



UN Information Centre
for India and Bhutan



UFYLC MUN 5.0

BACKGROUND GUIDE

AIPPM

**AGENDA : DELIBERATION OVER
COMMUNALISM, CASTEISM AND
RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE**

**11TH 12TH
APRIL 2020**

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CHALLENGE**

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Note: The BG provides an idea of the agenda and should not be considered for the entire research.

Greetings Delegates!

It is an honour to be serving as a part of the Executive Board of All India Political Party Meet at UFYLC Model United Nations from the 11th -12th April 2020. We hope to be a part of an enriching academic simulation and engage in a constructive discussion in the committee.

The background guide shall only be an instrument of assistance to the delegates instead of being the sole basis for your research. The given list of topics is not exhaustive and it is not intended to be. The list is simply indicative of pressing issues and topics of concerns, which must be addressed and will give you a bird's eye view of the gist of the issue. The delegates are at full liberty to bring up any other relevant point for discussion. We understand that MUN conferences can be an overwhelming experience for first timers but it must be noted that our aspirations from the delegates is not how experienced or articulate they are. Rather, we want to see how he/she can respect disparities and differences of opinion, work around these, while extending their own ideology so that it includes more of comprehensive solutions without compromising their own stand and initiating consensus building.

We sincerely hope that the All India Political Party Meet at the UFYCL Model United Nation's will help you gain experience to become better professionals and persons in future.

May the force be with you.

Mayank Raj Dang (Moderator)

Anjali Mundra (Co- Moderator)

Manya (Scribe)

Communal Harmony and Distorted Secularism

India is a land of religions, languages and customs. Many religions are flourishing here since long back, which have their own traditions and beliefs. Therefore India is a multi religious and multi cultural country from its known history. Secular traditions are very deep rooted in the history of India. Indian culture is a composite one which is based on the blending of various spiritual traditions and social movements. The spirit of secularism was strengthened and enriched through the Indian freedom movement too. In the initial part of the Indian freedom movement, the liberals like Sir Feroz Shah Mehta, Govind Ranade, Gopal Krishn Gokhale by and large pursued a secular approach to politics.

The term “Communalism” is peculiar to South Asia, and perhaps, most specifically to India, where it has a meaning quite different to the peaceful derivatives of ‘commune’ and ‘collectivism’, all denoting social harmony and cooperation that the rest of the world is familiar with. In India, communalism connotes rabid hate and divisiveness on the basis of religion with the erstwhile Indian subcontinent having been divided into India and Pakistan in 1947, on the basis of a created communal divide between Hindus and Muslims.

India, a multi-religious, multilingual and multi-racial country, has always ‘enjoyed the essential unity of culture amidst diversities that kept her people united. After independence, narrow religious, regional and communal feelings attracted the country. The apparently mindless communal tensions and bloody riots that take place occasionally create a sense of mistrust among the two principal religious communities involved in clashes. The country pays a heavy price for such disturbances through loss of life and property. Unfortunately, this traditionally peace-loving country is sometimes plagued by communal problems. It all happens as some fanatical zealots indulge in torturing the people of other religion. The alarming rise of fundamentalism is a great concern to the nation. Almost all the States of our country suffer owing to religious intolerance. Inter-communal relationship suffers a breach in this vitiated atmosphere. Our unity, integrity and solidarity is now at stake. It hampers the growth of the nation at every step. If the nation wishes to make sound progress in the socio-economic, political and scientific spheres, communal harmony has to be ensured as a permanent feature of life.

At present scenario, in the context of Indian, the separation of religion from the state constitutes the core of the philosophy of secularism. The expression ‘secular’ has also a special significance in the context of the historical development of Indian polity. It is of pivotal importance in the context of political realities on the ground as they exist now. In India, the word secular is identified with tolerance among the different religions. In a secular state, no one enjoys any special privilege in national life or in any type of conduct for international relations. No group of citizens arrogates to itself the rights and privileges which it denies to others. No person suffers from any form of disability or discrimination because of his religion but all alike to be free to share the fullest degree of freedom in his the common life.

