



Impact Of Religion On Political Culture In Contemporary India

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Abstract: Religion plays a significant role in shaping political culture in contemporary India, influencing issues such as identity, social cohesion and electoral dynamics. With a diverse population practicing various faiths, religious sentiments often shape political discourse, alliances and policies. Hindu nationalism for instance gained prominence, affecting governance, legislation and societal norms. Additionally, religious minorities play crucial role in shaping political narratives and mobilizing supports, highlighting the intricate relationship between religion and politics in India. This paper is based on secondary data collection; it will explain overall impact on political culture in contemporary India is profound and multifaceted shaping not only electoral dynamics but also governance, policy making and societal cohesion. This paper has been made to analyze, communal tension, secularism debates and their impact on people's psychological orientation towards political culture.

Index Terms – Religion, Political culture, Identity politics, Secularism debates, Communal tension

I. INTRODUCTION

India is the land of religious and cultural diversity, there are people from many religious faiths. Though there is Hindu majority with 79.8 percent of the total population followed by Muslim 14.2%, Christian 2.3% and rest Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and other religious people live in India. The beauty of India is that, there is no official or state religion, which give the status of a secular state, unique among all the nation in the world. The constitution of India treats all religious communities equally with the absence of special privileges to any and strives to establish fraternity among all. Despite all the constitutional arrangements which attempt for harmony among all communities, there is always silent and violent communal conflict between two major religion communities Hindu and Muslims for various issues. The conflict is not new born; it has been since independence which divided the country into two separate nations based on religion. The Muslim majority became Pakistan and rest remained Hindustan which is the place of Hindu. Pakistan became a theocratic country with Islam as state religion and India remained secular. Amid this division an area illegally occupied by Pakistan called POK (Pakistan Occupied Kashmir) which resulted many riots war between both the countries. Conflicts creates social economics and political instability in nation as well as international peace and security. Let's don't think about international sphere and have a glance on India, that how religion plays a determinants role in shaping political culture. It's impact on people's psychological orientation towards political parties, election, voting etc. It is profound and multifaceted, shaping not only electoral dynamics but also policy making and governance. The relationship between religion and politics is intricate and its impact can vary depending on cultural, historical and institutional factors. While religion can be force for positive social change and moral leadership, it can also be force of division and conflict when used to justified discrimination and oppression. Some political thinkers and philosophers opined that religion is complementary to politics, religion inculcates morality to political leaders which help to resolve conflict and enables to take

right decision. On the regards Mahatma Gandhi said “a religious individual can be a true politician and a true politician must be a true religious man”. Mahatma Gandhi studied various religious scriptures and had a secular approach towards religion, he believes that all religions show the path of salvation. People confines themselves to their religion and had prejudice attitudes towards other religions. Which resulted riots, conflicts, loss of lives and property. Here political leaders and political strategists play with the emotions of common people and use religion to a means to their ends, which is desire for power. As a result, religion remain a determinant factor in shaping political culture and political behavior.

II. ALMOND AND VERBA’S VIEW ON POLITICAL CULTURE

Generally political culture means “psychological orientation of the people towards political objects”. Almond and Verba’s political sociology is under the effect of structural functionalism that emerged in the context of social changes and the advent of transformer political mass movements because of the industrial operation and the political right of voting at the last 19th century and 20th century. It is important for the sociologists to study how these societies preserve social solidarity and unity during this quick changes. Durkheim felt a threat on social solidarity during the industrial revolution, Almond and Verba felt the same threat in the regime changes during the second wave of democratization and weaponry threat of the cold war. So they talk about “civic culture” which is a mixed version of parochial, subject and participant political culture, for him civic culture will retain the democracies. Almond and Verba’s structural theory constitute a set of individual attitudes and orientation related to the political aims. The orientation takes three forms: the first one is ‘cognitive’ orientation which is knowledge and trust on political system, rules, its roles and agents of these roles, inputs and output. The second is effective orientation which is feelings about the political system, its rules, roles, agents and action. The third one is evaluative orientation which is judgement and opinion on political aims that normally needs a combination of standards and criteria in relation to values, information and feelings. Moreover, the political aims include the general political system, the special roles and structures in this system, authorities of roles and the public policies.

Almond and Verba mention three types of political culture: The first one is parochial political culture where citizens have low cognitive, affective and evaluative attitude and orientation towards political objects. Such society is primitive society, there is no specific political roles and the expectations for political change is very low. In this culture individual’s interest is confined to their family’s interest only. The second is subject political culture there is high cognitive, affective and evaluative orientation towards the political system and policy outputs, but their self as an effective participant and orientation towards inputs object is minimal. It is suitable for centralized, authoritarian political systems. In the third political culture which participant political culture, the citizens have high cognitive, affective and evaluative orientation towards the political system, the inputs objects, the outputs objects and recognize themselves as active participants. Participant political culture is suitable for democratic political system. In India we can see mixed political culture, which Almond and Verba termed as “civic culture”. It is amalgam of all the three types of political culture. Here some people have high cognitive, affective and evaluative orientation towards political system or political objects, some have moderate and some have very low orientation. And this is due to its territorial, cultural, religious diversity. Culture, religion, region, education etc. play a determinants role in shaping political culture. India is a country immense diversity which resulted a mixed political culture.

