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## **Divide and rule: The dangerous implications and remedies to communal politics**

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### **Abstract**

The religion played a significant role both integrating and disintegrating people in India and world large. This article deals with the ideological perspectives of communalism and various factors responsible for the growth of communal fanaticism, communal violence, and sectarian riots, demolition, burning and forcible occupation of religious places etc in India. It also deals with steps taken for the check the growth of communalism and concluding remarks.

**Keywords:** Ideological perspectives, communalism, occupation, violence

### **Introduction**

Religion has played a significant role in both integrating and disintegrating people in the world at large. Religion as a means has the effect of unifying large sections of people on the one hand, religion has also led to sharp fragmentation between man and man, group and group, and nation and nation on the other hand. Religious wars in the Middle Ages in Europe in post-independent India also come across the communal riots at the time of partition and immediately thereafter, the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi in 1984; Meerut, Aligarh, Muzzafarnagar, Bhagalpur, UP, Gujarat, Karnataka and many parts of India affected by the force of fundamentalism. Even now, communalism in India continues to be a subject of interest not only to the students of Government and politics, and other social science and non-social science students but also to other larger interests of the active civil society. Over time, members of the major communities have increasingly organized themselves on communal lines. The religious fundamentalists have again become very active and because of their role, India, though a secular state is not a secular society because "India like some of the Asian countries is drifting into the morass of obscurantism, religious fundamentalism, and communal fanaticism" (Madhu Limaye, 1979) <sup>[16]</sup>.

This paper deals with ideological perspectives of communalism and various factors responsible for the growth of communal fanaticism, communal violence, sectarian riots, demolition, burning, and forcible occupation of religious places, etc in India. It also deals with steps taken the check the growth of communalism and concluding remarks.

### **Communalism is an ideology that consists of three elements that are as follows**

1. A belief that people who follow the same religion have common secular interests i.e. they have the same political, economic, and social interests. So, here socio- political commonalities arise.
2. A notion that, in a multi-religious society like India, these common secular interests of one religion are dissimilar and divergent from the interests of the follower of another religion.
3. The interests of the follower of a different religion or different 'communities' are seen to be completely incompatible, antagonist, and hostile.

Communalism also means when people of one community or religion go against the people of another community or religion. They start feeling superior to others. Social organization on a communal basis gives birth to hatred in society which ultimately ends in conflicts in society.

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## Factors responsible for the growth of Communalism in India

1. **Historical communal Legacy:** To curb the rising tide of nationalism in India the British government adopted the policy of divide and rule. By the time the government of India Act 1935 was passed, Muslim communalism was at its height which ultimately resulted in the partition of the country in 1947. Based on the "Two Nation" theory of Jinnah, India was partitioned. Communal politics had played its nasty game during the immediate past of independent India. The "Divide and Rule" policy of the British Government served their colonial interest. The partition of India was the outcome of their politics.
2. **Existence of Communal/ Sectarian Parties and Organizations:** Religion in India has become an important agency of political socialization and it is also reflected in the ideology of several political parties. Many communal and sectarian political parties and organizations are present in India. Muslim League, Muslim United Front (MUF), Jamaat-Islami, Hindu Mahasabha, Akali Dal, and Vishwa Hindu Parishad are directly or indirectly responsible for the emergence of communalism.
3. **Isolation of Muslims:** Indian Muslims have developed a tendency of isolationism even long after the creation of Pakistan. They remain aloof from the mainstream of national politics. Most of them are not interested to take part in the secular-nationalistic politics of the country. They insist on being treated as a separate entity.
4. **Economic Causes/Poverty:** The economic rivalry between small sections of both communities is another cause of communal flare-ups. For example Moradabad riots in 1981. There is no denying, that partly the rising prosperity of the minority community accounted for it. According to Asghar Ali Engineer, a social scientist, at Biharsharif and Godhra the acquisition of wealth by Muslims and the resultant economic rivalry between them and Hindus were the causes of riots. (J.R. Siwach, 1990).  
Mass poverty and unemployment create a sense of frustration among the people. It generates backwardness, illiteracy, ignorance, etc. The unemployed youth of both communities can be easily trapped by religious fundamentalists and fanatics. They are used by them to cause communal riots. The weak economic status often breeds communalism.
5. **Hindu Chauvinism:** The growth of Hindu chauvinistic attitudes has further strengthened communal tensions in India. The Hindu religious groups like Shiv Sena, Hindu Mahasabha, and Viswa Hindu Parishad often pressurize the government to take steps suitable to the interest of Hindus. They consider each Muslim as pro-Pakistani and anti-national. To face the possible challenge of other communal forces, they encourage the growth of Hindu communalism.
6. **Social Cause:** Post partition of the country, the two major communities of India Hindus and Muslims have been suspicious of each other. The Muslims complain of the threat of Hindu cultural invasion upon their lives and have become more assertive of their rights.
7. **Communalization of Politics:** Electoral politics in India has become more expensive and competitive. Different political parties are not hesitating to use any