Communalism

Communalism is referred in the western world as a “theory or system of government in which virtually autonomous local communities are loosely in federation”. Communalism is a political philosophy, which proposes that market and money be abolished and that land and enterprises to be placed in the custody of community. But in the Indian sub-continent context, communalism has come to be associated with tensions and clashes between different religious communities in various regions.

It is basically an ideology which consists of three elements:

1. A belief that people who follow the same religion have common secular interests i.e. they have same political, economic and social interests. So, here socio- political commonalities arises.
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 the different religion or of different ‘communities’ are seen to be completely incompatible, antagonist and hostile.

Communalism is political trade in religion. It is an ideology on which communal politics is based. And communal violence is conjectural consequences of communal ideology. The interests of the follower of the different religion or of different ‘communities’ are seen to be completely incompatible, antagonist and hostile.

Since Independence, India has been pursuing the ideal of

nation-building based on secularism. Even after 70 years of independence, India is still burning under the fire of communalism. Though, there are various reasons responsible for this. But few of them have been discussed here, understanding the reasons which play role in continuation of communalism are: first one is religious, and the second one is political. Third one is socio-economic and the fourth one is international.

In the first, i.e. religious, its fundamentalism should be considered responsible for communalism. After all, 'Our belief alone is true' and 'rest is untrue or incomplete', we find this kind of mentality of fundamentalists. As per this mentality, when the followers of any religious community, sect or sub-sect indulge in their activities, they certainly come in conflict with others. Reason is quite evident. They do not have tolerance, which is absolutely necessary for a country like India—a land of different religious communities. They become the cause of

confrontation, malice and struggle. In the first, i.e. religious, its fundamentalism should be considered responsible for communalism. After all, 'Our belief alone is true' and 'rest is untrue or incomplete', we find this kind of mentality of fundamentalists. As per this mentality, when the followers of any religious community, sect or sub-sect indulge in their activities, they certainly come in conflict with others. Reason is quite evident. They do not have tolerance, which is absolutely necessary for a country like India—a land of different religious communities. They become the cause of confrontation, malice and struggle.

Politicians also have played a villainous role in creating serious communal situations in India. There was politics at the root of painful division of India in 1947 in the name of a particular religious community. But even after paying a heavy price in the form of partition, in many riots provoked thereafter, we can find the involvement directly or indirectly, of political parties or their supporters. Along with this for the sake of vote bank, the policy of appeasement, selection of candidates on the basis of community, sect, sub-sect and caste, and flaring up religious sentiments at the time of elections, led to the rise of communalism. These practices are still continued and the country is bearing heavy loss because of it. We can witness many adverse results of these practices.

Socio economic conditions of India, though after independence has improved and even the economic reforms after 1991 has been instrumental in improving such conditions, but still there are many challenges in front of Indian society, which are becoming threat for

its diversity. Population, Poverty, illiteracy and unemployment create a lot of compulsions, especially before younger generation. That is why, many from younger generation, because of lack of right thinking, remain unemployed and in a state of poverty, get involved in the evil like communalism. The efforts being made for uprooting poverty, illiteracy and unemployment are not as fruitful as they should be.

External elements (including non-state actors) also have a role in worsening the problem of communalism, and making it serious. We cannot mention the name of any particular country in this regard but scholars and those who think on this problem from time to time have highlighted this fact.

The main reasons for involvement of external elements or their role in riots are as follows:

- To create an atmosphere of instability, so that it becomes socially weak;
- To hope for gaining sympathy from minorities;
- To try to weaken the economic structure of a foreign country; and
- With the aim to conceal their own incompetence.

Communalism in contemporary India

The Indian law defines communal violence as, “any act or series of acts, whether spontaneous or planned, resulting in injury or harm to the person and or property, knowingly directed against any person by virtue of his or her membership of any religious or linguistic minority, in any State in the Union of India, or Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes within the meaning of clauses

(24) and (25) of Article 366 of the Constitution of India”.

