"EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF RELIGION AND POLITICS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF INDIAN DEMOCRACY"

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ABSTRACT

India, a nation characterized by its vast population, embodies a rich tapestry of diverse religious beliefs within its society. The majority of its populace adheres to Hinduism, while minority groups include Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and others. Notably, four major religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism—trace their origins to India. Throughout history, religion has wielded significant influence across India's social, economic, and political landscapes, shaping its trajectory. Despite the constitutional declaration of India as a secular state, the translation of this ideal into societal practice has encountered challenges. Religion has consistently played a prominent role in Indian politics, often leading to tensions and communal unrest. Mahatma Gandhi, in 1942, advocated for the separation of religion from politics, emphasizing its personal nature. However, the entwinement of religion and politics remains pervasive in India, evident even in its partition based on religious lines. Nonetheless, India's constitution upholds the principles of equality and non-discrimination, reflecting the nation's commitment to ensuring equal rights for all its citizens, irrespective of religious affiliations.

Religious inequality and discrimination pose significant challenges in India, where countless individuals have suffered unjustly due to their religious affiliations. Politicians often exploit religion as a potent tool to secure votes, capitalizing on the faith-driven nature of Indian society. Many citizens, lacking political awareness, fall prey to the manipulative tactics employed by these opportunistic leaders. Exploiting the deep-seated religiosity of the populace, power-hungry individuals misuse religion for their own agendas, knowing that devotion can lead people to extremes. Consequently, religious influence permeates India's political landscape, with numerous parties aligning along religious lines. Once in power, such parties may exhibit favoritism towards specific religious groups, leaving minority communities vulnerable to marginalization. Moreover, the interplay of religious politics significantly influences India's foreign policy decisions, further underscoring the pervasive impact of religion on the nation's governance and diplomatic relations.

Keywords:- Religious, Fundamentalism, Politics, Communalism, Violence, Hinduism

OBJECTIVE

The aims of this research paper are as follows:

1. Investigating the influence of religion on national politics.
2. Exploring its ramifications on India's foreign policy.
3. Examining its effects on social, economic, and political stability.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The paper predominantly relies on quantitative data sourced from secondary materials within the realms of sociological and political research concerning Religion and Politics. Additionally, quantitative data is selectively incorporated whenever deemed essential to bolster the analysis.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. How does religion influence the political, social, and economic spheres of India?
2. What are the primary drivers of religious fundamentalism in India?
3. What are the global implications of religion on world politics?

INTRODUCTION

Following India's liberation from British colonial rule on August 15, 1947, the nation emerged as a sovereign entity. However, this newfound independence was accompanied by the partition of the subcontinent, resulting in the creation of Pakistan, a Muslim-majority nation, and India, a secular state. This division proved tumultuous, marked by widespread violence, the loss of thousands of lives, and the displacement of millions. The Hindu-Muslim discord in India traces back to ancient times, predating British colonization, and ultimately contributed to India's subjugation and subsequent partition. Despite efforts, India has struggled to reconcile the differences between its Hindu and Muslim communities. While Hindu-Muslim tensions garner significant attention, conflicts also exist among other religious groups such as Sikhs and Christians. Religion holds immense significance in the lives of most Indians, with devout adherence to religious beliefs prevailing across the nation. India stands as a melting pot of diverse communities, each with its own set of beliefs and practices. Given the Hindu majority, minority communities in India currently grapple with various challenges and instances of discrimination.

Religion, often understood as an individual's belief in a higher power or deity, embodies a profound and inherently pure concept. Each religion possesses its own intrinsic beauty. However, in our nation, power-hungry politicians exploit religion for personal gain. Despite India's declaration of secularism post-independence, promising equal respect for all religions, communal riots have plagued our history. While religion and politics can coexist, there must be clear boundaries. Unfortunately, the intertwining of these realms has led to the victimization of minority communities. In a democracy, where the majority rules, the needs of minorities are frequently overlooked. The politicization of religion in India has significantly jeopardized peace and security, evidenced by numerous religious conflicts such as the Ayodhya dispute and the removal of Article 370.

In contemporary Indian politics, certain individuals are using religious rhetoric to manipulate public opinion and secure votes. These pretentious leaders make false promises under the guise of religious endorsement, capitalizing on people's faith for their own gain. Sadly, many Indians, lacking political awareness and grappling with poverty, fall prey to these deceitful tactics. Consequently, those in power exploit the sincere religious beliefs and trust of the populace for their personal advantage.

RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM

"We should strive to limit the influence of religion in as many aspects of life as possible," a noble sentiment often articulated, yet regrettably, it remains largely theoretical. Religion has permeated nearly every facet of human existence, dictating political allegiances, social connections, marital unions, and even sports team affiliations. Patriotism, too, has become intertwined with religious identity. The encroachment of religious fundamentalism poses a grave threat to global peace and prosperity. It has demonstrated a chilling capacity to dehumanize individuals, extinguish rationality, and inflict suffering upon fellow human beings. Whether termed as 'jihad,' 'dharma yuddha,' or 'Crusades,' the essence of religion has been warped universally: to slaughter those of differing faiths in exchange for divine favor. What compels an Afghan soldier to wage 'holy war' in Kashmir, a land foreign to him? It's a lethal concoction of misguided religious fervor and financial incentives.

This menace has extended its influence globally, afflicting numerous countries including India, Pakistan, Israel, Ireland, Indonesia, the Philippines, and beyond. Even formidable nations such as the USA, Russia, and China have not been immune to the onslaught of fundamentalist ideologies. What accounts for this widespread appeal of fanaticism? Does it suggest that violence and aggression are inherent aspects of human nature? Alternatively, could it be attributed to the pressures of modern life, such as increased economic demands and the need for affiliation in an era of individualism? Or is it primarily driven by a thirst for power? Religion's history is as ancient as humanity itself, deeply ingrained in the collective unconsciousness of mankind. It is believed to have emerged to fulfill two fundamental human needs. Firstly, as social creatures, humans seek affiliation and cohesion within homogeneous groups sharing similar values and beliefs. Secondly, the fear of the unknown prompted humans to place their trust in a supreme being—a creator and sustainer—to navigate life's uncertainties.

Every religion may refer to the creator by various names and envision him in diverse forms, yet they all espouse a common message of peace, brotherhood, non-violence, and love for humanity. Unfortunately, these noble principles have often been overshadowed. The politicization of religion has transformed it into a tool for manipulating the masses, serving the interests of power-hungry and self-serving leaders, such as the Taliban. For instance, when the Taliban leader ordered the destruction of idols, citing religious tenets, it sparked global outrage as these statues represented a significant aspect of human heritage. However, amidst the outcry, the cannon's roar drowned out all dissenting voices. The Taliban's actions were driven by political motives, exploiting religion as a means to retaliate against Western sanctions. Religion has now become akin to an opiate for the masses, operating on an emotional platform where fervor can cloud rationality, leading individuals to commit illogical acts.

It is the emotional manipulation of the masses that a select few fanatically ambitious individuals exploit to serve their own agendas. When Iran declared war on Iraq, Ayatollah Khomeini, the Iranian spiritual leader, distributed green cards among teenage soldiers, promising entry into heaven for those who perished in battle with the card in hand. Similar tactics are employed by figures like Maulana Masood Azhar and groups like our own Bajrang Dal. They incite the populace in the name of religion, offering the allure of heavenly rewards while instilling fear of perceived threats to their faith, ultimately goading innocent individuals into committing atrocious acts. One chilling example occurred on a winter morning in 1992, when frenzied mobs razed the over 400-year-old mosque in Ayodhya, all under the guise of religious fervor.

Fundamentalist leaders wield significant influence over specific segments of society: the youth, the illiterate, and the economically disadvantaged. This demographic, often marginalized and denied opportunities to demonstrate their value to society, is particularly susceptible to manipulation. The frustration and anger of this neglected group find expression through fundamentalist ideologies. This formula has proven remarkably effective, fueling holy wars that are sweeping across the globe. Even nations considered "progressive" and "forward-thinking" in the First World have not been immune to this trend. For the past two centuries, Protestants and Catholics have engaged in bitter conflict in Ireland, with neither side willing to compromise their positions despite extensive dialogue efforts. Both factions insist on their branch of Christianity being recognized as the state religion. In an era characterized by liberal thought, reason, and scientific progress, is it necessary to intertwine religion with politics? The outlook appears grim if the current trend of fundamentalism persists. It could lead to anarchy and the tyranny of a few extremists. The concept of religion as a cornerstone for moral living and fostering love for all creation would be eroded, replaced by hatred and senseless destruction. The rule of the mob would supplant progress, plunging humanity back into a dark age. The cacophony of gunfire and bullets would drown out the fundamental teachings of harmony, peace, and love espoused by each religion. Consider the terrifying prospect of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of these uncompromising religious zealots: a nuclear holocaust would become a chilling reality. This decay must be halted swiftly and decisively.

