REMAINS OF "TAMAS" IN PRESENT INDIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

Tamas is one of the most significant literary work on the partition literature. Its ingenuity of painting a collective conscience rather that of an individual is what sets it apart. It is also this very character of the novel that makes it independent of its setting. It turns it into a sort of a master key that could be used to unlock & understand any kind of communal violence. This paper aims at understanding plot of Tamas & relate it to the latest instances of communal violence in the country. The paper is aiming to show how even after more than 75 years of greatest communal tragedy, text is still relevant in the present time. This paper is trying to highlight the disastrous cycle that every communally driven violent event seems to be taking. It will also point out the factors that must be pondered upon to make the world a better place to live in.

Key words: communalism, communal violence, collective conscience, partition, riots, morality, politics.

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INTRODUCTION

Tamas" is a novel by Indian author Bisham Sahni, published in 1974. The novel deals with the partition of India in 1947 and the ensuing violence and chaos that resulted. The novel follows the lives of various characters, both Hindu and Muslim, as they struggle to survive in the midst of the communal violence that erupted during the partition. The story is set in a small town near the border between India and Pakistan, and the characters include a range of people from different castes and classes, including farmers, shopkeepers, and government officials. The novel is known for its stark portrayal of the brutal violence that occurred during the partition, including the massacres, rapes, and forced conversions that took place on both sides of the border. Sahni does not shy away from depicting the horrors of this period in Indian history, and the novel is often considered a powerful indictment of the religious and political forces that contributed to the violence. The beauty of Tamas lies in its lack of traditional story arc & characterization. It doesn't follow any one character rather it captures the picture of a crowd. It plunges into the district where the questions of religious intolerance, political ideologies, femineity, ethics & faith are either to be grappled with or not to be thought about. Rather than focusing & examining judgements & actions of any one character, it walks us through a tunnel of cause & action which cascades & takes over an entire district. Thus, in doing so, it achieves what one would call a collective conscience. And it is this collective conscience & its inability to reason that makes it truly unique.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES:

1) To understand the factors that drive the socio-political conflicts in present day India in relation to the novel Tamas.
2) The outcome of institutionalised violence and imposed ethnical conflict.
3) Reminiscent of partition in present day conflicts.

NOVELTY

Most of the research papers consider the book as an excellent text of past. But our research in addition to conforming to the previous statement also highlights its relevance in the present day world. It is trying to compare recent events of violence with the plot of the novel & in doing so establishing similarities between the events.

LITERATURE REVIEW

"Tamas" is a powerful novel that depicts the partition of India in 1947 and the communal violence that followed. The novel is a poignant portrayal of the human tragedy that unfolded during this turbulent period of Indian history. It is a work of fiction, but it is based on real events and real people, which gives it a sense of authenticity and urgency.

The quality of darkness or ignorance is referred to as tamas, which is a Sanskrit word. It is one of the three nature-related qualities—rajas (passion) and sattva (purity) are the other two. In Indian way of thinking, the gunas are accepted to be the structure blocks of the universe and the human mind. Tamas is frequently connected with idleness, sluggishness, and antagonism. It is said to be the quality that prevents us from realizing our true spiritual nature and keeps us bound to the material world. Tamas is thus viewed as a hindrance to spiritual development and enlightenment. Authors like Salman Rushdie have looked into the idea of tamas in contemporary literature. In his novel "Midnight's Children," he uses it as a metaphor for the darkness and chaos of modern society. The idea of gunas is incorporated into the teachings of other authors, such as Deepak Chopra and Eckhart Tolle, who focus on spirituality and personal development.

One of the most striking features of Sahni's "Tamas" is its ability to capture the complexities of the communal tensions that led to the partition and the violence. The novel portrays the deep-seated mistrust and hatred between Hindus and Muslims, which were fuelled by religious differences, socio-economic disparities, and historical grievances. The novel also highlights the role of the British colonial rulers in dividing India and exacerbating the communal tensions (Stalin, 2384).

The characters in "Tamas" are complex and multi-dimensional, which makes them feel like real people. The novel portrays the different perspectives of the characters and how they are affected by the violence. The character of Nathu, a low-caste sweeper who becomes a pawn in the hands of the communal forces, is particularly poignant. The novel depicts how Nathu's life is destroyed by the violence, and how he becomes a victim of circumstances beyond his control.

