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IAS Mentor

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## SECULAR POLITICS: NEED OF IT; CHALLENGE ASSOCIATED WITH IN INDIA

It is said that you might not  
be interested in politics but politics  
is interested in you. Hence it  
becomes utmost important to preserve  
the sanctity of politics because of  
its persuasiveness.

Secularism is a product  
of enlightenment (14-15 cent). It  
was Machiavelli who ushered for  
separation of religion and politics.  
which led to emergence of secular  
politics.

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Ancient and Medieval times of India were age of Empires. Although the concept of secularism was unknown at that time, kings didn't base their politics on religion. Mauryan king Ashoka or the Imperial Guptas, being a devout Buddhist and Hindus respectively never stopped other religions from flourishing. Hence the politics was by and large secular. Later kings such as Akbar followed the footsteps and treated everyone as their own. However there were few exceptions such as Aurangzeb who ran state as per the regulations of Sharia.

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In Indian national movement, Indian national congress was the dominant party. which represented the secular interest of entire country. Stalwarts of congress such as Mahatama Gandhi, Jawahar Lal Nehru, B.R. Ambedkar had differing views on politics and religion. Mahatama Gandhi said "Politics without religion is a deathtrap" and called for spiritualization of politics. On the other hand, B.R Ambedkar and Nehru stood for segregation of Religion and politics.

At the same time.

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There were other parties as well which propagated sectional interest. These were Hindu Mahasabha, Muslim League, Rashtriya Swayam Senak Sangh etc. These parties fanned the interest of one section and gave reasons to Britishers to go for "Divide and rule policy". A country where there was already a resource crunch, it was not difficult to fit one community against other. This gave way to extreme communalism and new set of leaders who got partition of the nation on the basis of religion. ~~were~~ only satiated with the

Learning her lessons well post partition, India never wanted to use religion for political purposes however at the same time, looking at diversity, It could not withdraw from people's life completely. So it adopted its own model of secularism which is <sup>called</sup> principled distance model of secularism as contrast to western model which is based on wall of separation.

Indian state enters into the private sphere of religion only for few purposes such as religious reformation

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gender justice and justice to vulnerable. Barring these exceptions, Indian politics remains largely secular.

The realization in this regard is that Indian secular politics is not free from allegations. On one hand, majority calls Indian politics as minority appeasement, on the other minorities call it oppression by the minority majority. These are other challenges as well which are faced by intermingling of religion and politics.

Vulnerable section of society such as religious minorities.

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often reduced as tools for vote bank politics. Further more, there is wrath of majority community which leads to stigmatisation of minority. Recent examples of Tablighi Jamaat are a point in this regard.

Main issues for which ~~as~~ a government is elected such as education; health, nutrition are marginalized and negligible issues take the forefront seat.

Moreover, there is communal disharmony in the society which prohibits nation's

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growth. The instances of mob lynching (eg:- Palghar), love jihad, forceful conversion are some of the issues that confront Indian politics. Dilip hero in his book "The longest war" writes "The ghost of partition still looms over Indian subcontinent".

The statement points towards how still politics of the nation is communal which mirror the politics of the past.

The country involved in religious politics in internal sphere, does not have a free hand in internationally as well. For eg:- India's stand on Tamil crisis is largely determined by the domestic



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Situation.

Now the question arises?  
What is the need of secular politics at present. The answer would be manifold.

India being a secular state under which is there in the preamble has a duty towards all the citizens. A welfare state under Art 38 and protector of vulnerable sections under Art 46, India has special responsibility towards its vulnerable sections which can only get fulfilled if we get over petty power politics.

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Indian constitution itself guarantees freedom of Religion (Art 25-28) to its citizens. which makes it important for the states to protect it.

Secular politics paves the way for a society based on fraternity and common brotherhood. A society which is peaceful can contribute to nation in its entirety.

Secular politics pushes the agenda for gender empowerment. State vouching for women in recent Sabari mala case, Haji Ali Dargah case and

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Triple Talag case are good precedent to be followed.

It is said that leader shows the way and goes the way. So, if the people who are running the country are not communal, it is very unlikely that people will be so. So it is needed that no man is treated as a means (not bank) to some political end.

So the question arises as to how to remedy the problem of communal politics. For that it is very important to clean up the politics itself.

As per ADR, 43% of sitting MP's have criminal charges against them and out of them 29% have heinous charges against them. The step needed would be increasing the inter party and intra party democracy and stopping of such criminals from entering the system. SC in the past has said that simple winnability of a person can not be a basis for giving them ticket. Other efforts should be to increase governmental initiatives so as to such as "EK Bharat shreshtha Bharat" which help in increasing the unity of

the nation. Education should be unbiased and manipulated history must not be taught in the schools so that children have no prejudices from the beginning.

Politics without principles is one of the deadliest sins according to father of our nation. Hence it is important to go for Spiritualization of politics and uphold the spirit of "Sarna Dharma Sambhav" in letter and spirit.