CHAPTER -V

MULTI-RELIGIOUS IMAGE OF INDIA
In the previous two chapters i.e. the social image and the political image, the society of India and its politics are discussed at length. In this chapter the emphasis will be laid on how the communities of this oldest civilization fabricate with and within each other. Without discussing about communal image the points discussed in earlier chapters may not seem to be complete in themselves because probably community plays the linking thread between society and politics. Though communities are also as old as society and politics they have played different roles at different times. In pre-Vedic and Vedic times in India communities meant different castes of a same religion called 'Hinduism'. But after the invasion of Mughals and their settling down here communities meant Hindus and Muslims. Today after the rule of British and the Globalisation 'community', especially in India is a monster spilling fire. Community today has a much changed definition.

India which is famously known as a 'The land of Buddha' has turned almost into a land of social in-equity, injustice and social
unrest which can be noticed in Riot. Hinduism the biggest religion on the earth has some major shortcomings compared to other religions of the world. This is the religion which allows maximum freedom but at the same time it is the only religion which treats some people below the dignity of human beings. The most notorious among them is that of Brahmins claiming themselves as the agents of God and treating some people as dogs. Adding to this Tharoor says that “there are five major sources of division in India-language, region, caste, class and religion”.1 Shashi Tharoor, who has always advocated for secularism and pluralism, in his novel RIOT makes it clear that all the five sources mentioned above divide this country. In his Book India From Midnight to the Millennium he says that all these are “consequences of well intentioned social and political engineering”.2 This is the reason he feels “in the five decades since independence, we have failed to create a single Indian community”.3

These continuous communal unrest, riots keep taking place in this country without break. According to Shashi Tharoor Some selfish motivated politicians see to it that these things keep happening. Ram Charan Gupta a character in the novel Riot is an example of such politicians. This is what Shashi Tharoor is concerned about and
strongly feels that this is “a nation without nationals, of Indians who are not involved in India”.4

This not a new thing, that Indians are not a single community. The fact is that Indians have never been a single community. In pre-Vedic or Vedic period undoubtedly ‘Hinduism’ was the only major religion India had. If Indians had stayed united as a single community the history of this great land would have been still greater. But because of Brahmins, this neither happened then nor is happening now. This is because, to put in Tharoor’s words, “Brahmins, because they had a natural affinity for dictatorship”.5 This dictatorship of Brahmins has been the cause of communal disharmony for thousands of years. The Brahmins divided people and fortified the caste system and made it rigid. Some people were called by them as untouchables who are today called Harijans or Dalits.

Tharoor says caste is “basically a Hindu Phenomenon, but caste is hardly unknown amongst converts to other faiths, including egalitarian one like Sikhism, Christianity and Islam. There are hundreds of castes and sub-castes across the country, but they’re
broadly grouped into four major castes". Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras.

The Brahmins who are known for their shrewdness made this water tight compartments in the society for their personal benefits, which they are enjoying even today from time immemorable. The particular caste was to do particular work and they never overlapped. Only the Brahmins did the minimal work and enjoyed maximum profits. But this had a negative impact on the country as a whole. This can be quoted as the most important reason that India was vulnerable to anybody. Anybody could defeat the rulers here and rule them. This is the reason why Muslims could easily defeat the so called Hindus and settled here. Today they are the inseparable part of the country, not only they but many or almost all the religions came to India and found the space for themselves to settle down.

The problem what India faces today it not single but multiple. Tharoor also finds ‘minority’ as one of the problems. Indians or the Hindus who claim themselves the owners of this land find themselves in the awkward situation as at times they get a feeling that they have become a minority in their own land. And why not, to aptly put in
Tharoor's words on Hinduism, "everyone basically believes their suffering in this life is the result of misdeeds in a past one, and their miseries in this world will be addressed in the next if only they'd shut-up and be good and accept things as they are, injustices included". One tends to believe in the words of Tharoor because the Brahmins have done great injustice to the Sudras or the present day Dalits who were and are the inseparable part of this religion called Hinduism.

Tharoor in his book RIOT says that Hinduism is the only religion on this earth which bestowed utmost liberty on its followers to pray any god (including Gods of other religions also). Tharoor in the novel Riot says Hindu is the only person who prays one particular God in the morning and the other in the evening. Husband has faith in one God and wife in other. The sister is regular to the temples and the brother doesn't even know where the temple is. This is Hindu religion and for sure no religion can boost of these liberties. Tharoor says "Hinduism is the name others applied to the indigenous religion of India, which many Hindus simply call Sanatan Dharma, the eternal faith".
Tharoor in almost all his books at times appreciates Hinduism and some of its qualities. Undoubtedly this religion bestows the highest kind of liberty to its individuals. One has one’s own liberty in practicing one’s faith. What about the liberties of Sudras? The history of this country says that these Sudras never had a word called liberty and equality in their dictionaries, if they had any dictionary.