Communalism has unfortunately become part of India, with divisiveness emerging as the possible hallmark of the 2014 elections. There is a fight back from secular political parties and organisations, but at the moment it appears weaker than the communal offensive that is on the ascendant. In the states the regional political parties are contesting the Hindu nationalist communal forces with campaigns that continue to harp on pluralism and communal harmony. The sizeable Muslim vote in India ensures the resistance, with most of the political parties keen to ensure that this vote bank is not alienated. Lessons from history, and indeed from contemporary politics, have convinced the politicians that power flows from a ‘divide and rule’ policy where communities pitted against each other can then be persuaded to vote for those who they see to best represent their respective interests.

However, these incidents are not just recent in nature, as the country moved into the 1970's, communal violence broke out in different parts of India. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar took the brunt with large scale violence between religious communities characterising the 1980's as the most violent decade since independence. Assam was plunged into a virtual civil war with thousands being massacred across the state as so called indigenous Assamese attacked Bangladeshi migrants (mostly Muslims) with deathly intent. Swords, bows and arrows, and spears were used as villagers attacked villagers in scenes reminiscent of the medieval era. Delhi, the capital of India, went up in flames after the assassination of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards, with mobs attacking Sikhs and killing at least 3000 in three days. Kashmir saw huge terrorist atrocities directed at Hindus and Sikhs that led to the flight of Hindus from the Valley that was then overtaken by violent militancy. Communal violence took a heavy toll of lives in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar at the same time, with hundreds being killed in clashes between Hindus and Muslims, or between Muslims and the state police forces that opened fire on innocent persons in different instances.

Instances of Communal Violence in India

§ Partition of India, 1947 : After partition, millions of population were forced to move from both sides of the border. Hindus in Pakistan and Muslims in India were killed in masses, women were raped, and many children lost their parents. There was hatred everywhere; violence didn't see anything except bloodshed. Later, it turned in the problem of refugees and their rehabilitation became one of the biggest challenges for independent India.

§ Anti-Sikh riots, 1984: This is one of the bloodshed in India, where Sikhs in large number were massacred by anti- Sikh mob. This massacre took place in response to the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by his own Sikh body Guard in response to her actions authorising the military operation.

§ Ethnic cleansing of Kashmiri Hindu Pundits in 1989: Kashmir is known as the heaven of India and was known for its Kashmiryat, i.e. the reflection of love, peace and harmony through brotherhood and unity of Hindu, Muslims and other communities living together. But, the brotherhood saw a serious blow due to Extremist Islamic terrorism in the Kashmir valley, which led to mass killing and large scale exodus of Kashmiri Pundits from the valley to the various regions and corners of the India, giving them the status of rrefugee in their own country. Since then, the valley is under the grip of communal

violence and the ongoing unrest has become a problem for the development of the people.

§ Babri masjid demolition in Ayodhya, 1992: According to Hindu mythology, Ayodhya is birth place of Lord Rama and therefore it is sacred place for Hindu religion. But in medieval period Mughal general Mir Baqi, built a mosque, named after Mughal ruler Babur. There were disputes since then and riots also took place. But in 1990, due to some political mobilisation, there was atmosphere of protest by Hindu religious groups and in large scale “kar sevak” visited Ayodhya from all parts of India, in support of demolishing Babri masjid and building Ram temple there. These movements caused huge amount of bloodshed and since then it is a disputed matter.

After this, violence was followed by the Godhra incident in 2002, when “kar sevak” returning from Ayodhya in a Sabarmati Express were killed by fire in the coaches of train. This act was followed by the extended communal violence in Gujarat. That violence is like black spot in the history of the Gujarat and nation too, as people were killed without any mercy. Hindu and Muslim community became antagonist to each other.