Not through coercion, but by fostering harmony. The initial step could be the promotion of education. A literate individual is more adept at discerning the facade of fanaticism. Education dismantles religious biases and transforms attitudes, values, and perceptions. It also translates into increased employment opportunities, reducing reliance on terrorist organizations for livelihoods. Equally significant, a literate populace is less susceptible to being swayed by manifestos infused with religious or sectarian undertones, electing a government based on merit. Thus, widespread education is pivotal for instigating change. Literacy campaigns must be launched urgently, with an approach of each literate person teaching one illiterate. Societies mired in conflict must take proactive measures. A social revolution is imperative, achievable through the leadership of exceptional community figures. In this endeavor, religion can serve as a catalyst for positive transformation.

Gandhi leveraged religion as a means to advocate for patriotism and democracy, envisioning a liberated India governed by the principles of 'Ram Rajya'. His campaigns against untouchability and for temple entry for the Shudras formed integral components of his struggle, aimed at rallying support from all Indians against British rule. Central to his philosophy was 'Ahimsa', a religious doctrine that served as his most renowned weapon. Economic progress has the potential to quell fundamentalism, as exemplified by China's Xinjiang province. The Chinese government implemented extensive development initiatives in the region, including the construction of an oil pipeline from the Tarim basin to Shanghai, the establishment of highways, and the initiation of various other infrastructure projects.

It was a non-violent coup. The Uighur rebels experienced a total loss of territory and backing. Both national and international media outlets should refrain from providing any coverage to terrorist groups. Joining a fundamentalist organization has become a quick route to fame and acknowledgment. A comprehensive media blackout could deny them this recognition. Instead, a concerted media campaign should be initiated to uncover the true political and financial motives behind using religion as a catalyst for inciting violence.

Hope still lingers on the horizon, presenting the possibility of positive change. With the ongoing revolutions in information technology and media, today's youth are being exposed to diverse societies and cultures worldwide. This exposure is instrumental in

dismantling prejudice and dispelling narrow-minded perceptions. The barriers of the past, represented by iron and bamboo curtains, are gradually dissipating. The ambitious and forward-thinking Generation-X refuses to squander precious mental energy on trivial matters. It recognizes that one's abilities, not their faith, are what truly matter. The future of humanity rests upon the shoulders of the upcoming generation, and they must rise to the occasion. Failure to do so could result in the collapse of civilized society as we know it.

The famous line from Iqbal, "azhab nahi sikhata aapas mein bair rakhna" (roughly translated to "Religion does not teach animosity towards each other"), is widely understood at an intellectual level. However, putting it into practice requires statesmen who prioritize the interests of the next generation over short-term political gains, rather than politicians focused solely on winning the next election. It's imperative for society to evolve its mindset regarding religion and embrace modern values. For instance, while gay marriages were once illegal due to religious objections, even after being legalized, they still face societal stigma. Changing laws is important, but altering people's attitudes is equally crucial. While religious beliefs are deeply cherished, societal norms evolve over time, necessitating flexibility in adhering to ancient traditions.

It's high time we embrace the changes unfolding in our evolving society. While preserving religious traditions is important, we must also adapt to the changing times. The world is dynamic, and it's impractical to adhere rigidly to every religious tradition. A modern mindset is essential to navigate these shifts. Sadly, religious causes have sparked numerous conflicts, resulting in countless lives lost. Despite advancements in education, prejudice persists, often under the guise of religious beliefs. Instead of fostering love and harmony, religion has become a source of violence and discord. Individuals are indoctrinated to believe that violence in the name of religion is justified, viewing those of different faiths as enemies to be vanquished. In India, the entanglement of politics and religion has led to the victimization of minority communities, exacerbating societal tensions.

In a democracy, the majority holds sway, often overlooking the needs of minority communities. The intrusion of religion into Indian politics has jeopardized the nation's peace and security, leading to numerous instances of religious conflict such as the Ayodhya case and the removal of Article 370. Presently, political leadership in our country is dominated by individuals who manipulate religion for personal gain, disseminating false claims in its name to secure votes. Religion has historically wielded significant influence across India's social, economic, and political spheres, shaping its trajectory. Looking back at Indian history, religion has played a pivotal role in every phase of its development. Despite the constitution's designation of India as a secular state, this principle has often failed to manifest in societal practice. Religion remains a prominent force in Indian politics, exerting considerable sway over governance and public discourse.

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY AND POLITICS IS COMPLEX AND MULTIFACETED.

In today's global landscape, theocratic ideology holds significant sway in politics worldwide. It's evident that religious beliefs exert considerable influence on the political decisions of nations across the globe. Many philosophical outlooks, particularly those guiding political frameworks, are rooted in religious principles. Religion plays a prominent role in shaping the political dynamics of countries, including those in the developed world. Western nations, for instance, are largely influenced by Christianity and Islam. The pervasive influence of religion extends to numerous countries worldwide, profoundly impacting various

aspects of people's lives, from their dietary habits to their attire. Given the omnipresence of religious teachings, which often emphasize the supremacy of a divine entity as the ultimate authority, it becomes increasingly challenging to overlook their influence on society and politics alike.