The upper caste Hindus who claim to be very liberal were in real sense brutes who treated fellow humans worse than animals and this continued for thousands of years. Tharoor gives an example of this in his prize winning novel The Great Indian Novel where it is found that the Brahmin seduces the beautiful girl of a fisher man but does not want the world to know of this, so he takes that girl and hides her till she delivers. Many great personalities like Buddha took birth in this land but the rules of land remained unchanged. Many religions came and settled here, yet the rules of land were unchanged till late 19th century.

Tharoor rightly calls this land as a myth because in the same period two people were born, one was Ambedkar and the other was Mahatma Gandhi. Both were contemporaries, both were from the
same land and both were messiahs for the people of this land. One fought with the mighty British Empire for the freedom of his countrymen. The other fought for the social equality and justice and his fight was against his own countrymen.

Mahatma Gandhi succeeded in achieving ‘Purna Swaraj’ but Dr. Ambedkar’s struggle for social equality and justice has not found the complete daylight as many people of this country are still ill-treated in the name of caste and religion.

“During his school days Ambedkar realized what the stigma of untouchability meant”.\textsuperscript{9} He had to undergo an agony of untouchability right from his childhood to his service as Minister of Law in Government of India. Ambedkar was not allowed to touch the Blackboard, drinking water from the public wells etc. Ambedkar used all his knowledge power to change “‘religion of rules’ to a religion of principles”\textsuperscript{10} but has not been completely successful.

W.C. Kuber in his book \textit{B.R. Ambedkar} says “The insulting treatment at the hands of the Hindus: the denial of Sanskrit and Vedic learning, his experiences in Baroda and in the Bombay Bar-all these
convinced him that the untouchables would never receive just
treatment in Hindu Dharma and Hindu Society”. This out of disgust
and insult led Dr. Ambedkar to think of conversion to Buddhism. So
on October 14, 1956 he along with many followers embraced
Buddhism. Thus fulfilling the “vow taken in 1935 that ‘even though I
am born a Hindu, I will not die a Hindu’. One is compelled to think
what this ‘Hinduism’ is and what are its rules and principles?

Tharoor in his book India From Midnight to the Millennium
has one lengthy chapter called ‘Scheduled Casts, Un-Scheduled
Change’. In this chapter he talks about his friend Charlis who is a
Dalit. Even after 50 years of Independence things are same and
Charlis gets the same treatment what Ambedkar and his people were
getting since ages. One important thing what Tharoor highlights is
that things are very slowly but surely changing. His friend Charlis
has fought all the odds and has succeeded in becoming an I.A.S.
Officer. For this Tharoor aptly puts saying “Now, in my children’s
generation, the wheel has come full circle”.

But one very important
thing that can be noticed is that even though the rules have been made
in the constitution itself regarding social justice and equality they are
rules on paper only. The constitution provides opportunity for the
downtrodden or the Dalits. However the upper-caste Hindus have not changed their frame of mind. There are instances almost every day about untouchability. Tharoor himself, who is from upper-caste is an example of this when he mocks scheduled castes saying "you can’t go forward unless you’re a backward". Tharoor might be just giving the correct picture of Indian system today but the other reality is also that in this biggest Democracy on the earth equality and justice is bestowed to everyone. But the question is can the worlds most populated country run on constitutional rules alone?

The castes and communal biases within the Hindu Religion are not the only communal problems in India.

Time and again the people of other faith and beliefs have come to this land for one or the other reasons. Some came because in this country they found the highest kind of peace. Some were attracted by the culture and tradition of this land. There were others also who came here to loot this country. What ever may be the reason all found this land most suitable to settle down and this country also generously accepted them.
Tharoor in his book *India From Midnight to the Millennium* says that "Kerala hosts the oldest Jewish community in the world outside of the Middle East and a Christian community going back to the first decades after Christ". Not only these two religions but almost all the religions of the world have found enough space here to settle down. Probably they all were impressed by the Vedic image of India and India also accepted them and their traditions with open arms retaining its over Image.

Things took ‘U’ turn when in the medieval period the Mughals conquered India. They were the only people who had attacked India so brutally. The image of Vedic India was at stake because of number of invasions and conquests by Mughals. It was almost for the first time that the Hindus (including Brahmins) were tortured to the maximum extent. Their temples were looted and were polluted by the people of a religion which is antithetical to Hindu culture.

