malady lasts for a few days or a few months, after which either a man is restored to good health or disappears from the worldly scene, there is always a limit to tensions or conflicts in a society. When you reach that limit, the people get fed up with daily bickerings and hate the tension. Or, there arise certain factors because of which the two hostile groups agree to resolve their conflicts diplomatically. At the present moment, clouds of communal conflict and tension hover in the skies of India. The Hindu-Muslim differences which are creating havoc in the country must have limits.'

In the history of the world, bigotry and conflicts between people and religions are nothing new. It is less than two hundred years ago that the Roman Catholics and Protestants were at each other's throats in France, the Netherlands and England. Only a few years ago, the trouble of Ulster and the Sinn Fein movement had assumed such proportions that the Hindu-Muslim differences would pale into insignificance. Today, the people of all these countries are passing their days in peace and contentment. India's destiny too will undergo a change one day. On the occasion of Deshbandhu C.R. Das's death anniversary, on July 11, last, Dr. Ansari announced that, following the example of late Dr. Das, he would sever his connections with all the communal organisations, e.g. the Muslim League and the Khilafat Committee. "My religion", he said, "is swaraj". And he appealed to the people that they should get together for liberation of India. If a dozen such active patriots from each province come forward to show, through words and deeds, that the key to the salvation of India lies only in mutual love and willingness to make sacrifices for the other, and to renounce, the atmosphere in the country would certainly change. - Madan Gopal, Munshi Premchand: A Literary Biography, Delhi, 1968, pp.237-238.
Hussain because he was truthful, righteous, humble, and non-violent while his opponent Yazdi was lewd, lecherous, debauch, arrogant and a tyrant.  

Another purpose in writing *Karbala* was to acquaint the Hindus with the noble traditions of Islam. He believed it would help in easing the tension. "In spite of the fact", argued Premchand, "that Hindus and Muslims are living together in neighbourhood for centuries together", they are "ignorant of each other's religious traditions." They are also unaware of "each other's customs and traditions, feelings and sentiments, literature and philosophy". This is resulting in estrangement of these two communities. And this separation (or gulf) has been

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22. See *Karbala*, *op. cit.*, pp.72-74, 249-250.

23. However, Premchand felt distressed when some communal minded Muslims criticised him for writing a play on their religious leaders. But he defended himself stoutly. See Premchand to Dayanaray Nigam, 22 July, 1924, Chitthi-Patri, Vol.I, pp.146-147.


widening for last few years.27 This, in turn, is promoting religious narrow-mindedness and fanaticism.28 Therefore, it is essential to possess knowledge of each other's literature, ideas, sentiments and viewpoints.29

Thus, Karbala deals with two opposing forces: the forces of justice, truth and righteousness represented by Imam Hussain on the one hand and the forces of tyranny, wealth, corruption, State power represented by Yazid on the other hand. Through one of the characters, who was fighting along side Imam Hussain, Premchand asserted:

The tree of Islam has germinated out of the seeds of righteousness. By nourishing it with treachery, I fear, it might become arid. It would be preferable that Islam gets annihilated to establish (ascertain, to demonstrate) righteousness, than to survive to treachery.

Premchand showed that Islam when spread by the sword was actually going against the teachings of the

27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
Prophet. Thus, Hussain's cousin brother, Abbas, in Karbala remarked:

The followers of other religions claim that Islam was spread by the use of force. I wish they would have listened to the Prophet's voice. I believe that there is not even a single verse in Quran which suggests that Islam should be spread by force.31

In this way Premchand wanted to remove prejudices of Hindus against Muslim history.32

(B) COMMUNAL ORGANISATIONS - THEIR ROLE

Another important cause of communal tension was the vicious propaganda unleashed by the communal organisations. The leaders of communal organisations according to him hail from educated middle class. He vehemently attacked this class for creating a gulf between Hindus and Muslims in order to serve

their own vested interests. These "handful of educated men", stated Premchand, "are squeezing each other for getting government jobs and seats in municipal and legislative bodies." The greatest ideal of their life is to become an official and thus to keep the poor under their thumb. Besides this community, the rest of the Indian society consists of peasants and workers.

33. See "Golmez-parishad Mein Golmal", Vividhprasang, Vol.II, p.374; also see "Germany Mein Yahudiyon Par Atyachar", ibid, p.306. In the article "Golmez-parishad Mein Golmal", Premchand wrote:

"The educated men have driven the nation to utter destruction by enslaving themselves to the false, artificial and vain ideals of the west. An educated Indian is enthralled to his needs to this much extent that in order to maintain him, at least fifty workers and peasants are required to forsake their lives. In order to lead a false, ostentatious, vain and luxurious life, the educated men invent all types of hypocrisies, wear the mask of religion, raise the cry of imaginary differences of language and script."


