

Current Socio-Economic and Political Issues in India - II

FUNDAMENTALISM

Religion in India

India is the land of many religions like Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. The Constitution of India declares the nation to be a secular republic that must uphold the right of citizens to freely worship and propagate any religion or faith. It also declares the right to freedom of religion as a fundamental right.

Fundamentalism refers to a belief in a strict adherence to specific set of theological doctrines typically in reaction against what are perceived as modern heresies of secularism. Eg. Belief in virgin birth of Christ etc. Fundamentalism is found in all religions from Christian to Islam to Hindism.

Secularism is the concept that government or other entities should exist separately from religion and/or religious beliefs. The separation of executive and judiciary from religion is ingrained in the constitution of India.

Communalism denotes attempts to promote primarily religious stereotypes between groups of people identified as different communities and to stimulate violence between those groups.

Eg 2012 violence between Bodo-Muslims in Assam

Islamic Terrorism- Wahabbi School

Islam is subject to wide variety of interpretations, like other world religions. Although vast majority of Muslims do not condone violence, Islam has acquired a militant strain. 'Jihad' means Struggle against evil. It can be interpreted in varied ways. Eg. Al-Qaeda

Militant Hindu Nationalism-Pre-Independence

It is an expression of alienation from the secular Indian political system. Revivalist in nature, espouses the glories of a symbolic and mythic past. Provides forum for urban, educated, disillusioned populace to assert themselves. Eg. Madanlal Dhingra, Vinayak Sarvakar etc

Minority Rights

The Constitution has guaranteed certain fundamental rights to the minorities. They are free to preach, practice and propagate their religion. They can set up charitable and educational institutions of their own to preserve and develop their own culture, eg wakf boards. They can approach Supreme Court directly if these rights are infringed.

Sachar Committee Report found that Muslims lagged behind in many aspects like education, infrastructure, jobs, etc. To address it, Government came out with PM's 15-Point Minority Welfare Programme.

Ayodhya Issue

The Babri Mosque was built in Ayodhya in 1528. Hindu groups claim it was built after demolishing a temple. In 1949, idols were put inside the mosque. This led to a civil suit and government declared the area "disputed". In 1984 Hindu groups formed a committee to spearhead the construction of a temple at the Ramjanmabhoomi site. In 1986, a district judge ordered the gates of the mosque to be opened and allowed Hindus to worship inside it. A Babri Mosque Action Committee was formed as Muslims protested this move. In 1990, then BJP president Lal Krishna Advani took out a cross-country rathayatra and Karsevaks or Hindu volunteers started pouring into Ayodhya. In 1992, the Babri Mosque was demolished by Karsevaks.

Communal riots across India followed. The Allahabad High Court pronounced its verdict on four title suits relating to the Ayodhya dispute on September 30, 2010.

Ayodhya Verdict

Ayodhya land is to be divided into 3 parts, 1/3 goes to Ram Lalla represented by Hindu Maha Sabha, 1/3 to Sunni Wakf Board, 1/3 goes to Nirmohi Akhara.

Caste System

The Indian caste system describes the system of social stratification and social restrictions in which social classes are defined by thousands of endogamous hereditary groups, often termed jātis or castes. There are four main stratas – Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. Dalits comprise the fifth strata. This can lead to segregation of the Indian Society in terms of many castes but less Indians.

Khap Panchayats

These are community groups — usually comprising elderly men from the Jat community — that set the rules in an area comprising one or more villages in Haryana and parts of Rajasthan and Western UP. Over the time, they have become less transparent in functioning, oppressive and in conflict with the law of the land by sanctioning honour killings and other such measures. They are getting political support because Jats are state's largest caste group.

What are the problems with such unelected bodies?

How can the government use them for the benefit of the society at large?

How can violence against women be stopped using caste based organizations?

Caste Politics

Caste is one among the major factors in politics of India. In Tamil Nadu, DMK party rose to power under the canard of "Brahmin oppression". In 1990s, many parties BSP, SP and Janata Dal started claiming that they are representing the backward castes. In 2006, Arjun Singh, the then HRD Minister was accused of playing caste politics when he introduced reservations for OBCs in educational institutions all around.

Eg. Rajni Kothari – Politics in India is a good read for this

Reservations

Reservations are intended to increase the social diversity in campuses and workplaces by lowering the entry criteria for certain identifiable groups that are grossly under-represented in proportion to their numbers in the general population. Caste is the most used criteria to identify under-represented groups. Reservations in legislatures, jobs and educational

Institutes have helped the backward and scheduled castes to rise economically, politically and socially. Reservation has been capped at 50% of the total seats by the Supreme Court in the Indra Sawhney case in 1992.