The Mughals not only looted and polluted the temple and the land of Hindus but also permanently settled in many parts of India. Tharoor in his novel *Riot* explains how the impact of tyranny, torture
and permanent settlement of Mughals enormously changed the image of India there after.

An entirely different culture and civilization was rubbing shoulders with the people who were peace loving and not so aggressive in nature. Things were naturally going to change because these Muslims believed in Islam. The main features of Islam are their creed, Brotherhood and their holy Koran. The Hindus had thousands of Gods and never practiced brotherhood. The Muslims believe that "there is no God but God, and Mohammad is the Prophet of God".16

The Muslims could not digest idolatry and polytheism practiced by Hindus so they went on destroying temples. They also destroyed the holy books and scriptures of Hindus as nothing mattered to them than Koran.

As they were meat eating people they started slaughtering the cows. This was a great blow to the Hindus as cow was very sacred to them. The Muslims also tortured the Hindus to convert to Islam. All this was easily possible for them as Hindus were neither aggressive nor united.
As time passed, the Indian image no longer remained homogenic because by now they had accommodated the religion and culture of Islam. Though India had succeeded in retaining her culture and civilization, it was going to be identified as a land of Hindus and Muslims.

Somewhere, from this time, the image of India became heterogeneous because the Muslims by now had established themselves.

By now Muslims had become part and parcel of India and had begun to live peacefully and harmoniously. The traditions and tastes in architecture, painting, and music paved way for intermixing with each other.

Tharoor views: “India has survived the Aryans, the Mughals, and the British: it has taken from each language, art, food, learning, and grown with all of them. To be Indian is to be part of an elusive dream we all share, a dream that fills our minds with sounds, words, flavour from many sources that we cannot easily identify. Muslim
invaders may indeed have destroyed Hindu temples, putting Mosques in their place, but this did not could not – destroy the Indian dream. “Nor did Hinduism suffer a fatal blow”.¹⁷

Though the Hindus initially felt the jolt when Muslims came to India, gradually they accepted them and both the communities started living peacefully. The original identity of India was not shattered but the image of India thereafter became like a coins face one showing the Hindu culture and the other one Muslim culture.

The differences and the changes between both the communities were slowly gelling. But an unseen metamorphic change was going to take place. Of course it took place with the coming of British to this country.

Around three hundred years back the British came to India. They stayed here for more than two hundred years and during their stay India witnessed enormous changes. The strongest thing was that India got united as a nation for the first time in its history of thousands of years but the British were smart enough to divide not only the people on communal basis but also the land.
One cannot ignore the benefits which Indians got from British. At the same time no Indian will ever forget the scar that British gave i.e. the partition of India and creation of a new country for Muslims called Pakistan.

According to W. N. Kuber, the notable thing which Indians got from the British is “the democratic awakening of the depressed classes and increasing consciousness of their basic rights was a part of the general national democratic awakening that had taken place among the Indian people during the British rule”. This awakening was a blessing to the particular community which was deprived of education and social life for thousands of years.

Tharoor also speaks of this democratic change. He talks of a change which he has seen after fifty years the British left India. His childhood friend Charlis who was never allowed to play with him, come to his house, share the halwa and was often mocked by Tharoor’s aunt Rani – Valiamma calling Charlis and other Dalit children as ‘children of God’ because they were ensured with quotas in schools, Universities and jobs. After completing his education in
Trivandrum University under “Untouchable quota” Charlis becomes an I.A.S. Officer. Tharoor feels “This story is about change, democratic change, the kind that India has sought to promote for fifty years since independence”.19

Tharoor further explains that his home state Kerala was the first to accept or implement these changes and subsequently the change has taken place all over India. Yet one can never rule out that though these Dalits are there in every premier institution and almost all the Government organization of India, they have not been enjoying the equal social status along with other upper Hindu caste people.

One needs to appreciate Tharoor’s confidence and belief when he sees a phenomenal change in Indian caste system. He says that the political parties which are ruled by upper caste people are paving way for the menials to become leaders. Still one need not be shocked to guess that this can be a gimmick by the upper castes to build a vote bank.

Tharoor talks about the caste system in the present India and it seems to be no exaggeration when he says “In my grand parent’s
time, caste governed their lives; they ate, socialized, married, lived according to caste rules. In my parents’ time, during the nationalist movement, they were encouraged by Gandhi and Nehru to reject caste; we dropped our caste-derived surnames and declared caste a social evil. As a result when I grew up, I was unaware of caste; it was an irrelevance at school, at work, in my social contacts; the last thing I thought about was the caste of someone I met. Now, in my children’s generation, the wheel has come full circle. Caste is suddenly all important again. Your caste determines your opportunities, your prospects, and your promotions. You can’t go forward unless you’re a backward”.20 It is nothing but Irony that India is unable to get rid of this thing since ages. India has progressed in every field and has made tremendous impact on the world scenario but the communal harmony within the country is at disarray.