§ Assam Communal violence, 2012 : North eastern states are known for its distinguished tribal population & ethnic diversity and large scale Bangladeshi immigration has changed the demography of North eastern states, which often becomes reason for clashes. In 2012, there were ethnic clashes between Bodos (Tribal, Christian & Hindu faith) and Muslims.

§ Muzaffarnagar violence, 2013 : The cause of this ethnic clash between Jat and Muslim community is very much disputed and has many versions. According to few, it was started after some suspicious post on Social media platform Facebook. According to some, it was escalated after the eve teasing case in Shamli. Let the reasons be unknown, but what matters is, the nature and scale of loss to the country with respect to human resource and peace.

In all these and hundreds of other riots, one thing is common that huge majority of victims have nothing to do with communal hatred. In short, preparators of violence and victims of violence are different persons. It is imperative for all such secular forces to work together and ensure that stereotyping is countered, lies are replaced by facts, and all effort is made to keep communal harmony intact.

National human rights commission (NHRC) in India fights for the causes of rights of the victims, but its recommendations are advisory in nature, which doesn't gives significant outcome.

Ethnic tensions between Bodos and Bengali-speaking Muslims escalated into a riot in Kokrajhar in July 2012, when unidentified miscreants killed four Bodo youths at Joypur.

From time to time, respective governments have constituted various committees, to give recommendations to solve the issue of communal violence. prominent among them are Sachar committee, Nanavati committee and Ranganath mishra commission.

Sachar committee, appointed in 2005, recommended to set up Equal opportunity commission (EOC) in 2010. EOC was to set up a grievance redressal mechanism for all individual cases of discriminations- religion, caste, gender & physical ability among others.

same.

The solution of such problems cannot be one or two steps by government. Apart from legislative support, administrative efficiency and alertness with the help of modern tools and technology, the major

onus lies on the citizens themselves by avoiding communal violence.

Media, movies and other cultural platforms can be influential in promoting peace and harmony. Though all such practises in India are common, but there is still scope for improvement in this direction. Thus, in order to get rid of the problem of communalism in India, there is a need of collective efforts. All will have to discharge their duties. If we do so,

definitely harmony will prevail. Everybody will prosper.

The Nanavati-Mehta commission, set up by Gujarat government in 2002 to enquire about

Gujarat violence.

The Ranganath Misra Commission was entrusted by the Government of India to suggest practical measures for the upliftment of the socially and economically backward sections among religious and linguistic minorities and to include the modalities of implementation for the

The purpose of all above committees is to give recommendations to find out the causes of

backwardness of minorities and steps required to improve their conditions.

combated with the help of globalisation as a tool. In the globalised world, all countries are becoming integrated and dependent on each other. Movement of people from one place to other is becoming very easy, in such conditions to avoid such potential violence,

governments are already promoting cultural exchanges through shows, programs, heritage walk, cultural visit by

Communalism can be

students and parliamentarians.

(History and dynamics of communal violence in India)

Over the years, India has seen a number of what have been variously referred to as 'communal violence' and 'communal riots', ranging in severity from minor skirmishes during religious processions to the systematic and violent targeting of minorities, such as occurred in 1984 in Delhi (against Sikhs) and 2002 in Gujarat (against Muslims). According to the MHA, 'communal violence' involves 'planned and organised acts of violence by members of one community against members of another community with the intent of creating or expressing ill-will or hatred and leading to the loss of life or injuries to people'.⁹ Rights activists have argued for a more comprehensive approach to understanding communal violence, however, acknowledging the role of political actors who instigate and benefit from these attacks.