What is your view on Reservation? Does it lead to dilution of merit?

REGIONALISM

India is a mini-continent in itself. It is a country of diverse cultures spread over various regions from North to South and West to East. Regionalistic aspirations often lead to various socio-political issues. Regions like Uttarakhand, Chhatisgarh and Jharkhand accused their respective state governments of UP, MP and Bihar of draining out their resources and not investing back much for their development. Hence, these states were born in 2002. Similar demands have been emerging from regions like Telengana, Vidharba, Bundelkhand, Darjeeling, etc.

Telangana Issue

Andhra Pradesh consists of three distinct regions; Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telangana.

Telangana refers to the Telugu-speaking part of the Nizam of Hyderabad, a princely state during the British Raj. Currently, Telangana Rastra Samiti is leading the agitation for a separate state.

Major Grievances include it contributes 76% of state revenue but receives less than a third of budget allocation, it contributes majority of water supply which disproportionately benefits coastal Andhra Region through canal irrigation, lack of educational funding and government jobs.

Kashmir Issue

Sometimes the aspirations of some regions go beyond just a separate statehood. Kashmir has been mired in insurgency for more than two decades now. The secession movement in Kashmir is the result of Pakistan's frustration after losing on the war front over and over again. Following the 1987 elections in J&K, Pakistan gave refuge to Mohammad Yousuf Shah, the losing candidate and led to the formation of militant outfit Hizbul-Mujahedin. His election aides joined JKLF and recruited young disaffected youth.

On 20 January, 1990 an estimated 100 people are killed when a large group of unarmed protesters are fired upon by the troops. With this incident, it becomes an insurgency of the entire population with an estimated one million take to the streets.

In 1990's, around 10,000 desperate Kashmiri youth cross-over to Pakistan for training and procurement of arms. An estimated half a million Indian security forces are deployed in the Kashmir Valley. Increasing violence by all sides leads to tens of thousands of civilian casualties.

The latest string of protests and unrest in the Valley stem from alleged human rights violations of Indian Army. The call for this campaign which started in Jun, 2010 was to demand complete demilitarization of Jammu and Kashmir. According to intelligence reports, the protests were a concerted effort from across the border to boost militancy in Kashmir.

Regionalism in India is the biggest challenge we face today? Answer this question considering the recent exodus of North Easterners from Karnataka

TERRORISM

Terrorism

Terrorism can be defined as "the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological." Within this definition, there are three key elements—violence, fear, and intimidation—and each element produces terror in its victims.

Causes of Terrorism

1. Strategic
2. Individual or psychological
3. Sociological
4. Religious

Naxalism

The lack of development in regions of central and east India which is a major tribal belt has given rise to Naxalism. Naxalites, Naxals or Naksalvadis are a group of far-left radical communists, supportive of Maoist political sentiment and ideology. The term Naxalites comes from Naxalbari, a small village in West Bengal, where a section of the CPM initiated a violent uprising in 1967. As of 2010, Naxalites are active across approximately 220 districts in twenty states of India accounting for about 40 percent of India's geographical area.

Naxalism is not just a law and order problem. Often, the problem relates to genuine grievances of the rural poor which include land alienation and land distribution, poor remuneration for forest produce, exploitation by government officials as well as contractors and mindless prosecution for petty forest offences, Unemployment.

Tackling the Naxal Menace requires a multi-pronged strategy; use of power to neutralize militant Naxalites. Rather than mulling over military option, coordination between state special forces should be enhanced, and over-all development of the areas to win the hearts of people so that the movement cannot get its cadres.

Movies on Naxalism –Chakravyuh , Hazaron Khwahishen Aisi

How far is the problem of Naxalism economic in nature?

What is your view on the construction of “Operation Blue Star” memorial on the precincts of the Golden Temple in Amritsar ? Will it incite violence?

FACEBOOK ARRESTS – Misuse of Section 66A of the IT act

Shaheen Dhada and Rinu were arrested after posting a comment on the popular facebook site after they disapproved of the shutdown in Mumbai after the death of Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray which could hurt the sentiments of religious community under section 66A of the IT act. Although the two girls have since been let off and the two ultra-zealous police officers who were instrumental in their arrests suspended, their plight seems to have sensitized the country to the potential of Section 66A being misused by authorities to harass people who can at best be held guilty of exercising their constitutional right of freedom of expression.