After discussing how the British helped India a bit to educate people in this country, it can be taken for discussion how British were smart enough to study the mentality of Indians. They found that Indians were not at all living harmoniously. It is only for freedom movement that they were trying to come under one umbrella. It did not take much time for them to divide the people of this country. The
divide they created was between Hindus and Muslims. This divide which was created around 1940's when the National movement had its ugliest face at the time of Independence. Tharoor rightly says that Indian Independence was an abortion. A country was created for Muslims. The partition took place. Thousands and lakhs of people were killed in this historical blunder.

The problem was not solved but the problem became graver. The country which was created exclusively for Muslims has less number of Muslims than in India. India since than has become an inferno because of the communal clashes which occur almost everyday in at least one remote place of India.

The situation is very complex and complicated. The problem can be very easily solved if one follows what Tharoor emphasizes upon. Tharoor says accept ‘pluralism’ and follow ‘secularism’. The Indians have been claiming that they are secular. But mere claim has not proved that they have become secular. Nobel Prize winner and eminent scholar and economist of Harvard Amartya Sen puts it, “secularism as it is practiced in India.....Reflects the sum of the collective feelings of intolerance of the different communities and is
not based on combining their respective capacities for tolerance". Looking at the existing scenario of the country what Amartya Sen says seems to be correct. What Tharoor expects from the Indians appears to be a mirage which is deceiving.

India witnesses innumerable communal clashes for number of reasons between many communities. Communal clashes or riots need not be necessarily between Hindus and Muslims. There are many other clashes for innumerable reasons. But the clashes between Hindus and Muslims are the most highlighted and even the world is also most interested in them.

After the partition Hindus of India might have obviously thought that as a country itself was created for Muslims so all the Muslims will quit this country. If that had happened the Hindu-Muslim clashes as such could not have taken place. But communal clashes would still be taking place in this country because Tharoor says that this country is more a myth than reality.

The Muslims did go to Pakistan but the number was not more. Just because Pakistan was created all Muslims did not opt for it
because they had lived here for thousands of years. They were an inseparable part of this great country called India. Their right to live here was no less than any Hindu.

As the partition was a brainchild of British, majority of Hindus were also not interested in sending away the Muslims to Pakistan. One among them was Mahatma Gandhi. But within six months of Independence a hard-core Hindu fundamentalist assassinated Mahatma Gandhi claiming that Gandhiji was ‘Pro-Muslim’.

This event is an important event to be noticed because it highlights that somewhere the process of communal differences had started working in the psyche of Indians.

The first major riot India witnessed was in the year 1984. It was not a Hindu-Muslim riot. It was the riot in which Sikhs were killed all over India because two of the Sikh Bodyguards of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister had pumped in dozens of bullets in her body. The news of Indira Gandhi’s killing by Sikh Bodyguards was enough for the Indians to kill the Sikhs who came across them.
Tharoor in his novel *Riot* gives horrifying details of this 1984 riot. It was started by Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale who had holed up in the Golden temple. He with him had many followers armed with ammunitions. Their demand was to create a new country for Sikhs called ‘Khalistan’. Many Sikhs opposed this move and one of the famous Sikh journalist, Khuswant Singh “wrote that if Khalistan were ever created it would be a “duffer state”. But as Bhindranwale was a Frankenstein’s monster created by Indira Gandhi he had gone out of control. These terrorists were killing innocent people whom they hated.

“Then in 1984, she finally did something. Indira Gandhi, the only man in the cabinet, sent the army into the Golden Temple”. The terrorists were thrown out. Things were set right. But in doing this the Prime Minister had hurt the feelings of the whole Sikh community. They were angry that she had polluted their holiest shrine by playing bloodshed there.

Know the number of Sikhs vowing revenge was much more than the people hiding in Golden Temple. One fine morning Indira Gandhi’s own Bodyguards killed her and they thought “they’d had
their revenge. Sikh honour had been restored". But unfortunately after this assassination Sikhs in the whole country had toughest of times. They were brutally murdered, beaten up, their hair was cut in the public and all kind of humiliations were done to them.

Tharoor says even the innocent children were also not spared. The anger of the people was so disgusting that they had burnt an innocent boy alive along with his father.