III. DEBATES ON SECULARISM AND COMMUNAL TENSION

The debate surrounding secularism and communal tension in India is deeply complex and multifaceted, shaped by historical, social, cultural and political factors. India has a long-standing tradition of secularism enshrined in its constitution, which guarantees freedom of religion and prohibit discrimination based on religion. However, tension between difference religious communities have existed for centuries and have been exacerbated by various factors such as socio-economic disparities, political opportunism and identity politics. One of the key issues in the secularism debates is the relationship between religion and state. While the Indian state is officially secular, critics argue that the state sometimes fails to uphold secular principles in practice. For example, there have been instances of religious determination in government policies as well as the use of religious identity for political gain.

Communal tension flare up due to incidents of religious violence, such as riots and attack on religious minorities. These incidents are often fueled by inflammatory rhetoric from political leaders, religious extremists, and media sensationalism. Additionally, socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment and lack of education can contribute to communal tensions by creating fertile ground for religious extremism and communal polarization. Efforts to address communal tension and promote secularism in India include legal

measure, such as anti-discrimination laws and affirmative action policies for marginalized communities. Civil society organization, religious leaders and grassroots leaders also play a crucial role in promoting interfaith harmony and challenging religious extremism. There was communal riot between Hindus and Muslims in Sambalpur district of Odisha on 12th April, 2023 on the occasion of Ram-Navami, many arrested and there was internet shutdown in the city. This was an only example of such riot, there are so many riots have taken place among communities.

To secure justice, liberty and equality, and to promote among them fraternity, India pledged to a Socialist, Secular Democratic Republic. This is stated in the constitution itself. Actually the word secularism is rather vague, and was introduced by 42nd Amendment in 1976. From the beginning there was religious rights to the people of India in part III of the constitution Articles 25 to 30. There is also further provision in Article 28(3) no person attending any educational institution recognized by the state or receiving aid out of state funds shall be required to take part in any religious instruction that may be imparted in such institution or to attend any religious worship that may be conducted in such institution or in any premises attached thereto unless such person or, if such person is a minor, his/her guardian has given his consent thereto.

The first prime minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru had scientific approach and does not important to religion, he held that religion provide a set of moral and ethical values to life. His view was secular oriented. He believes that policy based on religion will not help in social progress of society, therefore opposed the formation of political party based on communal and religious basis, as it will result in social disharmony. His view on secularism is incorporated in the Indian constitution. Which has the following dimensions (a) the state has not encouraged or discouraged any religion, (b) social and political equality and (c) promoting secularism by eradicating equalities on religious basis. Nehru advocates secularism but was not oppose to religion as he held that the secular state will project all religions but doesn't favor any one at the expense of other.

Now, political parties are using religious identity to get vote. There are some political parties affiliate with religious organizations, politician join religious groups and advocate for their beliefs to gain their baking elections. This method relies on using religious feelings and creating a feeling of unity among religious communities. They do it creating tensions between different religious groups, political parties use religious languages, symbol, slogan to relates to voters. The plan wants to get more baking from religious groups by making their needs in seeking supports from the people of that religious communities and also some religious groups linked with political parties. From Ayodhya's Ram Mandir to Sambalpur's (a district in Odisha) Maa Samleimandir, we can see how religion is politicizing by the leaders. Due to upcoming election, leaders are inaugurating temple projects which are under construction or yet to complete.

In in Berhampur of Ganjam district of Odisha, on 31st January, 2023 conflict spotted during NUA-O program between students and authority, it was because students chanted *Jai.....Shree..... Ram* (a slogan on the name of lord Rama), since pranpratista of Ram Mandir people assume that, "Jai Shree Ram" is the slogan of BJP party. But, Mahatma Gandhi has clarified several times, in his prayer meeting on April 4, 1946, at Birla house, Delhi, Gandhi said the following. "I laugh within myself when someone says that Rama or chanting Rama-naam is for Hindus only, and that how can Musclemans (Muslims), therefore, take part in it? Is there one God for the Mussalmans and another for Hindus, Parsis or Christians? No there is only one omnipotent and omnipresent God. He is named variously and we remember him by the name which is most familiar to us. My Rama, the Rama of our prayer, is not the historical Rama, the son of Dasaratha, the King of Ayodhya. He is the eternal, the unborn, the one without a second. Him alone I worship, His aid alone I seek, and so should you. He belongs equally to all. I therefore see no reason why a Mussalman or anybody should object to taking His name. But he is in no way bound to recognize God as Rananama. He may utter to himself Allah or Khuda so as not to mar the harmony of the sound.