This leads to conflicts among various religions as each claims the superiority of their deity over others. Even in contemporary times, despite increased education levels, religious disparities persist among people. The significant role of religion in politics cannot be overstated, as nearly everyone is influenced by religious ideologies to some extent. Politicians often exploit this connection, appealing to voters by promising to safeguard their religious beliefs and advocating for their faith. Religious fundamentalism exacerbates this issue, with religious minorities bearing the brunt of neglect from opportunistic politicians. Firm adherents of religious philosophies often view those of different faiths as adversaries. Historically, in European countries, the church and state were intertwined, with the church wielding significant political influence. Dissent against the church was met with punishment, highlighting the dominance of religious institutions in political affairs.

However, despite the subsequent separation of church and state, many continued to adhere strictly to the doctrines of the church. In India, religion holds a deeply sacred place, with the majority of the population adhering fervently to religious practices. Politicians in our country exploit this reverence for religion, manipulating the less educated segments of society, who are inclined to believe anything they hear, to secure votes. Once elected, these politicians often neglect the needs of these vulnerable populations, exacerbating the disparity between the rich and the poor. While every religious belief deserves respect, religions should also promote mutual respect for the beliefs of others.

Religion ought to curb the propagation of violence and instead advocate for the universal language of love towards all individuals. Such a shift would undoubtedly contribute to a more harmonious world. Politics, meanwhile, should harness the positive influence of religion and put an end to the unjust marginalization of minority groups. It's imperative that we all cultivate respect for one another as fellow human beings, irrespective of caste, color, creed, or religion. In the eyes of the divine, we are all equal, and religious scriptures universally promote messages of love and harmony among humanity. Ultimately, humanity itself transcends all other religions, emerging as the paramount guiding principle.

GLOBALISATION AND RELIGION

Globalization refers to the intricate process of interaction and integration among individuals, businesses, and governments across the globe. It underscores the notion that we share more similarities with one another than we might realize, fostering connections between disparate parts of the world. Religion plays a significant role in globalization, as virtually everyone on the planet is in some way connected to a religious belief system. Nations with Islamic ideologies often find affinity with other Islamic states, while those opposed to such ideologies tend to align with each other. Given the pervasive influence of religion in global politics, it inevitably shapes international relationships. For instance, the United States and Iran have strained relations, whereas America enjoys a close alliance with Israel due to their shared Christian influences.

Similarly, numerous other countries have formed close alliances based on shared religious affiliations. Religion is as ancient as humanity itself, with people worshipping various deities since time immemorial. It has served as a guiding force for mankind throughout history. In today's globalized world, it is challenging to overlook the impact of religion, whether positive or negative. While globalization aims to unite everyone, religion often appears to oppose this notion. Coordinating between different religions in the modern

era is indeed challenging. However, religion has also contributed to globalization in several ways. Whether through charitable events or religious texts, it has played a role in advancing globalization. Religion exemplifies the essence of globalization, as it can now be disseminated more effectively than ever before, thanks to advancements in technology. With the aid of various technological tools such as magazines, media platforms, and social media apps like Facebook and Twitter, any religion can transcend geographical boundaries and reach a global audience.

In the contemporary world, terrorism often intersects with religion. Numerous Islamic terrorist organizations have been responsible for a significant portion of terrorist attacks worldwide. Alongside, globalization remains a dominant theme in today's discourse, prompting the rise of anti-globalization movements, some of which leverage religious justifications. Religion, in some respects, both facilitates and opposes globalization, creating a complex relationship between the two concepts. Despite their inherent disparities, these two phenomena continue to intersect in various contexts, pervading global affairs. In the modern era, it is challenging to overlook the omnipresence of both terrorism and globalization, as they permeate virtually every aspect of society.

HINDUVTA AND INDIA

Hindutva, a form of Hindu nationalism prevalent in India, holds significant sway in Indian politics. It advocates for the idea that India is a nation primarily for Hindus and should be governed in accordance with Hindu principles. Coined by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in 1923, the term "Hindutva" essentially translates to "Hinduness" or the essence of being Hindu. This concept has been integral to Indian society since the mid-1870s and played a crucial role in India's struggle for independence. The ideology of Hindutva has contributed to significant communal violence in the country. People from other religious communities often feel marginalized and offended, as they are also Indians but are not treated equally due to their non-Hindu faith. By embracing the Hindutva philosophy, the government appears to overlook a substantial portion of the population, disregarding their Indian identity. Furthermore, in India, individuals who do not adhere to any organized religion are often classified as Hindus, overlooking the diverse beliefs of nature worshippers and others whose faiths are not officially recognized by the Indian government.