Gurinder Singh an I.P.S. officer, a character in the novel RIOT describes the year 1984 like this – “our 1984 was an sister loving awful year as we’ve had since independence. It’s right up there with the worst with 1947, when the country was fucking ripped apart and 1962, when the Chinese hammered the crap out of us in the Himalayas. Our 1984 was a bad shit year, all right, a terrible year for the bloody national vintage”. Though this year 1984 witnessed one of the bloodiest riots in the country. The communal differences did not remain for long. The idea of ‘Khalistan’ was dropped and with it the problem got solved for ever.
India cannot for long live without problems and riots. Barely six to seven years had passed and India saw a new problem. Tharoor in his book *India From Midnight to the Millennium* gives a clear picture of it. He says “In the early 1990’s, Indian political culture went a change”. He feels that the change that took place was not an ‘event’ but a ‘process’. He illustrates it saying “The real change involved something intangible, if as pervasive as smog. It was a change in the dominant ethos of the country, in the attitudes of mind that define what it means to be Indian”. The change that took place in 1991 was more vicious one and the Indian society underwent a phenomenal change. Tharoor finds that the Hindus and Muslims have ever since then, become enemies of each other. Both the communities which lived together peacefully find themselves in great threat.

Tharoor points his finger towards the politicians of both these communities. He believes that all the riots in the country are engineered. The politicians do this for their own personal motifs which the common man is unable to understand.
The process of hatredness was going on in the minds of people. In 1992 it reached a culmination point. It was on December 6th, 1992 the Babri Masjid in Ayodha was destroyed. The Babri Masjid was destroyed because the Hindus believed that it was actually a holy place where Lord Rama was born. Somewhere around four centuries back Babar had destroyed that place and had built a Masjid. Ram Charan Gupta, a hard-core Hindu brigand, a character in the novel *Riot* feels that “at last, after centuries of helplessness, we were about to right a great wrong”.  

The thinking of Ram Charan Gupta and other Hindu-Chauvinists reveal that Hindus had for centuries lived in shame and helplessness. They were unable to fight the injustice done to their ego by the Muslims. The British education system, the Constitution and the partition of the country were all paving the way for the intellectuals to manipulate the uneducated minds. The Hindus seem to be more agitated because even though India was having 82 per cent Hindus, it was divided and a new country was created only for the Muslims. It hurt the pride of Hindus and some Hindu-fundamentalists started corrupting the minds of their fellow brothers.
Today Tharoor feels “The national mind had been afflicted with the intellectual cancer of thinking of “us” and “them”.” The divide between Hindus and Muslims is clearly visible in the novel *Riot*. The Hindus have developed a feeling that their identity in their own country is at stake. Ram Charan Gupta goes to the extent of asking “do we Hindus have no rights in our own country?” At times the arguments of Ram Charan Gupta seem to be correct. The politicians for their personal gains want to play with the sentiments of the innocent people from both the community. One such blunder which Ram Charan quotes is of Rajiv Gandhi the former Prime Minister of India “who quickly passes a new law, which he cynically calls the Muslim women (Protection of Rights upon divorce) Act, to undo the court’s judgment. Muslim women, under the law, will have to abide by their religion’s medieval rules, and if they are left destitute, there is no protection, no remedy, available to them from our civil courts. They will have to get help from their religion’s charitable boards, the Waqfs.” This historical blunder was deliberated by Rajiv Gandhi in Shah Banu case. Shah Banu, a wife of Muslim wanted divorce from her husband after their sixty years of marriage. Her husband was willing to pay only Rs. Forty as alimony, because according to Islam he was obliged to return the bride price given at the time of his
marriage. This was challenged by in the court of law of this country and justice was bestowed to Shah Banu.

Rajiv Gandhi, for his political mileage interfered and rest is history.

Now the most interesting thing is Ram Charan Gupta condemns this act of Rajiv Gandhi. Gupta thinks Rajiv Gandhi was doing favour to Muslim community. The facts also prove that Rajiv Gandhi was favouring. But the point to be noticed here is Rajiv Gandhi is a Hindu and not a Muslim. Tharoor finds even Nehru to be pro-Muslim who gave “them the right to follow their own personal law instead of being subject to the civil code of the rest of the country”.32 Like wise there are many more examples which irritate Ram Charan Gupta and his other Hindu friends.

Tharoor thinks that the communal rift has been started only to gain political power by the politicians. The common Hindus and Muslims have no problem in living peacefully. They have ever lived like that. Professor Mohammed Sarwar a character, in Riot says that
the fact is that we have, especially in North India, an extraordinary tradition of heroes, whether warriors or saints or, in this instance, both who are worshipped by both communities, Hindu and Muslim”.33 People of both the communities have worshipped the Gods of their faiths.