means, fair or foul, for electoral victory. They even create communal tensions and try to take political advantage of them. Concessions are granted to various minority groups for appeasing them.

8. **Cross-Border factors:** Communal tensions in India sometimes are highly intensified due to the rule of two neighbouring theocratic countries. These countries try to create communal problems in the border states. The communal problems of Punjab and Jammu Kashmir are caused due to provocation of Pakistan. So long as this cross-border factor is not removed, communal problems are likely to stay in India.

## Ramification of Communalism

**Genocides:** With mass killings, the real sufferers are the poor, who lose their house, their near and dear ones, their lives, their livelihood, etc. It violates human rights from all directions. Sometimes children lose their parents and will become orphans for a lifetime.

Ghettos, slums, and refugee problems are other dimensions of communalism-induced violence, whether it's inter-country or intra-country.

The sudden increase in violence against any particular community causes mass exodus and stampede which in turn kills several people. For example, this was seen in the case of Bangalore in 2012, concerning people from Northeastern states, which was stimulated by a rumour.

Apart from affecting society, it is also a threat to Indian constitutional values, which promotes secularism and religious tolerance. In that case, citizens don't fulfill their fundamental duties towards the nation.

It becomes a threat to the unity and integrity of the nation as a whole. It promotes only the feeling of hatred in all directions, dividing society into communal lines.

Minorities are viewed with suspicion by all, including state authorities like police, para-military forces, the army, intelligence agencies, etc. There have been many instances when people from such communities have been harassed and detained and finally have been released by court orders guilt-free. For this, there is no provision for compensation of such victims, about their livelihood incomes, forgone, against social stigmas and emotional trauma of the families.

**The barrier to development:** Communal activities occurring frequently do harm the human resource and economy of the country. And then again it takes years for the people and the affected regions to come out of the traumas of such violence, having a deep impact on the minds of those who have faced it. They feel emotionally broken and insecure.

## Steps to check the growth of Communalism

### Economic

Poverty is one of the major factors for communal violence. Poverty alleviation measures are thus important for promoting communal harmony. Eradicating the problem of unemployment among the youths, illiteracy, and poverty, and that too with honesty and without any discrimination. Reducing the educational and economic backwardness of minorities like Muslims. This can uplift their socioeconomic status and reduce their deprivation compared to Hindus.

### Social

Religious leaders and preachers should promote rational and practical things through religion promoting peace and security. Children in schools must be taught through

textbooks and pamphlets to maintain brotherhood and respect for all religions. Creating awareness in society about the ill effects of communism through mass media.

### Political

Political communism should be avoided in recent Supreme court directives. Identification and mapping of riot-prone areas. For Example, Delhi police used drones to monitor to maintain vigil during communal festivals. Media, movies, and other cultural platforms can be influential in promoting peace and harmony. Social Media should be monitored for violent and repulsive content and taken off immediately.

### Recommendations of the Committee on National Integration

- a. The joint celebration of community festivals.
- b. Observing restraint by Hindus while taking processions before the mosques.
- c. Formation of peace and brotherhood communities at the local level to prevent anti-social elements from engaging in communal riots.
- d. Respect for religious customs, rituals, and practices.

### Conclusion

Communalism cannot be accepted as a necessary evil in society. It is detrimental to the development, social change, democracy, and federal features of the State. Jawaharlal Nehru pointed out the issue and termed it as the greatest danger. And so he said that anyone who loves India would hate communalism and anyone who hates India would love communalism.

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