



Impact Of Communal Clash In Gita Hariharan's "Fugitive Histories"

RAKBAR ALI¹, Dr. A. ABDUL HAKEEM²

¹Assistant Professor of English, Jamal Mohamed College (Autonomous), Tiruchirappalli – 620 020 (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University)

²Assistant Professor of English, Jamal Mohamed College (Autonomous), Tiruchirappalli – 620 020 (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University)

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Abstract:-

Gita Hariharan is one of the most popular women writers in India. Her unique style of writing and mastery over the language are highly recognized by all. Being a social activist, she is more concerned with social issues and cultural ideologies. Apart from feministic perspectives, her novels also deal with Socio-political issues like social discrimination and communal problems. 'Fugitive Histories' is based on communal riots of Gujarat in 2002. India is a multi-facet country where people are of different religion, and different faiths, following different practices and speak different languages. Despite different beliefs and customs, our people live together. Religion and community play a very pivotal role in getting authority to rule over the people, and in discriminating the people; such as, the novelist describes how do religion and community create discrimination among the people.

Keywords: multi-facet, cultural ideologies, social discrimination, communal riot, social issues

INTRODUCTION

The Novel 'Fugitive Histories' is based on a particular Indian historical event. As far as we are concerned, unity in diversity is our strength. Due to some political and communal factors our unity is shaken and questionable at times. The novel mainly deals with the communal riots of Gujarat in 2002. The novelist narrated its causes and recorded consequences after communal riots. The bitter experiences of the affected people at the time of riot are vividly depicted from the victims' points of view who were targeted by the mob in the name of religion.

Gita Hariharan exhibits how Muslims were targeted and attacked due to their community. It was globally recorded as the worst historical event that never happened before it. The writer portrayed the ugly picture of the historical tragedy and its victims. Women were gang-raped, men were killed by cutting into pieces and children were also burnt alive. At this

point, though the whole Hindu communities were not against the Muslim community, but they were helpless and they became mute audience. Some of the Hindus pitied and felt sympathetically worried towards the victims. It was a pre-planned genocide against Muslim community and was cruelly performed.

It took a long period of time for Muslims to heave a sigh of relief of stunted pain. The plot of genocide always haunted them. It was the biggest threat to their life. It happened because of the religious tension between the two communities. Apart from the religious tension, the writer suggested that if both the communities distance themselves from each other by realizing the reason behind the terrible event, unity and harmony may remain the same as it was once.

“Mosque and Hanuman harmonise; call Sara like a muezzin calling the faithful to prayer” (FH.108-9)

At the time of riot, all the rioters shouted slogan: ‘Muslims quit India – or we’ll fuck your mothers’ (FH.138). Many times the terrible violence occurred whenever they felt relaxed and thought that the situation was controlled. The rioters gathered and within a short span of time, their numbers unexpectedly increased to attack the Muslim people. It was not a coincidence, but the pre-planned genocide was cruelly performed. They came prepared and some of them had ‘cell phones and water bottles. They were prepared for a long day’ (FH.159). A large number of people were murdered. Money and valuable materials like jewels were looted; women were raped and then burnt alive due to the communal hatred.

“The little boy next door. They poured petrol in his mouth. They put a lit matchstick into his mouth as if it was a lollipop. He was burnt” (FH.159)

They fulfilled their evil intention by performing brutal genocide. They seemed to be heartless brutes without sympathy for women, old-age persons and children. They were partially ill-treated only on the basis of community.

“They cut him across the forehead, they cut her stomach. They cut his legs, they cut her breasts. They cut his legs, they cut her arms off. They cut and slashed cut and slashed, Then they burnt” (FH.165)

The Muslims were treated in a coarse manner. Sufia Bano states that ‘we were still living but we had to sleep where the dead sleep’ (FH 161) Prejudice was developed against Muslims and their property and mosques were damaged. Hindu Idol was placed inside the mosque. Communal hatred led the rioters to act cruelly.