Furthermore, they highlight the inseparability of this violence from a broader range of discrimination and human rights violations on communal grounds, such as hate speech, exclusionary educational materials, the effective 'ghettoization' of minority communities and barriers to employment, housing and other needs. Rather than viewing each incident of communal violence as an isolated affair, this perspective more effectively accounts for the continuum of violence facing India's religious minorities, with each episode part of a longer-term 'state- society nexus that sustains the violence and reinforces impunity'.¹⁰ This approach also challenges reductive understandings of communal violence as the result of endemic and inherent hostility between religious communities, as well as a false equivalence which fails to recognise that communal violence overwhelmingly harms India's religious minorities. These issues are also in part perpetuated by the terminology used to refer to this violence: the label 'communal' can serve to obfuscate its linkages to a broader discriminatory context. Nevertheless, 'communal violence' is used in this briefing which draws heavily on official data and statistics, while recognising and working to address these limitations.

Communal violence has played a key role in post- independence India, in part influenced by the legacy of colonial rule in the sub-continent. British rule in India contributed significantly to the growing division of the Indian population through its classification of communities along religious lines, particularly in the decades leading up to independence in 1947. This culminated in Partition and the creation of India and Pakistan: a traumatic separation along communal lines that was accompanied by widespread religiously motivated violence, leaving between 1 and 2 million killed, tens of thousands sexually assaulted.

A key impact of colonialism and the trauma of Partition has been to and as many as 15 million displaced.

promote the formation of exclusionary identities, with ongoing implications for religious minorities.

The period following Partition saw continued outbreaks of communal violence, with a rise in incidents taking place in the 1960s, often involving the direct planning of political parties and right-wing nationalists, particularly the RSS. Coupled with social and economic discrimination, this encouraged a number of Muslims who had initially remained in India to migrate to Pakistan. Disproportionate numbers of more educated and influential Muslims were amongst those who left, contributing to even greater marginalisation of Muslims in India, who were increasingly segregated and excluded, a condition influenced by the insecurity they faced.

Violence against India's religious minorities spiked in the 1980s, with a number of high profile attacks including on Bengali Muslims in Assam (1983), Sikhs in Delhi (1984), and Muslims in different parts of India in the late 1980s, linked to the Babri Masjid demolition movement. These incidents reflected the instrumentalization of communal violence by parties across the political spectrum, including the Indian National Congress (INC) and the BJP, the latter of which saw its political influence rise in the 1980s. The BJP's promotion of an exclusionary Hindu nationalism was exhibited in the 1980s and 1990s through its involvement in a number of high-profile cases of communal violence, including the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992. This incident, contesting the presence of a 16th century mosque in a location claimed by some to be the birthplace of Ram, led not only to its demolition by an organised crowd of Hindu protestors but the subsequent outbreak of communal violence, with hundreds killed in riots across the country, the majority Muslims. This incident was the culmination of a protracted

campaign by Hindu extremists, supported by a number of high-ranking officials who either encouraged or failed to prevent these attacks.

Over time, communal violence has become a recurring feature of Indian politics. As detailed by the

cases of communal riots outlined in Table 3, these incidents both draw on and perpetuate discrimination against religious minorities, who have been

disproportionately targeted. Although tensions have been strategically provoked by a range of political actors, the

polarisation resulting from riots has been found to

particularly benefit right-wing parties, who have been in

power at the national level four times: 1977-79, 1998-99, 1999-2004, and at present, since 2014. The ruling BJP,

for example, is regarded to have benefited during the

2014 national level elections from the heightened

communal divisions resulting from riots in

Muzaffarnagar and Shamli in 2013, in India's largest state, Uttar Pradesh. state.

Ahead of elections, ring-wing groups frequently invoke anti-minority sentiment, including through hate speech or specific campaigns, such as revived calls to build a Hindu temple at the site of the demolished Babri Masjid in

Ayodhya. Despite attempts in the past by Prime Minister

Narendra Modi to distance his public image from a

religious nationalist agenda through promoting inclusive

development – ‘sabka saath, sabka vikas’ – actors affiliated

with the BJP have recently re-ignited this issue, likely in

an attempt to consolidate their support base ahead of

national elections in 2019. Similar themes have been

instrumentalized in the context of state level elections: for

example, ahead of the 2017 BJP victory in Uttar Pradesh,

the Prime Minister and other BJP officials drew on

references to ‘love jihad’ and accusations of preferential

resource distribution to Muslims – both of which have

previously been invoked ahead of communal riots .