Adding to this Professor Mohammad Sarwar says “I am indispensable to this noble edifice. Without me this splendid structure of India is incomplete. I am an essential element which has gone to build India. I can never surrender this claim. It was India’s historic destiny that many human races and cultures and religions should flow to her, and that many a caravan should rest here.... One of the last of these caravans was that of the followers of Islam. They came here and settled for good. We brought our treasures with us, and India too was full of the riches of her own precious heritage. We gave her what she needed most, the most precious of gifts from Islam’s treasury, the message of human equality. Full eleven centuries have passed by since then. Islam has now as great a claim on the soil of India as Hinduism”.34 These words of Professor Sarwar are justified and true because Islam has been in this country for
thousands of years and Tharoor also claims that Hindus have taken much from them. So they are inseparable part of India.

Tharoor says that “the Hindutva brigade is busy trying to invent a new past for the nation, fabricating historical wrongs they want to right, dredging up “evidence” of Muslim malfeasance and misappropriation of national glory”.35 This one group of Hindus which wanted to politically establish themselves destroyed the Babri Masjid. But that led to the rioting across the whole country in which thousands of people were killed. Again before calm was restored a well planned terrorist attack was conducted in Bombay, killing hundreds of people.

In Nehru The Invention of India, Tharoor gives the statistical figures of riots in India stating “In the twenty two years after 1900 there had been only sixteen communal riots throughout India, in the three years after, there were seventy two”36 and “by 1923, a growing estrangement between the two communities became apparent, with several Hindu Muslim riots breaking out.”37 The present scenario in the country is such that more than 30 riots take place in a month in the different corners of the country. The reasons for the riots can be
very trivial. Small incidence likes for example a girl from Muslim community talking with Hindu boy or vice-versa at times is enough to burn the whole street in riots.

Rudyard Hart, a character in the novel RIOT says “I’ll tell you what your problem is in India. You have too much history. Far more than you can use peacefully. So you end up wielding history like a battleaxe, against each other”\(^{38}\). This observation by Rudyard Hart seems to be true because India really has very complicated history. This is the oldest civilization with so many castes, class, colour, ethnic groups, languages, regions and almost all the religions of the earth. This kind of complexity can never be found anywhere else on the earth. Tharoor who is very proud to be a Hindu and Indian aptly says “Hinduism has always acknowledged the existence of opposites (and reconciled them); pain and pleasure, success and failure, creation and destruction, life and death are all manifestations of the quality inherent in human existence. These pairings are not contradictory but complementary; they are aspects of the same overarching reality”\(^{39}\). This view of Tharoor on Hinduism was and is true and holds good with every individual minus the politicians are the ones who create vicious atmosphere among the peacefully and
harmoniously living countrymen. Smita Gupta has gone to the extent of saying that the “politicians are the lowest of the low-corrupt and venal”. They are like the rotten apples. The politicians are the real devils who are destroying India and the youth of this country in general.

Tharoor in his novel RIOT gives an horrifying explanation of the procession of the Hindu-Chauvinists marching towards Babri Masjid. These Hindu Fanatics are crossing the streets where Muslim population is more. These people of Bajrang Dal and VHP are carrying trishuls in the hand. They are shouting the slogans of all kind like “Mussalmaan ke do hi sthaan/Pakistan ya Kabristan”. There are only two places for a Muslim, Pakistan or the cemetery. There are many more slogans which naturally boils the blood of the people who are shouting them and of the people against whom they are shouted at. The government administration like the District Commissioners and the Superintendent of Police and their police forces are deployed in such sensitive places but the people and their anger out power the police force. This results in the violent death of hundreds of innocent people.
Even though thousands of riots and communal clashes have taken place in India there are no incidences where a politician or his family has become victims of riots. This is because they are the people who only plan and engineer the riots but are executed by the uneducated and unemployed youth of this country.

Tharoor makes it clear that riots in India are always politically motivated. The leaders of both Hindu and Muslim communities instigate the people for their own personal gains in which they temporarily succeed. The riots of Godhra in Gujarat are the latest example of it. All these have cropped up unchecked in India because Indians have become aware of their political identities. They feel insecure amongst themselves.

