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run high culminating
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The concept of secularism in the Indian context is based on the philosophy of Sarva Dharma Sama Bhava. Indian Society is basically a religious society.

Religion acts as a strong, motivating force in our thoughts and actions.

However in spite of professing secularism there is religion, caste, colour and language intolerance. The communal virus has engulfed many a state in recent years. It is endemic and sometimes grows into an epidemic. India has a pluralistic society. The multiracial, multi-religious, multi-lingual and multi-cultural polity is bound to have conflicting interests.

Each community tries to preserve and promote its own interests, thanks to social awakening and educational expansion. When the interests of two communities clash, communal conflict is triggered off. Emotions and sentiments run high culminating in devastation and destruction of property and life.

The animosity between the Hindus and Muslims was largely the creation of the British rulers. In order to keep themselves in power they deliberately adopted a policy of 'divide and rule' and tried to promote feeling of alienation and hostility among the members of these two communities. They introduced separate electorate for the Muslims. Even some of the Muslim leaders, motivated by their selfish interest, promoted the feeling of communalism. All this, despite the best efforts of Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders ultimately led to the partition of the country into two states of India and Pakistan. The religious frenzy displayed by the members of the two communities on the eve of partition resulted in enormous loss of life and property on both the sides. A large number of Muslims migrated to Pakistan

while a sizeable number of them were persuaded to stay on in India with an assurance of security of life, the religion and property. On the other hand millions of Hindus were forced to leave the territories constituting Pakistan and migrated to India.

All this created a serious problem of communal harmony. The framers of the Constitution, therefore, decided to do away with the communal electorates introduced by the British in India. Instead they introduced universal adult franchise by which all the citizens above 21 years (now 18 years) of age irrespective of their religion, language, caste, place of residence etc. were granted right to vote. They also declared India a secular state which means that the state was completely detached in matters of religion. The Constitution promised to all the citizens the “ freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation to religion subject to public order, morality and health all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion.” The divide and the rule policy of the British regime ultimately led to the historic communal riots accompanying the balkanization of the country on the two nation theory basis. It was a demonstration of the deep seated communalism.

However, it did not end here. The country has frequently witnessed Hindu-Muslim riots since independence, notwithstanding the efforts to bring about national and emotional integration. Fundamentalism is its main cause. Though we profess secularism yet the communal differences persist. These sometimes deepen with sectarian and parochial religious beliefs. The situation is aggravated when politics is mixed with religion.

Politicians have often tried to win favour with the minorities at the cost of another community. Populist measures are often used to gain political mileage or advantage in elections. Criminalization of politics has added a new dimension and accelerated communal conflict. Last but not the least, the electronic media and religious press have often added fuel to the fire.

Sensationalism and irresponsible reporting and visuals which are provocative contribute their mite to rouse communal feelings. The communal harmony was seriously disturbed in 1961 when a clash between the students of the two communities took place at the Aligarh Muslim University. This produced repercussions in other parts of U. P., Bihar, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh and communal trouble broke out in a number of towns, resulting in enormous loss of life and property. After a lull for about two years, the communal harmony was once again seriously disturbed in 1963 following the theft of a relic of Prophet Mohammad from the Hazratbal mosque at Srinagar. This was followed by hartals, processions and protests from the Muslims of Kashmir.

There were large cases of violence and lawlessness. Even though the Government recovered the relic, its genuineness was challenged by the fanatic Muslims and the state was virtually in the throes of violence for some time. This produced repercussions in Pakistan where a number of Hindus were killed and their houses looted. A large number of Hindus from Pakistan were forced to seek refuge in India.

This greatly infuriated the Hindus and fresh riots broke out in the rural areas of West Bengal, in which a number of Muslims were killed. In Bihar and

Madhya Pradesh also riots broke out which were accompanied by arson. As a result hundreds of people were killed. In 1968, once again communal harmony was disturbed in U. P., Assam and West Bengal. In U.

P. the trouble started over the killing of a cow. A similar incident at Aurangabad led to communal riots. What is worse is that the year 1968 for the first time witnessed the command being disturbed in Kerala nad Mysore, which had so far been immune to communal tension. But probably the worst riots broke out at Ahmadabad in 1969 over the issue of chasing away of certain cows belonging to a Hindu temple by certain Muslims. The riots took a heavy toll of life.

It is estimated that 600 to 1200 lives were lost in these riots. In view of the large scale on which these riots took place in Ahmedabad it had been asserted by certain scholars that these riots could not have proceeded without a plan. In 1970, Bhiwandi, near Bombay, was the scene of fresh roits. The trouble started over the stoning of Hindu procession by certain Muslims. These riots took a toll of over 80 lives and property worth thousands of rupees was destroyed. In 1971 and 1972 there were riots at Aligarh, Tellichery and Gulbarga, but compared to the riots at Ahmedabad and Bhiwandi they were of minor nature.

In the subsequent years-also communal tension has continued to grow and a number of communal riots took place in different parts of the country. In 1973 once again Meerut was scene of serious riots which resulted in the death of nine persons and injury to over 40 persons, apart from normal loss in property. For several weeks in September-October 1990, many parts of

the country witnessed communal riots, religious frenzy of unusual intensity and prolonged tensions cumulatively, gave the impression of breakdown of law and order. The poor masses and other weaker sections of society, as usual suffered the most in the communal riots. There were divisions on a communal basis; it seemed as if religious tolerance and secularism had become hollow slogans. Among the worst affected states were U. P, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.

The agony of violence and the heavy losses suffered by innocent people besides those who deliberately defied police directives in pursuance of their religious convictions cause much concern. The demolition of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya on 6 December 1992 by a group of Kar Sevaks was followed by communal riots in many parts of the country. As a reaction to the demolition Muslim fanatics in Pakistan, Bangladesh, England, etc. destroyed several Hindu temples and properties owned by Hindus. In Bangladesh the minority community and their places of worship suffered heavily despite the concerned Governments prompt and strict measures to check the Muslim mobs from indulging in widespread destruction.

Religious issues were politicized. The Rath Yatras, Bandhs and rumours of all types caused virtual madness and led to reckless actions by way of revenge and retaliation.