Forcing individuals into the Hindu category disregards the sentiments of minority groups. While Hindutva is embraced by the majority of Indians, it's crucial to consider the concerns of the minority community. The belief that India is a Hindu state can inadvertently offend the religious sentiments of minority groups. Gandhi utilized religion to advocate for patriotism and democracy, envisioning a 'Ram Rajya' for a liberated India. His campaigns against untouchability and for the entry of Shudras into temples were pivotal aspects of his advocacy. In his quest to combat British rule, Gandhi sought the support of every Indian. His most renowned tool was the principle of 'Ahimsa,' or non-violence, a central tenet of Hinduism. While Hinduism is esteemed as one of the world's great philosophies, it's essential to recognize the greatness inherent in all religions. Each faith holds its own significance and merits reverence. Ultimately, it is the faith and belief of individuals that hold true importance.

RESEARCH ANSWERS

1.   How does religion influence the political, social, and economic spheres of India?

 As previously noted, religion holds significant sway across all aspects of Indian society. With a deeply religious populace, many facets of daily life are intertwined with religious beliefs. The intersection of religion and politics is particularly noteworthy, as politicians often

leverage religious sentiments to garner support. They capitalize on promises to safeguard religious ideals and express strong allegiance to specific faiths in order to sway voters in their favor.

2.   What are the primary drivers of religious fundamentalism in India?

Religious fundamentalism in India stems largely from historical and ongoing religious conflicts. India's tumultuous history is rife with instances of interreligious strife, with the Hindu-Muslim conflict standing out prominently. The deep-seated differences between these communities often lead to domination struggles and persistent tensions, making resolution seemingly unattainable.

3.   What are the global implications of religion on world politics?

In the global political landscape, religious fundamentalism has significantly impacted relations among nations. With individuals worldwide having religious affiliations, alliances often form along religious lines. Islamic states tend to align with others sharing similar religious beliefs, while those opposed to Islamic states find common ground. This dominance of religion in world politics extends to international relations, shaping diplomatic ties between countries. For instance, the strained relationship between the USA and Iran contrasts with the close alliance between the USA and Israel, both influenced by Christianity. Similar patterns emerge with other nations forming alliances based on shared religious influences.

CONCLUSION

- Religion exerts a profound influence across all dimensions of human existence, including politics, society, and economics. Its significance is undeniable, shaping the lives of individuals not only in India but also in Western nations. Religious beliefs deeply impact daily activities, influencing everything from attire to dietary choices. The evolution of religion is often attributed to two fundamental human needs.

- Initially, religion addressed two fundamental human needs: the inclination to form cohesive social groups sharing similar beliefs and values, and the instinctive fear of the unknown, leading to faith in a supreme being. While different religions may refer to this deity by various names and representations, they commonly advocate principles of peace, brotherhood, non-violence, and love for humanity. Unfortunately, these noble ideals have been overshadowed by the politicization of religion. It has transformed into a tool for manipulating the masses, enabling power-hungry and self-serving leaders, such as those of the Taliban, to exploit it for their own agendas.

- He asserted that idols contradicted Islamic principles, sparking global outrage as the statues represented a significant heritage of humanity. However, all arguments faltered in the face of the Taliban's determination, driven primarily by political motives. They exploited religion to retaliate against Western sanctions imposed on their regime. Consequently, religion has been likened to an opiate for the masses. In today's globalized world, the impact of religion, whether positive or negative, is undeniable. Religion is often viewed in contrast to globalization, which aims to unite diverse communities, while religion tends to accentuate differences. Coordinating multiple religions in the modern world poses significant challenges, yet religion has also facilitated aspects of globalization.

- Whether through charity events or literature, religion embodies the essence of globalization. Advancements in technology have revolutionized the dissemination of religious teachings, enabling them to transcend geographical boundaries. Platforms such as magazines, social media networks like Facebook and Twitter, and various applications facilitate the widespread propagation of religious beliefs. Unfortunately, in the

contemporary world, terrorism often intertwines with religion. Numerous Islamic extremist groups have perpetrated a significant portion of global terrorist attacks. However, it's crucial to recognize that true religious teachings promote love and harmony among people, emphasizing the equality of all individuals in the eyes of a higher power. Ultimately, the overarching religion of humanity transcends any specific faith.

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