35. "Muslim League Ka Adhiveshan", ibid, p.424.
who are poor and oppressed. They are not divided
into Hindus or Muslims. The problems of Arti
and Namaz, Hindi and Urdu do not exist among the
poor peasants and workers. They are hardly concerned
if the number of Hindu or Muslim officials is
increased or reduced.

Premchand believed that the masses are not
communal. Their main interest is in the economic

36. Ibid; also see "Hindu Social League Ka Patwa", ibid., p.323;
"Dr. Iqbal Ka Jawab Pandit Jawaharlal Ko," op.cit., p.425; "Swarajya Sangram Mein Kiski Vijay Ho Rahi Hai", ibid., p.66.
38. Ibid. Premchand was of the view that communal feelings are absent among the peasants and workers. His peasant characters be they Hindus or Muslims are free from communal feelings. The urban working class, too, have a harmonious relationship. In Godan, when Gobar departs from the city and leaves for his village, all the men and women of neighbourhood see him off:

"Gobar bade farewell to them all. There were Hindus and Muslims, all friendly with each other, sharing in each other's trials and tribulations. The Muslims fasted during the month of Ramzan, the Hindus on the eleventh day of the moon. Occasionally they would tease each other in fun. Gobar would call Aladin's prayer-ritual mere calisthenics, while Aladin would refer to the assorted Shiva lingams under the holy pipal tree as a bunch of weights. There was no trace of communal hatred, however. Now Gobar was going home, and they all wanted to give him a warm send-off." op.cit., pp.249-250.
issues which can solve their day to day life problems. 39

The communal organisations did not fight for the interests of peasants and workers. 40 In fact they were least bothered about ameliorating the economic conditions of the poor. 41 They were reluctant to identify themselves with the poor, due to the fear of antagonising the colonial State. 42 They were stooges of Imperialism and they served their own interest by collaborating with the imperialist masters. 43 They were

    He wrote: "How can the general Muslim masses of Gujarat or Tamil love Urdu script, they are not bothered whether Sindh remains in Punjab or Bombay Presidency. They are concerned only with economic issues."


supported by colonial officials. Premchand perceived a close relationship between the communal leaders and the capitalists.

According to Premchand, one of the most important causes of communal tension was the

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44. Dr. Iqbal Ka Jawab Jawahar Lal Ko", op.cit., p.425; "Manushayata Ka Akal", op.cit., p.356.

45. See "Hindu Social League Ka Fatva", Vividh-prasang, Vol.II, p.223. He wrote: "Hindu Social League as well as Hindu Sabha is an organisation of the capitalists and it is opposing socialism neither for the sake of nation nor Hindu community but for the interests of a few Hindu capitalists. Capitalists be they Hindus or Muslims are made of the same stuff. Their mode of thinking, their excessive self-interestedness is identical. Their only pursuit is to plunder the masses and fill their own coffers. The awakening of the masses about their rights appears to them as contrary to their vested interests. They want the masses to remain ignorant so that they may continue to suck their blood. Their patriotism is a deceptive mask."

Also see Rangbhumi, p.86. Surdas comments "The rich people be they Hindus or Turks are of the same stuff."
launching of Shudhi movement and Hindu Sangthan.\textsuperscript{46}  

"The Muslims were not afraid of Shudhi movement" argued Premchand, "as long as its propaganda was confined to Arya Samajists", but now "all sects of Hindus are supporting and propagating it, then


In an article "Malkana Rajput Mussalmanon Ki Shudhi", he vehemently attacked the Shudhi movement launched by the Hindu communalists. In a letter dated 22nd April, 1923 to Dayanarayan Nigam, Premchand wrote: "I am writing a short essay on Malkana Shudhi. I am strongly opposed to this movement. I will send it in three or four days. The Arya Samajists will be angry but I hope that you will give this essay a place in Zamana." - \textit{Chitthi-Patri}, Vol.I, p.132.

Though Premchand was a member of the Arya Samaj in earlier phase of his literary career yet he did not support its religious aspects. He was all the time more interested in its social reform activities. He condemned Arya Samaj policy of proselytization.