In addition to immediate challenges facing religious minorities in the aftermath of communal violence, a possible long-term impact is therefore greater entrenchment and institutionalisation of Hindu nationalism and anti-minority sentiment.

Key incidents of communal violence affecting India's religious minorities, 1964 - 2013

- January – March 1964, West Bengal / Bihar / Orissa (now Odisha): Riots took place in Calcutta (West Bengal), and later spread to Jamshedpur (then in Bihar, now part of Jharkhand), and Rourkela (Orissa, now Odisha), resulting in an official death toll of 134, but with estimated deaths of up to several thousand. Violence was allegedly triggered following the theft of a holy relic from Hazratbal mosque in Srinagar, Kashmir in 184 people killed, including 164 Muslims, and further deaths in nearby industrial towns such as Hatia where 26 people were killed, including 25 Muslims. Targeting of Muslims was provoked during general elections in March 1967 around the status of Urdu, spoken overwhelmingly by Muslims. Anti-Urdu protests led by right-wing Hindu nationalists drew on existing anti-Muslim sentiment, which had been exacerbated during riots involving Hindus and Muslims in September 1969 took place in Ahmedabad and nearby areas, resulting in a death toll of 660 and 1,074, the majority of them communal violence and rising anti-Muslims sentiment,
- April 1979, Jamshedpur, Bihar (now Jharkhand): Mass violence in Jamshedpur on 11 April resulted in a death toll of 108, including 79 Muslims. This was provoked by a large anti-minority procession through a predominantly Muslim area organised by Hindu extremists and also involving Adivasis. This violence had been directly preceded by the spreading of anti-Muslim sentiment, such as through speeches and distribution of leaflets, and drew on a broader context of industrial in 1963.
- August 1967, Ranchi, Bihar: Riots in Ranchi resulted decline and prior communal violence in the area.
- August – November 1980, Moradabad, Uttar PRADESH
- September 1969, Ahmedabad, Gujarat: Large-scale Pradesh: An escalation of violence primarily between Muslims and (Hindu) Dalits, and later involving police, resulted in a death toll between 400 (official government figure) and 2,500 (an independent estimate), primarily Muslims. The incident was provoked by allegations of Muslims kidnapping a Dalit girl, and involved direct violence between Muslims in

assembly elections occurred against a backdrop of ethnic and linguistic divisions, as well as tensions around the migration of Bangladeshi Muslims into the area. The holding of assembly elections sparked protests that saw Muslim residents, homes and property targeted by Hindus, tribal members and ethnic Nepalis. The number of people killed in Nellie and surrounding villages, though unknown, could be as (430 and 592 respectively) Muslim.

A NARROWING SPACE: VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST INDIA'S RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

- October – November 1984, Delhi: Following the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by two Sikh bodyguards, anti-Sikh riots broke out in Delhi, resulting in more than 3,700 deaths. This was preceded by a military operation in Punjab some months prior, which had left many Sikhs dead and a

Following extensive agitation and hate speech by Hindu extremists, communal violence broke out between Hindus and Muslims in the cities of Bombay and Bhiwandi. Well-orchestrated attacks and arson left

between upper-caste Hindus and Backward Classes evolved into communal violence against the local Muslim population. The police were complicit in much of the violence, attacking Muslim neighbourhoods with arson and gunfire on a number of occasions. The total

Hindu over a minor land dispute led to large-scale rioting after some Muslims pelted police with stones. The subsequent violence, with hundreds killed, saw a number of Muslim neighbourhoods burnt and looted with the alleged support of local police, with some accounts claiming that more than 100 Muslims were killed by security forces in nearby Moradnagar in a riot.

