

# Relationship between politics and religion in india

Politics



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Indian politics has an important relationship with Religion. Religion fulfills the role of an ideology in a situation of transition when there is a plethora of new demands and constant adjustments have to be made. Both Islam and Hinduism in the late nineteenth century were trying to accommodate the new demands. This ruptured their earlier accommodations and led to conflict with the necessity of a complex interaction between nationalism and Religion. This is where the clash started. India failed on this front leading to conflicts and division between two competing utopia visions.

The clash of egos over basis and minor disagreements made this division inevitable. The importance of religion, in spite of such conflicts can be clarified in the words of Gandhiji who said that those who assert that Religion has nothing to do with Politics, have no understanding of either Politics or Religion. That the Hindu majority were more tolerant and absorbent of others' viewpoint, is nothing new. The religion itself is distinguished because of its fundamental component of tolerance which separates it from other religion viewpoint.

Anslie embree in his book on Utopias in Conflict states that " Tolerance is not merely an academic question. It is intrinsically linked with the minority. The Islamic community in India wanted neither to be absorbed or tolerated and this seems to have occurred to very few exponents of Hindu tolerance". Tolerance is also a matter of perception and over the centuries as India met with three different civilizations, the society evaluated. The coming of Islam in the eighth century, to the major power at the center, in the form of nearly 500 years of their mainstay, did not change any fundamental value in the Hindu religion.

The coming of the Portuguese and the French also did not lead to any changes in our social structure, the reason being the apathy similar to the earlier Muslim period when views were articulated in a religious vocabulary. The coming of the British was different as “ they did not articulate their views and attitudes of their culture in religious terms”. The Hindu intelligentsia were definitely more receptive to the cultural and religious ideas as contrasted by the ‘ keep aloof’ behavior in response to Muslim, French and Portuguese ideologies.

However the elaboration of the national movement’s ideal by Gandhiji in “ vocabulary of Neo-Hinduism” lay the seeds of religious conflict in India which led to separatism. One of the important omissions in this Neo-Hindu perception was its inability to comprehend the belief structure of Muslims and the differences with Hindus. Salvation in Hinduism is of an individual whereas the Muslims and Christians find their salvation as a part of a large religious community. The politics of the nineteenth century and the strength of nationalism has gone missing today but religion appears to be as strong as ever and a fundamental pillar in our politics.

Secularism has been re-defined and pseudo-secularism seems to be the order of the day where massacre of the majority community hardly draws a reaction publicly except in private. The Politics of Religion is as strong as ever and there is only a change of perception. Our politicians never miss an opportunity to exploit the use of religion, be it the Hindu view or the Muslim angle and India politics would continue to use Religion and the Caste system for their survival.