Premchand pointed out the inherent contradictions in the arguments put forward by the Arya Samajists. If "Vedas contain essential elements of all the religions of the world" then on what ground "they have the right to attack Islam or Christianity", questioned Premchand. How can "our own organ be bad?" The truth is that "our own arrogance and ignorance has sucked us dry". - "Ashenti", \textit{Vividh-prasang}, Vol.II, pp.297-300.
naturally the Muslims are apprehending danger to their existence.\textsuperscript{47} He believed that Shudhi movement posed a grave danger to the freedom movement.\textsuperscript{48} The colonial State "is capitalising

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\textsuperscript{47} "Malkana Rajput Mussalmanon Ki Shudhi", Hans, October, 1987, p.12. Also see the story "Hinsa Paramo Dharma", Mansarover, Vol.V, pp.96-95. Kazi-sahib remarks: "The Hindus are out to get rid of us. They want to remove us root and branch from this land. By force, by guile, by trickery they're undermining our faith in Islam...It seems that the whole lot of Hindus are out to gobble us up". - In Nandini & P.Lal, A Premchand Dozen, Calcutta, 1983, p.33. Also see Kayakalap, \textit{op.cit.}, p.30. Yashodharnand questions Khwaja Mahmud why they are bent upon sacrificing a cow when it never happened in that locality in the past, the later replied: "Because slaughtering cow is one of our rights. We have respected your sentiments all these years and waived our right. But now we have realized that you Hindus never respect our feelings when it comes to asserting your rights. ...You have right to reconvert Muslims to the Hindu fold. For five hundred years this right has never been asserted. There is no record of a Muslim being reconverted. Today you are reviving a corpse. Why? So that the power and influence of Muslims may be reduced. Since you are using new weapons to pressurise us, we have no alternative except using whatever weapons we have with redoubled force." - Translation of the passage from V.S. Naravane, \textit{op.cit.}, p.134.
\textsuperscript{48} See "Malkana Rajput Mussalmanon Ki Shudhi", \textit{op.cit.}, p.13. He believed that the Shudhi movement is weaning away the nationalist Muslims from the Congress fold. "The number of such Muslims is increasing day by day who are suspicious of the Swaraj movement itself and in their perception Swaraj would be synonymous with the Hindu Raj." \textit{Ibid.}
on this communal mentality among Hindus and Muslims.\textsuperscript{49}

On the occasion of communal riots in Kanpur in 1931, Premchand wrote in an article "Navyug", \textit{Vividh-prasang}, Vol.II, p.363:

"Our rational faculty is not prepared to believe that the same government which can act with such alacrity to crush the political movements and can order police firings so casually was on this occasion rendered so powerless that rivers of blood flowed while it watched helplessly... Our common sense tells us that the bureaucracy did not act deliberately in order to prove their claim that without the presence of a third party India cannot be ruled and therefore justify their existence".

Also see \textit{Kayakalap}, p.339.  
Khwaja Mahmud has become a wise man in the process of communal riot. He refuses to condone the shameful deed committed by his son and refuses even to mourn his death. He has seen the hand of the foreign ruler in inciting hatred between Hindus and Muslims. He tells Ahilya that "while Hindus go to the collector's house to salaam him in the morning, the Muslims go there in the evening." He has realized that it is immaterial whether one is Hindu or a Muslim. The important thing is that you should be truthful and good. Not all Muslims are god-like and not all Hindus are Kafirs", ibid, p.339.

Also see "Dr. Iqbal Ka Jawab Pandit Jawahar Lal Ko", \textit{Vividh-prasang}, Vol.II, p.425.
Premchand posed a question to the advocates of Shudhi:

"If you are genuine well-wisher of the community you must uplift the untouchables, nurse the wounds of the depressed and downtrodden, spread education and culture among them, remove the inequality, liberate the community from the meaningless and smutty (filthy) feelings of discrimination. Are these religious fundamentalists prepared to establish the equality and brotherhood with Domars and Chamars? If they are not, then their claim of preventing the community from dismemberment (dispersion) is false." 50

He further addressed the advocates of Shudhi:

Either you have become a victim of the conspiracy hatched by ruling class or you are blinded by narrow religious outlook. 51

(C) CULTURE AND COMMUNALISM

Premchand pointed out that communalists being ashamed of expressing their vested interests took recourse to culture. In fact they were twisting the meaning of 'culture' to beguile and mislead the masses. They raised the cry of 'Hindu culture' and Muslim Culture! Premchand rejected religion based

definition of culture. According to him culture has no connection with religion. In an article "Sampardayikte Aur Sanskriti" he wrote:

Communalism always swears by culture. Ashamed perhaps of coming out in its true colours it parades itself under the guise of culture, like the ass who strutted around frightening other animals of the jungle wearing a lion's skin. The Hindus want to preserve their culture till kingdom come, and the Muslims want to preserve theirs. Both continue to regard their respective cultures as intact and inviolable, forgetting that in the world today there is neither a Hindu culture nor a Muslim nor any other culture but only an economic culture. And yet we go on harping on our Hindu and Muslim cultures while the truth is that there is no connection between culture and religion. There may be an Aryan culture or a Persian culture or an Arab culture but there is no such thing as a Christian culture and a Muslim culture and a Hindu culture.52