Female writers of this genre such as Bapsi Sidhwa focused on the feminist view as her female characters undergo psychological trauma and pain because of their sex. Meanwhile, male writers wrote on communal divides, migration, and political movements in their texts (Pareek, 57). A female perspective is also thrown through the minor characters involved in the text such as Jasbir Kaur, who is symbolic of the mass female suicides that were committed mostly by jumping into wells to avoid sexual assault (Revathi, 78). Sahni was

thus also able to incorporate the female perspective in his literature.

Such narrative style of "Tamas" is engaging and immersive. The novel uses multiple narrators, which gives it a sense of depth and complexity. The language is simple and accessible, but it is also poetic and evocative. The novel uses vivid imagery to describe the violence and its aftermath, which makes it a powerful work of literature.

This horrific chapter in modern history is however, still present in the contemporary

Indian society. Urvashi Butalia in her book *The Other Side of Silence* stresses on how the ordeals of Partition was unfortunately not talked about much even in history books. Butalia comments, "I began to realize that Partition was not, even in my family, a closed chapter of history- that its simple, brutal political geography infused and divided us still." (Butalia, 6) Butalia's study through oral history from her own family members to the communal tensions of the later half of the 20th Century India led her to conclude, "It took 1984 to make me understand how ever-present Partition was in our lives too, to recognise that it could not be so easily put away inside the covers of the history books." (Butalia. 6). The dripping remains of Partition was sucked on even by the later generations which resulted in the said 1984 riots where thousands of Sikhs were attacked and killed as retaliation to the assassination of the then prime minister, Indira Gandhi.

METHODOLOGY
The fundamental objective of this research is to compare the plot of Tamas with that of recent events in Indian history. Therefore, the research analysis every event mention according to four main principles,

- Cause of the event.
- Involvement of communal factor.
- Involvement of Government.
- How did it end.

1. Bombay Riots
The Bombay riots of 1992 were a series of communal riots that occurred in the city of Mumbai (formerly known as Bombay) in India, between December 1992 and January 1993. The riots were triggered when the Babri Masjid mosque was demolished by Hindu nationalist groups in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh.

The 16th Century Babri Masjid was a mosque built by the Mughal emperor Babur, which was claimed by Hindu nationalists to be built on the site of a temple that marked the birthplace of the Hindu god Ram. The demolition of the mosque led to widespread communal violence in several parts of

India, including Mumbai. The riots in Mumbai were particularly brutal, with an estimated death toll of around 900 people and thousands injured. The violence was largely directed towards the Muslim community, with Muslim-owned businesses and homes being targeted by mobs of Hindus. The riots also resulted in widespread destruction of property and displacement of people. The riots were seen as a failure of the state government and the police to control the violence, with allegations of police complicity in the attacks against Muslims. The riots also exposed deep-seated communal tensions in Indian society and led to a renewed debate on the role of religion in politics.

The Bombay riots of 1992 had a lasting impact on the city and its residents, with many people still living with the trauma of the violence and its aftermath. The riots also led to the formation of several citizen-led organizations that work towards communal harmony and peace in the city.

1.1) Cause
The Bombay riots of 1992 were triggered by the demolition of the Babri Masjid mosque in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, by Hindu nationalist groups on December 6, 1992. The demolition of the mosque, which was claimed by Hindu nationalists to be built on the site of a temple that marked the birthplace of the Hindu god Ram, led to widespread communal violence in several parts of India, including Mumbai. The immediate cause of the Bombay riots was the demolition of the Babri Masjid, which had been a source of contention between Hindu and Muslim groups for many years.

In summary, the Bombay riots of 1992 were caused by a combination of the demolition of the Babri Masjid mosque, deep-seated communal tensions, political polarization, and the failure of the government and law enforcement agencies to maintain law and order.

1.2) Involvement of communal factor
The riots were direct result of deep-seated communal tensions and political polarization in Indian society. The demolition of the mosque was seen as a victory for Hindu nationalist groups, who had been campaigning for the temple to be rebuilt on the site. This, in turn, led to a backlash from Muslim groups, who felt that their community's rights had been violated. The communal tensions were further fuelled by political leaders who sought to exploit the issue for their own gains, and by the failure of the government and law enforcement agencies to maintain law and order and prevent the outbreak of violence.