in the context of significant mobilisation by Hindu extremists around the issue of the Babri Masjid, which they claim to be the birthplace of Ram. This was preceded by general elections at the end of the previous year, and resulted in the death and injury of

demolition of the Babri Masjid by Hindu extremists in 1992 led to outrage amongst Muslims, and mobilisation of Hindu mobs against them in various parts of India. Riots and massacres resulted in hundreds of deaths and injuries which disproportionately

affected Muslims. killed and injured. The worst of the violence occurred in Mumbai: besides looting, destruction of places of worship and numerous incidents of sexual assault, a total of some 900 lives were lost, of whom an estimated 2,000 killed, 100,000 displaced, and many others injured - the overwhelming majority of them Muslim, who were specifically targeted. These riots, framed as retaliatory violence for the burning of a train carrying Hindu pilgrims, were also accompanied by high levels of sexual violence against minority women and those accused of associating with Muslims. Members of the BJP state government have been accused of complicity in the violence and for Hindu nationalist leader, extremists used the incident to scapegoat the local Christian community. Violence resulted in the death of at least 39 Christians, more than 230 places of worship vandalized .

Uttar Pradesh:- Communal riots overwhelmingly targeting Muslims resulted in the death of at least 65, an estimated 50,000 displaced, and high levels of sexual violence against minority women. The riots were preceded by accusations of a Muslim man harassing a Jat, Hindu, woman, and local authorities have been widely blamed holy site, Akal Takht, damaged.

- May 1984, Bombay and Bhiwandi, Maharashtra: hundreds across various parts of India.
- December 1992 – January 1993, various: The hundreds dead, the large majority of them Muslim.
- March – June 1985, Ahmedabad, Gujarat: A dispute death toll from the violence exceeded 200.
- May 1987, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh: The murder of a single day.
- October 1989, Bhagalpur, Bihar: A Ram Shila failing to curb atrocities.
- August 2008, Odisha: Following the assassination of a procession through a predominantly Muslim neighbourhood escalated into violence that soon spread throughout the city and to surrounding villages, with some estimates putting the actual death toll at over a thousand, including 896 Muslims, 50 Hindus and another 106 missing persons. Local police were complicit in the violence: the superintendent,

dismissed by Bihar's Director General of Police for his involvement, was later reinstated by then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi following pressure from police.

- April – December 1990, various: This extended period saw high levels of clashes and targeted attacks

thousands of people displaced.

- September 2013, Muzaffarnagar and Shamli, Uttar Pradesh
575 were Muslim.

- February-March 2002, Gujarat: Severe violence
for their failure to halt the spread of violence.

Casteism

The post-independent India while adopting her constitution put affirmative action as a part of its objective to alleviate the poverty, unemployment and the miseries of the so called untouchables (SC and ST), other backward classes and the adivasis. The castes eligible for this treatment were identified and included in the schedule for quotas and reservation in education and employment. These castes came to be known as Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled tribes (STs). The other eligible castes for reservation and quotas came to be known as Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Jotirao Phule was the first modern thinker to characterise the productive castes of India as 'Sudras and Ati-Sudras'. Those castes other than Brahman, Kshatriya and Vaisyas were called by him as Sudras. Ati-Sudras is the so-called untouchables and according to Phule they are the ones who predate the Varna scheme. But now many of the Sudra castes have been elevated into neo- Kshatriya category. Hence to denote the people who still languish in the drudgery of caste system had to have a word to rally all men and women from these castes and fight for their emancipation.

B. R. Ambedkar, the great leader of the productive castes of pre and post- independent India started using the term dalit, a concept that is rooted in Marathi language to refer to the so- called lower caste people. The word dalit means suppressed and exploited people. The concept has emerged from the people's usage in Maharashtra. Dalit has come to mean things or persons who are cut, split, broken or torn asunder, scattered or crushed and destroyed. The term dalit became popular after the emergence of Dalit Panthers movement in Maharashtra. Dalit is usually used to denote the SCs. After the emergence of Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh, the use of the term Bahujan to refer the SCs, STs and OBCs gained acceptance of the people and the government. This term was first used by Buddha and then by Phule. The term Bahujan simply means majority and does not qualify the nature of the population. Hence dalit scholar- activists like Kancha Ilaiah use the term Dalit bahujans to refer to so-called untouchables and the Other Backward Castes.

