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## Religious Conflict in Githa Hariharan's *In Time of Siege*

Surender Singh  
&

Poonam

Research Scholar

Department of English & Foreign Languages

M.D.U. Rohtak

Among the new generation of Indian novelists, Githa Hariharan is a name to refer with particularly in the context of post-colonial Indian writing. She successfully ventilates the levels of conflict beyond domestic confines so as to engage and penetrate the boundaries of socio-cultural, religious and political domain. *In Time of Siege* pivots on the theme of the interference of the religious fundamentalist in the life a history professor who is posed by the demand from them to revise a historical event. Shiv Murthy is condemned by an extremist group for propagating anti-Hindu agenda as his module on the 12th century post & social reformer conflict in nature is between different species for survival, continuing since even before the human race emerged. Survival of the fittest is the law of Nature that brings all the animals in to a conflicting situation. They are seen fighting for the survival at all levels. The major categories of conflict portrayed in literature are social conflict cultural conflict, psychological conflict, religious conflict & spiritual conflict. Religion has structural functional - dimensions & any theory of social change needs to take this in to account as well as the fact that religion is unlucky to wither away. Marxism, considered to the inheritor of rational, anticlerical and secular trend, is how entering a period of close contact & even merger with organised religion. It is an organising principle which gives form & Shape to the societies, "Hinduism is, in fact, both a Helenism & Judaism that is both a way of life of characterising an entire people and highly organised social and religious system".

Hindu-Muslim unity which heralded the possibility of golden future for India after the appalling period of slavery through the revolt of 1857, shattering the British myth of rigid control over the colony, gradually had given rise to suspicion. What the white rules could not imagine in their wildest scheme, had become a reality that Hindus and Muslims could be easily alienated from each other by playing on the religious sentiment. The seeds of suspicion gradually had grown into distrust and aversion. At the slightest provocation, the two ethnic groups can be brought face to face into a virulent clash resulting in death & destruction and unreasonable psychological scars. Kiran Garud and Abdul Jamal in *Distant Drum* or Gian Idwar, Devidayal and Safi Usman in *A Bend* or Kiran Garud, K.I.T Nadkar versus Mr. Behl Kadar Hussain in *Bandicoot Run* play on the religious sentiments as Jinnah does in *The Men Who Killed Gandhi*. It is only violence that appeared to provide wholeness to Hindus a sense of pride and being alive "Violence of the conquests - has dehumanised the native & only counter - violence can make him whole -again" (Fanon).

Professor Shiv Murthy is a professor of medieval Indian history in New Delhi. He is exploited by a childhood experience, the sudden vanish of a father who had been frustrated Indian

freedom- fighter. Shiv finds himself in hot water when an extremist group accuses him of anti - Hindu bias because of his lesson about 12th century poet & social reformer Basavanna. Basava believed that the Hindus rigid & oppressive caste system needed radical reforming. Shiv had made an attempt to disentangle the reality from the myth. What he had emphasised was that Basava was not "a cardboard saint singing syrup - sweet, devotional songs, only concerned with the hereafter" (Hariharan104). He questioned the idea of 'the Hindu world' as being a homogeneous whole and protested against all kinds of discrimination. Hariharan unveils how cultural Institutions like the Itihas Suraksha Manch rip off the religious beliefs of the common people and establish hegemony. This Manch assails Shiv for undermining Hinduism and reducing its saints to common men & accuses him by calling him a traitor who is loyal to Pakistan & Muslims. The President of Itihas Suraksha Manch sows the seeds of violence in the society to oppress the weak & the marginalised to earn fame. He paves the way for agitation to wake up the Hindus in the name of revival. The inner enmity among the Indians was due to prejudice that was never shed by Hindu & Muslims against each other. Talcott Parson says that prejudice is not only directed by individuals against scapegoat groups, but can readily become a phenomenon of group attitude that is become partly institutionalised. Then instead of being disapproved by members of one's own group for being prejudiced one is punished for not being prejudiced.

Through this incident the author highlights the truth that in multicultural country like India such revolution in the name of religion can lead to chaos. The agitators kindle the religious feeling in order to bring chaos in the society. Very cunning question put forth by them like, "If the Muslims can have their fundamentalist why can't we? Have we forgotten that Hindus have stood the test of time like no one else? Our fundamentalist have been around longer than theirs have so we have to show the world we are superior to them in every way (Hariharan135)".

The demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992 was in fact a strategy to divide Hindus and Muslims through History which resulted in communal riots & subsequently the Godhra massacre in Gujarat. Githa.Hariharan in her interview with Gowri Ramanaryan, "is a tool to understand over selves & over time. We may know that under a mosque there is a temple but the problem begins when they come up with an authorised official version of the past in its entirety a whitewashed view of a single continuous, homogeneous Hindu past, seeking a range of censorship rights (The Hindu April 24,2003)". The novel reverberates with the Hindu - Muslims clash that in the make of Ayodhya, have left their marks on India. Even today this event is viewed as the most serious warning to India's secular state since the troubles of independence and continue to threaten the peaceful co-existence of Hindu & Muslim. Hariharan has portrayed violence through Hindu - Muslim right. In her view, intolerance and prejudice, a few of the consequences of colonialism have to be stunned to determine healthy social relations. Hariharan thus remarks:

"But still, is one world, our times and the contemporary faces of violence, hatred and exclusion are unfortunately, unique to our times. There are wars against terrorism, there is Jihad, there is Hindutva. These are all the modern pseudo-modern versions of medieval battle of good against evil" (Spring 94).

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