He stated further that culture constitutes of two aspects: one relating to external world and the other to the inner world. The former pertains to language, clothes, marriage customs, etiquettes etc. and the later to the religious and spiritual spheres.53 Applying this logic on the Hindus and


Muslims of India, he categorically demonstrated that there does not exist any difference between Hindu culture and the Muslim culture. They, in fact, belong to a single community. Specifying the similarities of both the inner and outer aspects of Hindu culture and Muslim culture, Premchand wrote:

We would find that in each region of India both Hindus and Muslims speak the common language, wear the same clothes, and their marriage customs are similar. For instance a Muslim or a Hindu peasant of Bundelkhand or Avadh cannot be distinguished from each other. The inner world of both Hindus and Muslims are also the same. Both have similar outlook to life: both are religious, fatalist, peace-loving and self-contented. The Muslims of rural areas are bound by caste rules in the same way as Hindus are...The festivals, customs of Hindus and Muslims of rural areas are the same. The Muslims celebrate Holi, watch Ramlleela and Hindus keep Taejey during Moharram and vow offerings.

54. Ibid; also see "Hindu-Muslim Aikta", op.cit, pp.376-377.
55. Premchand in conversation with Mohammed Akil in Premchand Samriti, op.cit, p.171. Mohammed Akil recollects one of his conversation with Premchand: "He used to say that all the differences between the Hindus and Muslims were superficial and that in actual fact both the communities were one". Ibid, p.171.
56. "Sampradayik Samasya Ka Rashtriya Samanavay", op.cit, p.428; also see "Sampradayikta Aur Sanskriti", op.cit, pp.233-234.
In fact, "the general masses" according to Premchand "has neither enough leisure nor the need to safeguard (defend) the culture". 

"Culture is the addiction of rich, glutton and carefree people. The most important problem for the poor is the protection of their life. What was good in that culture for whose defence they may make efforts? So long as they were not awakened they were under the chimera (delusion) of religion and culture. But since they are awakened now they have started realizing that this culture was the culture of plunderers (dacoits).... Now it is more important for him to defend his life than culture. There is no reason why should he love the ancient culture." 57

Premchand believed that the general masses have nothing to do with the communal question. Their main interest is in the economic problems that can solve their day to day life struggles.

"How can the general Muslim masses of Gujarat or Tamil love Urdu script, they are not bothered whether Sind remains in Punjab or Bombay Presidency. They are concerned only with economic issues. 58

RELIGION AND COMMUNALISM

Premchand was not against the practice of rituals of one's religion but he vehemently attacked the use of religion for political interest. "One has the liberty to follow any rituals of one's religion as long as one does not drag religion into politics". 59 He was in favour of rejecting those aspects of religion which interfere in the process of nation in the making. 60 He wanted religion to be liberalised to such an extent that "it should not be a matter of grief for us when


"We are free to visit mosque or temple, read Urdu or Hindi, wear Dhoti or trousers but the Indian nation will not tolerate to be divided into different parties or groups in the name of religion or to drag the relationship between man and God into the national question". Vividh-prasang, Vol.II, p.374.

60. "Mirzapur Ki Conference Mein Aik Mahatavpuran Prastav", op.cit., p.366. Premchand wanted the words like Kafir and Malecchh to be eliminated from our religions.
our son or wife gets converted to another religion.  

It would, on the other hand uplift us.  

"But unfortunately" lamented Premchand "religion now-a-days is not a means to accomplish faith but an instrument to fulfil political interest". The absurd meanings are being derived from the scriptures. This, in turn, is giving rise to religious strifes. The Maulvis and Pandits who generally develop narrow-mindedness because of the communal environment they inhabit "give primacy to outward features and secondary questions of religious scriptures than to the primary one". They are turning the "sacred object like religion" into such

61. Ibid., p.366; also see "Manushayata Ka Akal", op.cit., p.355.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid., p.418.
a horrid form that "it is manifesting in the
form of violent animal". 67 They are promoting
religiosity in their respective communities. 68
In fact their "livelihood depends upon masquerade
as religion." 69

According to Premchand the communalism is
an urban phenomenon. It is absent in the villages.
This is well illustrated in the story "Hinsa Parmo
Dharma". Thus Jamid in this story belongs to a
village and visits a city and is surprised to see

67. "Karamvir Vidhyarthi Ji", a tribute to
Shri Gyan Shankar Vidhyarthi, Vividh-prasang,
Vol.III, p.419; Also see "Samparkayik Samasaya
Ka Rashtriya Samanavay", Vividh-prasang, Vol.II,
p.428.