They want to own this country and the history of this country. The Hindus believes that the wrong was done to them thousands of years back and now they want to ‘right’ it. The Muslims think that they have been living here for thousands of years so they are an inseparable part of India.
Tharoor says that both are correct so both have to amicably find a solution. Here are some of the solutions which he has tried to give for this un-ending problem. ‘Pluralism’ is the one which he has always advocated for In Riot he makes it very clear that “the whole point of India is that this is a country for everybody, and everybody has the duty, the obligation, to work to keep it that way”. He says that the question of ownership of history does not arise at all. All the people in this country are the owners of this great country. Instead of owing it the Indians have come on the streets to divide it.

Tharoor who feels so proud to be Hindu defines Hinduism thus “as a Hindu I belong to the only major religion in the world that does not claim to be the only true religion”. By saying this he is trying to convince the Indians that Hinduism is not a religion of narrow minded people. It is known for its adaptability, its greatness. It has sustained all kinds of changes and yet retained its originality. Probably, Tharoor is trying to convince the people of India that in India all are ‘minority’ and no one is ‘majority’. This argument of Tharoor seems to be logical when he tries to explain this in his India from Midnight to the Millennium. “We are all minorities in independent India. No one group can assert its dominance without making minorities of the
majority of Indians. If upper caste Hindus agitate for Hindutva, a majority of Hindus are not upper caste; if north Indians in the cow belt clamor for Hindi to be the “national language”, a majority of Indians do not speak it as their mother tongue; and so on. India’s strength is that it is a conglomeration of minorities using democratic means to ascertain majority opinion on the crucial questions of the day”. Not only these but there are unlimited number of things which proves that no one is a majority in this country.

To support this Professor Sarwar a character in the novel Riot gives a startling statistics from the pages of Indian history which supports the theory of minority hood given by Tharoor, Sarwar says “Mathematically Muslims were always a minority in India, before partition, even in the mediaeval Muslim period I spend my life researching and teaching. But when the great Mughals ruled on the throne of Delhi, were Muslims a “minority” then? Mathematically no doubt, but no Muslim thought of himself as a minority. Brahmins are only ten percent of the population of India today do they see themselves as a minority? No, minorityhood is a state of mind, Mr. Diggs it is a sense of powerlessness, of being out of the mainstream, of being here on sufferance”. Professor Sarwar not only does state
that all are minority in India he even says that it is a state of mind, a feeling of minorityhood.

Tharoor says that this feeling of minorityhood has creeped in Indian minds because of some group of politicians felt that they were powerless in their own country. So, to achieve that power they started all this game of “us” and “them”. For long they were deprived of political power and their cultural identity. So, Tharoor says, “Politicians of all faiths across India seek to mobilize votes in the name of religion, caste and region, they have urged voters to define themselves on these lines”.46

This division of people by the politicians has tarnished the image of modern India. Peace has been robbed for ever. People either live with the vengeance or frisk away with a fear of being attacked. Every Indian has become more conscious of his caste than ever before. He knows what divides him from others. A Dalit knows how different he is from upper caste Brahmin, a Muslim knows how different he is from a Hindu and a north Indian knows how his language is different from a South Indian’s language.
The only way to come out of this vicious circle, Tharoor says, is that every Indian thinking himself as a Malayali or Bihari, a South Indian or North India, a Hindu or a Muslim should first feel that he is an Indian and nothing more than that.

It is not only Tharoor who is worried about the present Indian situation but many scholars and intellectuals are also haunted by this prevailing situation of the country.

"This democratic system," Ambedkar said movingly "India lost. Will she lose it a second time?" The great Urdu poet Mohd. Iqbal who wrote "Sare Jahan Se achha Hindustan hamara" paradoxically had to say "Tumhari tahzeeb khud apne khanjar se khudkhush karegi/Jo shukh-I-nazuk pe aashiyan banega, napaider hoga" the meaning of which is "ours is a civilization that will commit suicide out of its own complexity; he who builds a nest of frail branches is doomed to destruction."

The concern of all these people is very serious one. The nation itself is very complex and the notion of nationality is still more complex. Bhole L.M. argues that "the communalism is a fact of
modern Indian life which cannot be brushed aside. But it is an error to blame religion for it. If there have been Hindu-Muslim riots and Muslim Christian crusades, there has also been a peaceful co-living of Hindus, Muslim, Jains, Buddhists, Jews and others. No amount of description, documentation and analysis of communal riots can really prove that they are the result of practicing true religion. Bhole is quite critical at discussing about communalism because there are hundreds of instances that even during Hindu-Muslim riots the people of Muslim community helping Hindus and Hindus providing shelter to Muslims. The whole point to analysis is that the riots in India are not just because of practicing a particular religion but because of psychological fear, or deprivation of ones political existence.