In their speeches political leaders uttering the concept of Ram Rajya or the implementation of the concept of Ram Rajya. Finance minister Atishi presented budget of financial year 2024-25 for Delhi assembly, saying it was aim at realizing the Aam Aadmi Party's dream of achieving Ram Rajya. On the other hand, the Bharatiya Janata Party on March, 2024 passed a political resolution tittle Viksit Bharat – Modi's Guarantee, at a meeting of the party's National Council, lauding Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, likening it to the realization of Ram Rajya in the past 10 years under him. This is how political parties playing politics on the name of lord Ram. Do they really know the real meaning of Ram Rajya? Originally the concept of Ram Rajya was used by Mahatma Gandhi, what is the different between the Gandhi's Ram and present day Ram? Gandhi knew a deep and serious implication of upholding Rama as a role model and Rama-nama as a cure for all ills in India where people from many religions live and where the Hindi-Muslim conflicts is century-old, he was always careful not to visit temples, mosques and churches. But he used the symbols from Hindu traditions and to religion to which he was born. In 1929, at a public meeting in Bhopal, he said "I warn my Musalman friends against misunderstanding me in my use of the word Ramarajya, I do not mean Hindu Raj, according to him

Rama Rajya mean a divine Raj, the kingdom of God. For him Ram and Rahim was one and same deity. He acknowledged no other God but the one God of Truth and righteousness. This is how he defined the concept of Rama Rajya even a dog received justice under the Rama Rajya. So there is different between Gandhi's Ram and present days Ram.

CONCLUSION: The intersection of religion and politics is a longstanding phenomenon, characterized by a symbiotic relationship between the two. Utilizing religion as a means to achieve political objectives constitutes the politicization of faith, often leading to conflicts rooted in religious differences. Throughout history, rulers have employed religious doctrines to legitimize their authority, as evidenced by the clashes between Christians and Muslims in Spain, which catalyzed religious reform and fostered diverse perspectives on faith's role in society. In the contemporary global landscape, this trend persists across regions like Europe, America, and Asia, where states leverage religion for strategic gains. India serves as a pertinent example, where the dominant Hinduism, alongside Buddhism and Islam, is manipulated in modern politics. The ruling BJP government, in power since 2014, adeptly exploits religious sentiments to consolidate its authority, capitalizing on historical hierarchical structures. With technological advancements and media evolution, the BJP's politicization of religion is poised to further entrench its influence, aided by the ideological backing of groups like the radical RSS, promoting Hindutva ideology. This dynamic underscores the enduring nexus between religion and politics, shaping socio-political landscapes at both intra and inter-state levels. The intricate relationship between religion and politics in India reflects the nation's rich tapestry of cultural and religious diversity. Despite being a secular state, India's political landscape is often shaped by the influence of various religious beliefs and practices. This influence extends beyond mere political rhetoric, permeating into societal norms, electoral dynamics, and governance structures. The nexus between religion and politics, as observed by scholars like Almond and Verba, underscores the complex interplay of individual attitudes and orientations towards political objects. This interplay manifests in India's diverse political culture, characterized by a mix of cognitive, affective, and evaluative orientations towards the political system. However, the utilization of religious identity for political gain has also contributed to communal tensions and conflicts, challenging the principles of secularism enshrined in India's constitution. The politicization of religion by political parties, exemplified by the appropriation of symbols and slogans associated with religious sentiments, further underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of the concept of secularism. While historical figures like Mahatma Gandhi envisioned a secular India where religious harmony prevails, contemporary political leaders often invoke religious symbolism for partisan objectives, diluting the true essence of secularism. Gandhi's conception of Ram Rajya, rooted in the principles of justice and righteousness, contrasts with the present-day appropriation of the term for political gains. His emphasis on inclusivity and the universal nature of religious teachings serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring values that should guide India's socio-political discourse. In navigating the complexities of religion and politics, it is imperative for India to uphold the principles of secularism, promote interfaith harmony, and safeguard the rights and freedoms of all citizens, irrespective of their religious affiliations. Only through such inclusive and equitable practices can India realize its vision of a truly pluralistic and democratic society. If we talk about the upcoming 2024 election and consecration of Ram temple, then BJP is coming under the limelight because there are Hindu majority in India, a political party named "All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen", president of the party is Asaduddin owasli. This party promotes the interest of Islam community. This is how political parties use religion to seek votes from voters. And the politicization of religions impact on people orientation toward political system, there cognitive, affective and evaluative orientations towards political objects such as political parties, policy making, voting, election take a significant change and impact over all political behaviors of the people and their psychological orientations of the people toward political objects. Common people don't have control over their religious sentiments and flow with the provocation of political leaders.

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