

Religion and Politics in India

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Abstract:

Public policies and social norms are frequently shaped by the intersection of religion and politics. In Indian politics, religion plays a significant role. It has an impact on the nation's democracy and politics. India has a wide variety of religions, and its citizens hold deep convictions. Politics is impacted by these ideas. In India, religion has been applied in a variety of ways. In politics, religion has been employed both favorably and unfavorably. It has been used to win people over. Election success or failure has been significantly influenced by politics. Additionally, it has been crucial in addressing cultural and societal challenges. In Indian politics, religion is a major factor. It aids political parties in influencing voter behavior. Despite being divided along religious lines, India decided to become a secular nation and enacted its Constitution in 1950. Religion has been a point of contention in Indian politics. Violence results from anything that is overdone. The Hindu clarifies whether political parties are allowed to run campaigns based on caste and religion.

Keywords: Religion, Politics, Indian Politics, Communal Riots, Constitution to Control Religion

Introduction:

Politics and religion have always coexisted. Politics and religion are not new nor exclusive to India. It is a phenomenon that occurs everywhere. Since the conclusion of the Cold War, the usage of religion has significantly increased. Conflict between civilizations resulted from the conclusion of ideological conflict. Around the world, religious extremism of all kinds replaced secular philosophies.

Communalism is a political ideology, much like any other -ism. Voter mobilization is the goal of political ideology. It is known as communalism when religion is utilized to mobilize voters. Identity politics is what communalism is all about. Identity politics appeals to people's emotions or passions. Politics based on identity is invariably violent.

Man is a social "animal." Passions rule man, and once they are aroused or appealed to, they become uncontrollable. Violence will inevitably occur when reason fails. Being sentimental or ardent about one's own religion, culture, or language is perfectly acceptable. However, it is unethical for elites to exploit people by making emotional appeals.

B.R. Ambedkar once said, "Ignoring religion is like ignoring a live wire." Like other social influences and organizations, religion can either positively or negatively impact the society it controls. Religion is a belief or faith in anything that is wholly theoretical (ideal), somewhat practical, and that provides the believer with fulfillment, value, or a benefit. What we refer to as "Dharma" or religion is not a single entity. Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Buddhism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, Bahaism,

and many other small and contemporary religions are among the several structured religions practiced in Indian society today. [1-3]

Historical Evolution of Religion in Indian Politics

Since ancient times, religion has played a significant role in Indian politics. During the Vedic era, kings derived their legitimacy from heavenly sanction, and governance was intimately associated with religious teachings. Buddhist ethics were incorporated into statecraft under Ashoka (3rd century BCE) of the Mauryan Empire, promoting moral leadership and peace. Similarly, rulers in medieval India supported religious organizations, such as the Mughals, who promoted a hybrid culture that combined Islamic and Hindu customs.

Religious identity became a tool for political influence during British colonial administration. Communal divisions grew as a result of policies like the establishment of separate electorates for Muslims in 1909. The goal of the Indian independence movement, spearheaded by individuals such as Mahatma Gandhi, was to bring disparate religious communities together around a common nationalist ideology. But in the end, the Muslim League's rise and the movement for Pakistan led to India's partition in 1947, which sparked extensive sectarian violence.

Following independence, Jawaharlal Nehru and other Indian leaders embraced secularism as a fundamental tenet. The Constitution aimed to maintain official impartiality while protecting religious liberties. However, religion continues to play a significant role in politics, with different political parties using religious identities to gain political benefits. Important incidents like the emergence of Hindutva ideology, the Shah Bano issue (1985), the demolition of the Babri Masjid (1992), and the Gujarat riots (2002) demonstrate how religion and politics are still intertwined in contemporary India.[4-5]

Research Methodology

Research methodology is a structured and scientific approach used to collect, analyze, and interpret quantitative or qualitative data to answer research questions or test hypotheses. A good research methodology answers your research questions ethically and clearly explains why you made each methodological choice. If your study were repeated under similar conditions, your research methodology should act as the foundation for other researchers to verify your findings, build on your work, or determine if your results hold in different contexts.