68. "Religiosity may be defined" points out Bipan
Chandra "as deep and intense emotional commit-
tment to matters of religion and as the tendency
to let religion and religious emotions intrude
into non-religious or non-spiritual areas of
life and beyond the individual's private life,
to refuse to separate religion from politics,
economic and social life- that is, to be
over-religious or to have too much religion in
one's life." -
Communalism in Modern India, Delhi, 1984,
pp.170-171.

69. Premchand to Daya Narayan Nigam, 25 June,
a number of temples and mosques there. He takes it as an expression of religion and is thrilled to "see such a proliferation of dharma in the city." He honoured religion with a special dedication. He thought "How honest, how truthful these people are! How full of pity, conscience, sympathy! That's why God has blessed them so profusely. He looked at each passerby with respect, and bowed his head humbly. He thought the citizens were like gods." But gradually he comes to know the reality underneath the façade of religion. This makes him realize that religion is often only artificial, superficial and hypocritical, and so he goes back to the simplicities of village life. He gets so much disgusted that he left the town in the pitch dark of night. The polluted city atmosphere suffocated him. He wanted to get out as quickly as possible and return to his village, where religion meant sympathy, love and human warmth. He had started loathing dharma and the so called followers of dharma.


71. Ibid.
Premchand created such heroes who possess virtues like self-sacrifice, generosity and courage, who are truly religious but at the same time tolerant.72

Premchand believed that we should fight against communalism with the "weapons of tolerance, mutual trust, patience and service.73 This is exemplified in the story "Mandir Aur Masjid."74

Chaudhury Itarat Ali, a Muslim Zamindar, was a truly religious minded person. He was "a scholar of Persian and Arabic and a true follower of Shariat, regarded money-lending business a sin, performed Namaz five times a day, observed fast for thirty days and recited Koran everyday."75 But there was not even

74. Gupt-Dhan, Vol.II., Allahabad, 1962, pp.159-161. When some fanatics attacked this story, Premchand wrote in defence to Dayanarayan Nigam "All that it has done is to expose the mentality of the fanatics without any fear or favour. While, on the one had, we see the doings of the Hindu pandits and priests, on the other, we see exposed the communalism of the Muslim mullahs. Both are victims of selfishness. If some people do not like it, what can I do?"-quoted by Madan Gopal, op.cit., p.356.
a streak of religious fanaticism in him. He had made it a norm to walk a couple of miles at the crack of dawn to bath in the Ganges daily. He drank nothing but the holy water of the Ganges. He used to get his entire house coated with cow-dung every week.

He had a pandit in residence reciting hymns to goddess Durga round the year. Even kings were amazed at his devotion and hospitality to sadhus and sanyasis. In other words he used to distribute food to the poor on a permanent basis. He used to make handsome donations at the weddings of all Hindu girls in the neighbourhood. In fact his tenants were always ready to sacrifice their lives for this generous and broad-minded person.

Because of his liberality towards his Hindu subjects, the fanatical muslims were displeased with him. How could they comprehend such a way of life. Why should a true Mussalman take Ganges water, generous to sadhus and sanyasis, recite hymns to goddess Durga.

76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid. p.159.
79. Ibid. p.160
80. Ibid. p.160.
The Mullahs had been hatching conspiracy against him and preparing themselves to showdown Hindus. (to settle their scores with Hindus, to beat them low, to humiliate the Hindus.)

Premchand's conception of secularism involved respect for each other's religious sentiments. Thus in the story 'Mandir Aur Masjid' he intended to depict a secular character, Chaudhury Itarat Ali, who even worships Hindu gods and goddesses but objectively the text defeated the author's intentions. Itarat Ali's religious temperament as depicted at the end of the story reveals that he can also be vulnerable to communal consciousness. The type of religious images he uses i.e. when he makes the temple and a mosque as sacred and makes absolute conditions about its sanctity indicate a thin line dividing deep religious consciousness and communal consciousness. We can refer to the text in brief in order to illustrate this.

When Chaudhury Itarat Ali came to know of the riot that took place in the mosque he became furious. He was again and again feeling woefully frustrated over the fact that they have defiled the abode of Gods.
The house of God has been defiled! Did not the tyrants had enough space outside the mosque to fight? Massacre in the house of God? Such an insult to mosque! Mosque as well as the temple is the abode of God. If Muslims deserve punishment for defiling a temple, do not the Hindus too deserve the same for defiling a mosque?82

Itarat Ali, who had done all to save Bhajan Singh and had pardoned his crime of murdering his son-in-law who had defiled the temple decided to punish Bhajan Singh. He told him:

I would have been greatly pleased if some Muslim would have murdered you in the mosque. But you have escaped shamelessly. Do you think God would not punish you for committing this crime? It is God's order that whoever insults Him should be chopped of his head. It is every Muslim's duty (It is the duty of every Muslim). You are my friend and I have no grudge against you. Only God known how grief-stricken am I but I will kill you. It is command of my religion.83

In fact, Chaudhury Itarat Ali was torn between two conflicting emotions i.e. religion and dharma (righteousness). Religion dictated him to kill Thakur Bhajan Singh and nobility (gentility i.e. Dharma) to forgive him.84

83. Ibid., pp.168-169.
84. Ibid., p.169.
For Premchand communalism and nationalism were opposed to each other. He regarded discord between Hindus and Muslims as an hindrance towards achieving nationalism. He asked: "How can there be nationalism in a society where communities are so much suspicious of each other". This mutual antagonism would lead to the downfall of the nation.