1.3) Involvement of Government

The Bombay riots of 1992 were marked by a failure of the government and the police to prevent and control the violence. The state government at the time was led by the Congress Party, which was accused of being slow to respond to the situation and failing to take adequate measures to stop the riots. The state government was criticized for its failure to anticipate and prevent the violence, despite the fact that there had been prior warnings of a possible outbreak of communal violence in the city. The government was also accused of being biased towards one community and failing to protect the rights of the minority Muslim community, which bore the brunt of the violence. The police were also criticized for their inability to control the situation and for their alleged complicity in the attacks against Muslims. There were reports of police officers standing by as mobs attacked Muslim-owned businesses and homes, and in some cases, even actively participating in the violence.

The central government at the time, which was led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), was also criticized for its role in the riots. The destruction of the Babri Masjid by Hindu groups, which flamed the riots, was seen as a failure of the central government to prevent the destruction of a historical mosque and to maintain communal harmony in the country. The Bombay riots of 1992 were a stark reminder of the importance of the government's role in maintaining law and order and promoting communal harmony in a diverse and pluralistic society like India. The riots led to a renewed debate on the role of religion in politics and need for greater efforts to promote inter-community understanding and harmony.

1.4) How did it end?

The riots ended after reaching to extremities of the violence. There were legal proceedings, criticism of government & number of citizen-led initiatives.

2. Bhiwandi riots

The 1970 Bhiwandi riots were a series of communal riots that took place in the town of Bhiwandi in the state of Maharashtra, India, in May 1970. The riots were sparked by a dispute between Muslim and Hindu traders over the playing of loudspeakers during a religious procession. The violence quickly escalated, with both sides attacking each other with swords, knives, and other weapons. The riots resulted in the deaths of over 80 people and the injury of more than 500 others. The violence also led to widespread destruction of property, including homes, shops, and mosques.

The government responded by imposing a curfew and deploying the army to restore order.

2.1) Cause

The Bhiwandi riots were triggered by a dispute over a mosque and a temple that were located in close proximity to each other. The mosque and the temple were both situated in a crowded and densely populated area of the city, and tensions between the Muslim and Hindu communities had been simmering for some time.

The dispute over the mosque and the temple began when the local municipality decided to widen the road on which both structures were located. The plan involved demolishing a portion of the mosque and the temple to make way for the wider road, and this led to protests and demonstrations by both communities.

The protests soon turned violent, and members of both communities began attacking each other. The police were unable to control the situation, and the violence continued to escalate, with mobs indulging in arson, looting, and destruction of property.

2.2) Involvement of communal factor

The Bhiwandi riots were part of a larger pattern of communal violence that has plagued India for decades. Communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims have often erupted into violence, particularly in the state of Maharashtra. The government has made efforts to promote communal harmony and prevent such incidents, but the underlying tensions and grievances remain unresolved.

2.3) Involvement of Government

The government's response to the 1970 Bhiwandi riots was criticized for being slow and inadequate. The riots started on May 18, 1970, but the state government did not impose a curfew until May 21, which allowed the violence to escalate. The police were also accused of failing to take effective action to control the riots and protect the lives and property of the people.

The state government eventually called in the Indian Army to restore order, but this was only after the riots had claimed many lives and caused extensive damage. The army was deployed on May 23, and a curfew was imposed, which helped to bring the situation under control.

After the riots, the government set up an inquiry committee to investigate the causes of the violence and suggest measures to prevent such incidents in the future. The committee recommended various measures to improve communal harmony, including better communication between

communities, the appointment of inter-community mediators, and the creation of joint committees to resolve disputes.

Overall, the government's response to the 1970 Bhiwandi riots was criticized for being reactive rather than proactive, and for failing to prevent the violence from escalating. However, the government did take some measures to address the underlying issues and promote communal harmony in the aftermath of the riots

2.4) How did it end?

The riots led to a deepening of communal divides between the Hindu and Muslim communities in Bhiwandi and the surrounding areas. The violence also had a ripple effect on other parts of the country, leading to an increase in communal tensions and violence in other parts of India.

The Bhiwandi riots also highlighted the need for the government to take steps to address the underlying causes of communal violence in the country. The government launched a commission of inquiry to investigate the causes of the riots and to recommend measures to prevent such incidents in the future.

Overall, the Bhiwandi riots were a tragic reminder of the dangers of communalism and the need for tolerance and understanding among different communities.

3. 2020 Delhi riots

The 2020 Delhi riots were a series of communal riots that occurred in the northeast district of Delhi in India in February 2020. The riots began on 23 February 2020 and continued for four days, resulting in the deaths of at least 53 people and injuring over 400 others.