Religion and Politics

Throwing politics and religion into each other's arms will undoubtedly start a fire because they are both volatile topics. Religious life and civil life have quite distinct responsibilities. You cannot say that God commanded you to disobey the law in order to defend yourself in court. Almost every nation builds a wall to keep God out of the Constitution for these and other reasons, but it appears to be a leaky wall because religious belief is a rather firm sight when politics get heated. Life is not compartmentalized, and personal morality—where God's voice is more powerful than anybody else's—is raised by topics ranging from abortion and birth control to homosexual rights and stem cell research. [6]

Despite the growing agreement on the right to freedom of conscience and the necessity of some kind of separation between church and state (both among political theorists and in actual political contexts, like the United Nations), the relationship between religion and politics remains a significant theme in

political philosophy. Religions frequently make significant claims about people's loyalty, and global religions make similar claims about everyone, not just members of a specific community, which is one reason this topic is so important. For instance, Islam has long maintained that everyone must submit to Allah's will. Therefore, it is most likely unavoidable that religious obligations may occasionally clash with political needs. However, religious practices and beliefs can also help politics in a variety of ways. For political philosophers, the degree and nature of this support are just as significant as the potential for conflict. Additionally, interest in minority groups and the political rights and entitlements they are entitled to has grown. This focus has led to significant attention being paid to the unique needs and problems of minority groups that are identified by their religion rather than by their wealth, gender, or race.[7]

Religion and Politics in India

Religion is fundamental to Indian culture and forms the cornerstone of our daily existence. From the start, political leaders believed that staying secular was the best way to keep India united. Gandhi ji had been advocating for brotherhood across the various religious groups because of this. Nehru was a fervent advocate for secularism. Their attempts failed to separate religion from politics; instead, vested interests in politics began to take advantage of caste and religion. [8, 9]

Difference Between Politics and Religion

Sr. No.	Politics	Religion
1.	Governing people	How one should live life
2.	Constant changes	Not changed since ages
3.	Lies	Myths
4.	Selfless & Violent	Lazy & Selfish
5.	Real life processes of society to govern itself	Faith in supernatural things
6.	Law	Ethics
7.	Rules & regulations	Morals
8.	Competitive	Not competitive
9.	Use religion	Don't use politics
10.	Game	Wisdom

Analysis of Communal Riots in India [10]

There are four schools of thought.

1 Essentialist

This school claims that Muslims and Hindus are two hostile groups. They will therefore inevitably clash with one another. Western academics like Louis Dumont have advanced this viewpoint. The aforementioned strategy is also the foundation of Jinnah's Two-Nation Theory.

2 Instrumentalist

Bipin Chandra: This school holds that the elites are to blame for all forms of communal violence, whether they occurred before or after independence. Caste and religious mobilization are preferred by elites. This thesis holds that although people are not communal, politicians employ community politics. As a result, normalcy eventually returns.

3 Institutionalism

Asghar Ali Engineer: He claims that communalism is encouraged by state policy. One community is made insecure by state actions and public policies, which also foster the perception that others are being discriminated against and are being placated.

4 Social Constructivists

They claim that certain prejudices against one another are still fostered by various societies. They create and maintain mental maps. Social constructivists contend that these prejudices are a result of the communities' inability to communicate with one another. One of the main issues is the lack of trust that exists between the communities as a result of poor communication.

5 Contribution of Paul Brass

He asserts that communal riots are not unplanned occurrences. The nation has very advanced machinery. These are programs of targeted violence rather than riots. They are carried out with great professionalism. There is always communal violence in the air. Political parties never permit a free environment. The spirit of communalism must endure.

He outlines the development of community violence in three stages. He believes that the division of labor is appropriate.

- **Preparatory Stage:** There are proper rehearsals. In this stage, there is a role of fire tenders. Keeping communalism in the air through speeches.
- **Precipitation Stage:** This is a stage when major violence erupts. Now comes the role of conversion specialists.
- **Explanatory Stage:** Now the blame game starts.