Tharoor in his book India From Midnight to the Millennium strongly advocates for secularism. He wants people to understand and accept things as they are. He is sure that living peacefully with each other is the only way of living. He strongly condemns the people who talk of ‘my’ history and ‘your’ history. Rather he asks the Indians to take it as ‘our’ history.
Tharoor is against the demolition of Babri Masjid. His point of argument is that even if Babar had destroyed Rama Temple and built Babri Masjid it was some four hundred years back. Why should people repeat the same mistake even today? He even asks “why should today’s Muslim have to pay a price for what Muslims may have done four hundred and fifty years ago?”

Tharoor says “As a Hindu, I take no pride in wanting to destroy other people’s symbols, in hitting others on their head because of the cut of their beard or the cuts of their foreskins. I am proud of my Hinduism. I take pride in its diversity in its openers, in religions freedom”. These words of Tharoor are undoubtedly for every Hindu anywhere on the earth. This is what Hinduism is known for. He wants that this image of Hindu should not be tarnished by any bad deed.

At the same time there are people from Muslim community also who strongly feel patriotic. They are also true Indians. One such personality is Maulana Azad and he says “I am proud of being Indian. I am part of that indivisible unit that is Indian nationality”. He even says “Islam’s splendid traditions of thirteen hundred years are my
inheritance. I am unwilling to lose even the smallest part of this inheritance”. It is very important to understand the viewpoint of Maulana Azad. He is a representative of Muslim community. His argument holds good because Muslims are a part of this land since thousands of years. They did not just loot this country like British and go away. They have stayed here. With their stay here the cultural identity of India has got a different approach. Their claim to Indian identity should not be at stake. Mohd. Sarwar a character in the novel Riot feels that it is India where they belong and not Pakistan. He argues “Muslim’s didn’t partition the country – The British did, the Muslim league did, the congress party did. There are more Muslims in India today than in Pakistan. This is where we belong”. The partition of Muslims, Tharoor also feels, has never been a question. At the same time the secularism of the country is also undoubted. The result of both these things can be seen as many Muslims occupying the highest positions of the country like Presidents, Chief Justices of the Supreme Court of India. Not only these, Indian democracy is an example in itself because in 1971 was with Pakistan the Air Marshal, who later went on to become Air Chief Marshal, was a Muslim called Latif.
Yet one can never succeed in defining India. In 2002, Gujarat was burning under communal riots in which hundreds of innocent people from both the communities. Paradoxically the first citizen of the country or the President of India is a Muslim, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.

At the same time the present Indian Government is the best example of highest kind of democracy. The President of India is a Muslim, the Prime Minister is a Sikh supported by a Christian and the Supreme Court Judge is a Scheduled Caste. But at the same time all these things do not assure for a peaceful and riot free society in the country.

Tharoor concludes by giving some very vital suggestions in his book *India from Midnight to the Millennium* which he had written at 50th anniversary of Indian independence. He is concerned about the cross roads at which India is standing even after fifty years of Independence. He feels that the religious fundamentalists are ruining the country. He thinks that in the era of Globalisation a change must come in India. A change, he emphasizes, is must as India is a diverse country with social and political contentions. Tharoor says instead of wasting the energy on destroying a Masjid or constructing a temple
the greatest “Challenge of Indian democracy is to meet the basic material needs of all Indians while accommodating their diverse aspirations within the national dream”.55 This suggestion by Tharoor is very important because in India more than fifty per cent of the population is illiterate and almost the same per cent of people live below poverty line. These people neither need temple nor mosque. They need two square meals and basic amenities. That is why Kanshi Ram a Dalit leader from Uttar Pradesh in 1993 remarked “we will build neither mandirs nor masjids, our priority will be to build latrines”.56 It a real concern of every Government of India to provide basic facilities like what Kanshi Ram says.

Even Dominique Lapierre the author of a world’s best seller book The City of Joy thinks “I believe the future of India lies in education”57, because according to him “there are 40 million children who have never been to school. There are 400 million Indians who earn less than a dollar a day”.58 For these millions of people where Lord Rama was born? Did Babar really destroy Rama Temple in Ayodhya to build Babri Masjid hardly matters? Not only these poor people, Tharoor says, that these things should not bother any sane Indian because these are the thing of history which is as old as four
hundred years. The ‘present’ of India is more important than the ‘past’ of this country. Tharoor is almost sure that “an India that denies itself to some of us could end up being denied to all of us. This would be a second partition and a partition in the Indian soul would be as bad as a partition in the Indian soil”.59 with all these worries haunting Tharoor about this country he is very optimistic and believes that “Indians will stand for democracy, openness, tolerance and freedom”.60
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