They came prepared with all the kinds of sharpened weapons like swords, pipes, soda-lemon bottles with the main intention to create a sense of insecurity. Meanwhile they offended very blindly and slashed all the Muslims including children to death. At the time of riot, the government and even the police silently witnessed the atrocities of the culprits and favored only the culprit Hindus. The police not only denied to help the Muslims but also joined the culprits to attack and destroy the Muslim community. One of the victims reminds the evil attitude of a policeman at that time: ‘Snacks that are not poisonous should keep the enemy away by hissing once in a while’ (FH.160). The atrocities of the Hindus were a hissing to them, but many were killed and horrified by their brutal attack. It seemed that the hands of police were leashed and they were ordered not to take any action against the culprits. Feroza

explained what police said; “They said we have no orders to help you, you better learn to protect yourself if you want to live in Hindustan” (FH.160)

Moreover, it was a remarkable irony that the culprit Hindus tried to convert the dead Muslims into their religion even after killing them. Mumtaz states that she saw her neighbour’s corpse on the road and she saw them ‘sprinkling kerosene on the corpse’ shouting “Jai Shri Ram!” (FH.162), they added that they were converting and performing their own religious rite. Their painful experience and their sufferings are unforgettable and still remain a scar in the minds of the victims. No culprit was punished and justice is being denied to the Muslim community. The Muslim community awaited to get justice for a long period of time, but still now, the victims could not get. Yasmin pointed out that as if the victims were mere voices, not people in flesh and blood; “They are just voices, nothing else, because if they were really bodies, really people wouldn’t some have heard them by now, given them some justice in five long years?” (FH.162)

It was unanswered question like mystery or puzzle that no Muslim knew really the reason behind the terrible violence and riot. They were killed without knowing their mistakes. All the authorities, political beneficiaries and administrative officials muted their voices and the hands of the police were hard-cuffed by considering Hindu culprits were their strong vote bank.

After the terrible riot, Yasmin and her Muslim community were rehabilitated at different places and now they are far away from their own city losing all their belongings including their own houses. Besides, Yasmin is very cautious about the strange place where she resides at present. In addition to the fact that their life becomes dark and they react softly without happiness.

Even after their scared experience through the terrible violence. The victims unsteadily survive, instead of giving education to their children, the school going children are given a practice of tailoring. The tragic event made them utmost lifeless at their new houses which are very dark and full of negativity as all their hopes were crushed and lost. They had to move away from the city due to their fear and their sense of insecurity. They became homeless and hopeless without a peaceful mind.

It was the strange statement of Yasmin that her dark house is, in fact, a safe place to hide from the remaining of the people and she was afraid of crowd. The crowd reminds her ruthless mob and violence at the time of the riot she had experienced. She felt: ‘Any girls know that a busy road is safe road. But, Yasmin knows now that she should also be afraid of a crowd’ (FH.149)

After going through a thorough study of communal riots, the novelist comments that people should not be treated partially and people should not be judged on the basis of religion or community. The novel explores the religious tension between the two communities and the Muslims are blamed as strangers or outsiders. Sometimes, Muslims were called mistakenly as Pakistanis even by Hindu friend in a jovial manner; on hearing this call even from the Hindu friends, Muslim community felt unsecured and disappointed. People of all the ages and genders suffered more with the same religious tension. In particular, women remember how the Hindu Indian called them ruthlessly Pakistanis. It was irritating and shocking to a particular community. On the other hand, in most of the places, Muslims are tortured and

brutally attacked as if they were terrorists by the goons. Here is no evidence for their foolish act, but they unleashed the atrocities of ‘the goons against the Muslim community.

Unforgettable memories and the bitter experiences of the Muslim community remind us the tragic event of the Independent India. The past experience and memories of Sara and Mala also reveal the poor condition of women in India. Yasmin and her mother’s memories depicted the devastated life of the affected community. By the shared experiences of Yasmin, Sara realized how religious tension and communal hatred destroyed the Muslim community.

The novelist poignantly points out that their bitter experience of the communal clash remains forever in the mind of the affected people. The novel brings out the dark side of the affected community, and a coarse behaviour of Hindutva culprits. Gita Hariharan took effort to bring out the impact of communal clash between the two communities. She also barely revealed the reality and ruthlessness of a particular community.

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