The Role of Constitution to Control Religion in Politics [11-13]

Politics and religion can bring people together, but they can also drive them apart. In 1950, the Indian Constitution was ratified. India becomes a secular country as a result. The state is not allowed to discriminate on the basis of religion. Every citizen is free to follow their own religion. India has implemented constitutional restrictions to control the role of religion in politics. The policies seek to uphold democratic values, ensure equality for all, and maintain secularism. Some of India's most important constitutional clauses and sections are:

- Article 25: [Freedom of Religion](#)
- Article 25 of the law guarantees freedom of conscience and religion. People have the right to freely practice and share their religion.
- The right to practice any religion is protected.
- This means individuals can choose their own religion.
- The state can control religious practices for public order, morality, and health reasons.
- Article 26: Freedom to Manage Religious Affairs
- Article 26 enables the religious groups to govern their religious issues.
- This implies that the government does not meddle in their personal businesses. The government has no right to dictate the way a religious body should run.
- Religious institutions can be formed and maintained by religious groups.
- They are able to take control of their properties. They are also capable of dealing with religious endowments.

- The government can control organizations.
- Regulation is aimed at providing the order of people, morality, and health.

Secularism: India is a secular country, according to the Preamble of the Indian Constitution. This indicates that all religions are treated equally by the state, which does not have an official religion. Secularism aims to keep one religion from controlling politics.

Anti-Discrimination: Discrimination based on religion is forbidden by the Constitution. The state is not allowed to discriminate against any person on the grounds of:

- religion
- race
- caste
- sex
- place of birth.

It prohibits political parties from engaging in political discrimination in order to win support from voters.

- **Electoral Laws:** [The Representation of the people Act, 1951](#) regulates the way of circuit in elections in India. It does not allow the voter to use religion and caste or language to campaign in elections. There is no way that political parties and candidates can demand votes on the basis of religion. It does not allow them to instill hatred amongst the various religious groups.

- **Election Commission of India:** [Election Commission](#) is an organization that abides by the constitution. They ensure that the Indian elections are fair and free. It acts to make sure that the political parties follow the laws and rules of election. During election campaigns, the Commission monitors them. It punishes the violators of rules. It assists in creating an equal opportunity to all political parties regardless of their religion.

- **State Neutrality:** According to the [Indian Constitution](#), a state is not supposed to be partisan in religious affairs. Article 27 does not allow the use of state finances to advance any given religion or religious practices. The state should neither discriminate nor have favors towards a specific religion. The clauses of the constitution aim to keep India secular and prohibit the use of religion in politics. All citizens are treated fairly under constitutions, regardless of their religious beliefs. Additionally, they guaranty equal opportunity for all political parties during the electoral process.

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Activists of the Hindu right-wing Shiv Sena party in New Delhi protest on Nov. 1, 1999, against what they claim are forced conversions of Hindus by Christian missionaries.

Hindu nationalists classify Christianity as an outsider religion, though it has existed in India for 2000 years.

Religion and Politics in India

— BY LANCY LOBO—

THERE ARE ONE BILLION PEOPLE in India, the second most populous country in the world. This means every sixth person in the world is an Indian. About 450 million Indians live below the poverty line. Suppression of religious minorities and its nuclear blasts have made India visible to the world. One of the messages that India sent to the world was that it needs to be reckoned with. The Hindu nationalist leadership on the whole sent this message. While each country needs dignity before others, many ask why such a poverty-ridden country should invest massive amounts in nuclear devices and why it persecutes a Christian religious minority that has made bold attempts to empower the poor of India.

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Conclusion:

In conclusion, the interaction between religion and politics in contemporary India is a complex and multifaceted issue that has a significant influence on the sociopolitical climate of the nation. Politics, legislation, and election decisions are still heavily influenced by religion. Religious equality is protected under India's secular constitution, but the increasing use of religion in politics has led to significant problems like the rise of religious nationalism, disputes between communities, and the marginalization of minority groups. In Indian politics, religion has a big impact on voting behavior, the choice of candidates, and policy choices. In India, the caste system serves as a foundation for affirmative action as well as a system of social stratification and restriction.

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