Although Premchand lauded the Congress for launching anti-imperialist struggle, he criticised the ambivalent attitude of the Congress to Shudhi movement. He pointed out that though the Congress as a party has abstained from Shudhi and Hindu sangthan movements yet the congressmen in their individual capacities are participating.

86. "Ab Hame Kya Karna Hai", ibid, p.381.
87. "Bhai Parmanand Ji Ka Bhashan", ibid, p.421.
in these movements. In fact "a large section of the Hindu Sabha has infiltrated the Congress and is injecting the same poison here too." If the Congress leadership would have desisted from encouraging this type of mentality the communal rivalry would not have taken such a vicious form.

Premchand felt indignant over the fact that not even a single responsible Congress leader had summoned enough courage to oppose the Shudhi movement. Even leaders like Pt. Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Lala Bhagwan Das, Lala Shri Prakash who were expected to demonstrate enough moral courage, at first expressed their doubt and opposed these movements but later contradicted their own stand. If such eminent

89. "Mirzapur Conference Mein Aik Mahatavpuran Prastav", ibid, p.365.
90. Ibid, p.365.
92. Ibid.
leaders were not able to take a forthright position. Premchand was not optimistic about others. This led Premchand to doubt the secular credentials of congressmen as a whole:

Most of us are congressmen for name sake only (in name only), we would cry 'revolution' with full vigour, would sing the national anthem loudly but inwardly the nationalist feelings have not even touched us...They do not see beyond the narrow field of religion. The feelings of being an Indian is distant from them; they are either Hindus or Muslims. They would seek an opportunity; the moment they find that the mood of the masses is bent towards religion, they would desert the congress because they need leadership be it from Congress, Hindu Sabha or Muslim League.

Premchand blamed the Congress for not trying hard to carry the Muslims with it and for relying complacently on the support of the Hindus who formed the predominant majority. Congress, thus had provided an opportunity to Muslim communalists as

93. Ibid.
well as the colonial officials to create (incite) communal tension. 96 He believed that "communal malice in India continues to prevail because of our political subjection". 97


LIMITATIONS OF PREMCHAND’S IDEAS ON COMMUNALISM

Premchand provided a simplistic solution to the communal problem. He was of the firm belief that communalism would die out on its own with the growth of nationalist consciousness. It was assumed by Premchand that since communalism did not reflect the interests of the masses, the

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Premchand wrote the article "Hamare Netaon Ki Batein", in April 1931 in response to Maulana Shaukat Ali's pronouncement that he is capable of facing lakhs of Gandhis. Premchand declared "that the future belongs to the nationalists and the Muslim masses would refuse to be beguiled by the communal leaders. Kanpur riots were the last one. It won't happen again." Ibid, p.368.
Also see "Bhai Parmanand Ji Ka Bhashan", Vividh-prasang, Vol.II, p.421; "Shiksha-Parnali Mein Aik Avashayak Sudhar", ibid, p.367; "Hindu-Muslim Bent-Batware Ka Prashan", ibid, p.51; also see ibid, p.373.
Premchand felt that the time is approaching when the Indian peasants and workers would be conscious of their rights and would not allow their rights to be trampled over by educated men. When the Indians would protest against this false and vain ideal and would shatter the spider of web of separation. See "Golme Parished Mein Golmal", ibid, p.373.
masses would not be affected by it, especially if economic issues are given priority. He believed that the twentieth century is the age of economic struggle. Only that policy would succeed now which can solve the economic problems of the general masses which can eradicate the superstition and religious hypocrisy. In the modern age "no political system can flourish that gives concession to communalism". The categories such as "Hindu" and "Muslim" would become redundant. Only those would be given importance who bear sound moral character, possess qualities like courage, perseverance and service.


103. Ibid, p.394.
At times Premchand himself used categories like 'Muslim' and 'Hindus'. At times he bracketed Congress as Hindus and Muslim League as Muslims. Such categories in themselves manifest a communal approach.