Myth and Reality about Caste System in India:

The orthodox view on the origin and sustenance of caste system in India relies heavily on the sacerdotal texts and on the brahmanical interpretation of the same. This originates from a monolithic understanding of caste system and considers the reality as one that continues for

three millennium without any significant mutation. According to the Purusasukta legend, the Brahmans and Kshatriyas emerged from the head and shoulders, respectively, of Purusa, the primeval being. Consequently they merit high-caste status. Next came the Vaisyas from the thighs of the primeval being. The same legend goes on to say that the lowly Shudras deservedly occupy a subordinate position because they were born from Purusa's feet. The so- called untouchables who bore the burnt of this mysterious system for generations are beyond this four-fold Varna scheme. The dominant lay understanding and academic point of view on caste phenomenon is that a single caste hierarchy is universally acknowledged and accepted by everyone in the caste system. To believe that there is a single caste order to which all castes from Brahman to the untouchables adhere would not match the realities. The emergence of Rajput and Gujar-Pratihara kingdoms in the medieval India and the rise of Jats from the thirteenth century onwards, the assertion of Izhavas and later of Mahars in the modern period are the example to prove this view-point. But no castes other than the Brahmins adhere to this origin story and hence thereby accept their current status in the caste hierarchy. The entire so- called untouchable and other castes have their own origin tales that are totally against the orthodox view. For example, the Kahars, a backward caste of Central Bihar claim that they are descendents of the lunar dynasty – the moon, which are the eyes of Purusa. This story tries to establish the superiority of Kahar's over and above the Brahmans and Kshatriyas by stating that they are made up of superior and finer material. In medieval India, the Bakhti movement, which was anti-caste and anti-brahmanical, lasted several centuries. This could not have

been possible if the brahmanical view of caste hierarchy was accepted by all. The present day caste wars, uprisings and demands for more shares in economic and political power would not have arisen if brahmanical-textual view were accepted uncritically by all. The caste system is being viewed as a rigid hierarchy based on purity and pollution. But no caste, even those placed at the bottom of the caste hierarchy do accept the upper-caste notion that their bodies are made of impure substances. No caste willingly agrees that its members are defiling and charge other castes to be polluting them. A Chamar i.e. Leather worker believes that he or she is being pushed down the caste ladder unjustly but at the same time condemns other so called untouchables to lower caste status. But at the same time every caste (jati) practices its own purity–impurity rituals. This is the story of the myth and reality about the caste system in India.

Conclusion

After a long history of communal incident in India, still now, Secularism is seen as the only possible option that would be able to provide harmonious and peaceful survival for the different religions and casts of Indian society. Communal conflict is a hurdle in nation building as there can be no development unless there is fraternity or cross cultural harmony. Communal riots and riots disrupt law and order which requires large amounts of money and personnel to resolve, diverting the government's concentration away from development of the nation. Fraternity and harmony are result of manifestation of liberty, equality and justice. These constitutional values must prevail in all senses: religiously, linguistically, economically and politically.

It is the sacred duty of our political leaders to inject the importance of communal harmony in their political programs. The media must also recognise its responsibility in nation building and spread the message of universal brotherhood and not align itself with economically and politically powerful institutions for vested interests. The danger of communalism can be averted if the self-defeating and suicidal slogans like 'my state', my language', my caste' and after all 'my religion' are supreme, give way to the noble sentiment of India first and last and always. It will integrate our emotions and aspirations and ensure Communal Harmony and National integration of the country. Then the slogan 'unity in diversity' will be true and be our hopes and aspirations.

Regards,
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Manya.