The Indian government was criticized for its handling of the riots, with some accusing the police of being complicit in the violence against the Muslim community. The government, however, denied these allegations and blamed the opposition parties for instigating the violence. Several investigations were launched into the riots, and numerous people were arrested and charged with various offenses, including murder, rioting, and destruction of property.

The riots have had a significant impact on the social and political fabric of the country, with increased polarization and communal tensions. The government has been criticized for its failure to address the underlying issues that led to the riots and to promote unity and harmony among different communities in the country.

3.1) Cause

The riots were sparked by clashes between supporters and opponents of India's Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which was passed in December 2019. The law provides a route to Citizenship for Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Paresis and Christian immigrants who entered India Illegally from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan before December 2014, but excludes Muslims. The violence began as small-scale clashes between pro-CAA and anti CAA protesters in the Northeast district of Delhi. The situation escalated quickly, with mobs attacking each other and Burning shops, homes, and vehicles. There were reports of widespread looting, arson, and Vandalism.

3.2) Involvement of communal factor

The communal factor played a significant role in the Delhi riots of 2020. The clashes were primarily between the Hindus and Muslims living in the area, and both communities were reportedly involved in violence. Reports suggest that the violence was triggered by the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) passed by the Indian government, which provided a path to citizenship for non-Muslim migrants from neighbouring countries.

3.3) Involvement of Government

The 2020 Delhi riots ended after four days of violence, with the deployment of additional police and paramilitary forces in the affected areas. The government imposed Section 144 of the Indian Penal Code, which prohibits the assembly of four or more people, in the affected areas to Maintain law and order.

The government also set up relief camps for the affected people, provided medical and other necessary assistance, and announced compensation for the families of the victims. The Government also initiated several investigations into the riots, with multiple arrests made.

The role of the government in the Delhi riots has been a subject of controversy and criticism. Some critics have accused the government of not taking enough action to prevent the violence, While others have alleged that the government and the police were complicit in the violence against the Muslim community.

3.4) How did it end?

The Delhi riots of 2020 lasted for four days and finally ended after the deployment of large numbers of police and paramilitary forces in the affected areas. The Delhi Police imposed curfew in the affected areas, and the Indian Home Ministry called in the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)

to assist in maintaining law and order. After the deployment of security forces, the violence subsided, and the affected areas were gradually brought under control. The authorities also conducted a massive operation to identify and arrest those responsible for the violence.

Result

Our research clearly shows that somewhere all the four factors seem to be same. Every conflict seems to be caused communal conflict. During the conflict, communalism seems to play an important role in escalation of the conflict. Moreover, failure of government is also seen in almost every case. The events only end because of widespread deaths. So following are the things that should be brought into attention which will discourage such events from occurring in future.

- Emphasis on the sense of fraternity.
- Government should avoid biased policies & should take action quickly in case of such events.
- Promotion of empathy & compassion.
- Importance of the dialogue.

CONCLUSION

Thus, one can clearly see the relevance of Tamas in the present-day world. It helps us better understand the consequences of communal tensions: "Tamas" portrays the consequences of communal tensions and how they can lead to violence, destruction, and loss of life. By reading the novel, one can gain a deeper understanding of the impact of communal tensions and the importance of promoting tolerance, understanding, and harmony. One can always learn from the mistakes of the past: The novel portrays how political leaders at the time failed to prevent the violence and how their indecisiveness and lack of leadership contributed to the tragedy. By studying the events depicted in "Tamas," one can learn from the mistakes of the past and work towards preventing similar tragedies in the future. It also allows us to appreciate the complexity of human emotions: "Tamas" portrays the different perspectives and emotions of the characters involved in the violence. By reading the novel, one can gain a deeper appreciation for the complexity of human emotions and the impact that violence and conflict can have on individuals. It clearly shows us that we should promote empathy and compassion: "Tamas" portrays the suffering and trauma of the victims of violence. By reading the novel, one can develop a greater sense of empathy and compassion for those who have experienced violence and trauma. This can help promote a more compassionate and understanding society. It also helps us recognize the importance of dialogue and reconciliation: The novel

highlights the failure of political leaders to find a solution to the communal tensions. By studying the events depicted in "Tamas," one can recognize the importance of dialogue and reconciliation in resolving conflicts and promoting peace.

In conclusion, "Tamas" can be a valuable source of learning for individuals interested in promoting peace, understanding, and harmony in society. By studying the novel, one can gain a deeper understanding of the impact of communal tensions and the importance of promoting tolerance, understanding, and empathy.

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