Premchand believed that it is the majority community who should take initiative to fight against communalism. The Hindus should remove the seeds of suspicion and mistrust from the minds of the Muslims. Once the Hindus took

105. Ibid.

Writing on Nehru's approach to communalism, Prof. S. Gopal wrote:

"He always, like Gandhi, took the line that it was for the Hindus, as the majority community, to make concessions while the communal problem lasted. This in itself, despite the call to magnanimity, assumed a communal approach, however, subconscious. The argument is based on the belief that the majority community is a privileged one, and the minority community has reason to be communal... But even so, the implication that there was something to choose between Hindu and Muslim communalism was dangerous in its application." — Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, Vol.I, Delhi, 1975, p.183.
lead in this regard the minority community would
follow. He felt that if the Hindus overcame their
communal mentality it would have an immediate impact
on the Muslims. 107

p.382; also see "Manushayata Ka Akol", op.cit.,
pp.353-354.

Premchand tried to pacify the Hindu communalists on (a) question of music in front
of mosque. He said that Hindus should accept
the conditions put-forward by Muslims to be
silent in front of mosque.
(b) question of cow-protection - since the beef
is eaten throughout the world would it mean
Hindus should fight with all the communities of
the world. He said "Why should they object to
the sacrifice of old decrepit cow when they do
not object to the sacrifice of a goat."

In his memoir, the Hindi poet Bal Krishna
Sharma 'Navin' recalled an incident from those
times: "Once Premchand visited the offices of
Pratap which I then edited. One of my sub-editors
was a somewhat argumentative temper. In our con­
versation the question of Hindu-Muslim unity
came up. The editor passionately declared:
'There is no other way to stop this communalism.
We must return tit for tat. - that's the only
answer.' Premchand was smiling as he listened.
When the angry outburst of this gentleman came to
an end he said in an even tone: 'But look, the
Muslims now have a diseased mind...If we were to
match them in madness what good would that do?'
Provoked, that gentleman asked: 'Tell me, Sir,
if a madman were to start piddling right in front
of you, what would you do?' Premchand replied
gently: 'I should move away a little.' 'And if
he were to confront you again and do the same
thing?' 'I should move away a little further?'
But this gentleman, never the one to say die,
persisted. 'And what if he came to face you again
and did the same thing?' Upon which Premchand
said, "Now look, my dear fellow, this chap that
you have in mind - is he a human being or some
kind of a water sprinkler that he'd go on piddling
here, there and everywhere?" - Quoted by Amrit
A communal perspective, even if unconscious, informs Premchand's attitude to history and culture. On the one hand Premchand exploded the myth of the existence of religion-based community and on the other he pointed out that religion as a social diversity or differentiation existed in real life. He pointed out that Hindus and Muslims belonged to the same (single) community. But at another place he contradicted himself and said that Hindus and Muslims had always distinct identities and they ought to preserve their separate identities.  

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108. See p. 39 of this Chapter.
"Hindus and Muslims neither were ever like milk and sugar nor they ought to be. Both should maintain their distinct identities. The only need of the hour is that their leaders should preserve the feelings of sacrifice and tolerance. Then Premchand condemned the leaders who besmirch the atmosphere and inject poison into the minds of the masses."
Tracing the roots of mutual hatred in the past he wrote:

We do not hesitate to accept that the roots of struggle, suspicion and hatred between these two communities are inbuilt in our history. The Muslims were conquerors and the Hindus vanquished (conquered ones). The Muslims inflicted excesses upon Hindus and though the later retaliated whenever afforded an opportunity yet on the whole it can be assumed that it is the Muslim rulers who committed the worst of oppression upon Hindus.110

That Premchand himself was, at times, prejudiced, may be unconsciously, is indicated in the following dialogue between a Maulvi and Hindu woman in the story "Hinsa Parmo Dharma":

'You look like a maulvi to me' the woman retorted.
'Is this all God has taught you to molest women in your home?'
'Yes, it is the will of Allah that all Kafirs should be converted to Islam by any means', said the Kazi, 'if not freely, then by force.'
The woman asked sharply,
'How would you feel if any one dishonoured your wife or daughter?'

'It happens all the time,' replied the Kazi. 'We'll do to you what you do to us. We are not demeaning you. We're making you one of us. You don't lose honour by embracing Islam; you increase it. The Hindus are out to get rid of us. They want to remove us root and branch from this land. By force, by guile, by trickery they're undermining our faith in Islam. How do you expect Muslims to take this lying down?'

'A Hindu can never stoop to such atrocities', the woman replied. 'It's more likely that, fed up with your mischief, some low class people are out to take revenge, but no true Hindu will approve of this!'

The Kazi-Sahib reflected and said:

'Of course, this was the kind of mischief Mussalmon rogues did in the past. But all decent folks condemned it, and tried to stop it as best as they could. With the spread of education and manners all this would have become a thing of the past. But it seems that the whole lot of Hindus are out to gobble us up. What alternatives do we have? We are weak. To survive we have to resort to trickery. But why are you getting so worked up? You won't have any problems here. Islam respects the rights of women more than any other religion. A Mussalmon will sacrifice his life for his wife. Here's my young friend - Jamid. We'll arrange your marriage with him. You'll have no worries for the rest of your life.'

He contrasted the greatness of ancestors with the meanness of the contemporary youth.\textsuperscript{112}

He compared the fame earned by Bardoli in non-violent struggle to that of Chittor in its armed struggle.\textsuperscript{113} He believed that Chittor added lustre to India. Thus Vinsy in \textit{Rangbhumi} though leading the oppressed populace of Jaswant Nagar, yet his nostalgia for medieval Rajput glory prompts him to praise the Maharaja:

We have always seen this State with the eyes of pride and we have the same regards for His Highness the King. He is a scion of the family of Sanga and Pratap who had sacrificed their lives in defending the Hindu race. We consider the King our defender, well-wisher and the paragon of the Kshatriya clan. His officials are our brethren. Then why should not we have trust in this court?...\textsuperscript{114}

Premchand believed that a community which cannot feel any sense of pride in the historical

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113. "Veerbhumi Bardoli", \textit{ibid}, p.70.
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heroes like Arjun, Pratap and Shivaji, is a fallen one:

If Hindu community is not pleased to see its ancestors self-sacrificing themselves in a religious struggle than what else can be derived from this that we have lost even the feelings of hero-worship that is the last symptom of the downfall of a community. As long as we continue to worship the heroes like Arjun, Pratap and Shivaji etc. and feel a sense of pride in their glory till then we can expect to regenerate ourselves. But the day we get devoid of the feelings of a sense pride in the achievements of our community and object to the eternal glory of our ancestors, we would be lost. We are unable even to imagine such a mentality who is so much indifferent to our past glory. 115

In his journalistic works whenever Premchand refers to Indian culture and glorified it, he referred it in terms of ancient Indian culture. 116

Even the ancient Indian culture is praised mainly in terms of the upper-caste culture. It is identified with Hinduism in its Sanskritic form. Social tensions and conflicts are either defended or glossed over. 117

117. See Chapter IV of this thesis.
Thus Premchand equated 'Jati', 'Jatiya' with nationalism. Jati has been taken in the sense of community as well as nation. Thus praising educational system prevalent in Gurukul Kangri he wrote:

"Our (Jatiya) national customs and manners, rites and rituals, can be preserved only in such institutions."118

Thus here Jatiya is equated with Hindu community and then with the nation. It is also manifested in his biographical essay on Gopal Krishan Gokhale where he pointed out "Oh, motherland! it is unjust on the part of them who allege that the Hindu community has become dead and lifeless. As long as sons like Dadabhai, Ranade and Gokhale play in your lap the Hindu community cannot be said to have died."


119. Kalam, Telwar Aur Tayaq, Vol.II, p.44. Premchand wrote these biographical essays in the earlier period of his literary career, i.e. from 1905 to 1911. These essays are compiled in two volumes, Kalam, Telwar Aur Tayaq. These essays were written with a patriotic zeal. Premchand's purpose in writing these biographical sketches was to inculcate the feelings of patriotism among the Indians.

But while praising a particular quality in a leader at one time he condemned the same at another in another leader. - See Geetanjali Pandey "North Indian Intelligentsia and Hindu-Muslim Question", Economic And Political Weekly, Vol.XIX, No.38, Sept. 22, 1984, pp.1664-1670.
At times Premchand used categories like 'Muslim' and 'Hindu' thereby manifesting a communal approach. At times he bracketed Congress as Hindus and Muslim League as Muslims.

Premchand accepted that there were always fights or conflicts between different religious communities in the past, yet he argued these have to be confined to history and not be revived, if communal harmony was to be preserved.

121. Ibid.

Though the mouth of one his women characters, that is Jai in Prem Ki Vedi Premchand pointed out that religion always had explosive potentialities in promoting conflict and inspiring extreme and violent action. It has, in the past, led to violent conflict not only between followers of different religions as, for example, between Hindus and Muslims, Muslims and Christians and Hindus and Budhists, but also between followers of the same religion as for example, between Catholics and Protestants, Shias and Sunnis, Shaivites and Vaishnaites, Sanatanists and Arya Samajists.
v

To sum up: Despite the limitations in Premchand's ideas on communalism he was able to diagnose it correctly and provided the solutions to cure this malady. Although he was critical of the nationalist leadership for its lackadaisical approach to communalism, he himself was not outside its influence. He did try to transcend the dominant nationalist ideology, but his inability to do so is evident in his ideas on Communalism.

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