

Topic – Communalism

As the definition goes, Communalism is described as an ideology stating the division between states (people, groups of people or communities) on the basis of religion. The difference of two or more religious communities can sometimes produce clashes in the society. Communalism is an important topic for the [IAS Exam](#), from the perspective of social issues in Indian society. Since, questions in Mains GS-I and Essay can be asked from this topic, it becomes imperative for an aspirant to learn about the relevant facts about Communalism.

This article will provide you with relevant facts about Communalism. You can also read about the stages of communalism, factors leading to communalism from the links provided in the article.

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What is Communalism?

The ideology that rises from the religious pluralism, and is to be considered as a social menace leads to communalism. Communalism can also be defined as a tool that is given rise to, in the presence of diverse religions, to gain political benefits in a state.

The issues attached to Communalism are:

- It is a threat to the national integrity
- It is a catalyst to political and social tensions in the state
- It leads to divisions between the people, groups of communities or groups of states in the country
- It is attached to the rivalry of one religion, ethnicity, beliefs or values against another's.
- Active hostility or opposition towards others' religions, values and beliefs often lead to issues in society

Types of Communalism - Facts for UPSC

Though the concept 'Communalism' is one topic; to make it simpler sometimes, it is defined in three ways:

1. Political Communalism
2. Social Communalism

3. Economic Communalism

The brief description to these three types of Communalism is given below:

Type of Communalism	Description of Communalism
Political Communalism	To survive in the sphere of politics, leaders tend to implicitly promote the idea of divisions among the communities. This gives rise to political communalism where different sets of people are divided on political lines and ideologies
Social Communalism	When the societies' beliefs divide these into different groups and lead to rivalry among each other, it further leads to Social Communalism
Economic Communalism	The difference in economic interests of the groups of people or communities, leading to further clashes in the society, can be termed as Economic Communalism

Dimensions of Communalism

Indian Sociologist, T.K Ooman has mentioned six dimensions of Communalism which are given the list below:

1. Assimilationist
2. Welfarist
3. Retreatist
4. Retaliatory
5. Separatist
6. Secessionist

The characteristics of these Communalism dimensions are given in the table below:

Dimension of Communalism	Features of Communalism Dimensions
Assimilationist	T.K Oomam describes it as a dimension where a small religious group or groups are integrated or assimilated into a larger religious groups
Welfarist	When a community works for the welfare or betterment of a particular community, it leads to welfarist communalism
Retreatist	When a community proscribes its members to participate in the politics or abstain from politics, it leads to retratist communalism
Retaliatory	When, in rivalry, one community harms or injures people of other community, it is termed as retaliatory communalism
Separatist	When a demand of a separate identity surfaces or a group of people demand separation from a larger group, it is termed a separatist communalism

Secessionist	To have a separate political identity, a group of people can demand a secession from a state or a nation, that often leads to secessionist communalism
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Note on Communalism in India for UPSC

Perspectives

- The two-nation theory supported by Muhammad Ali Jinnah and V.D. Savarkar was flawed, and history has proved this. For example, there is much in common between a Bengali Hindu and a Bengali Muslim, than a Bengali Hindu and a Punjabi Hindu who do not share the same closeness in cultural ties than the former. In the liberation of Bangladesh (1971) the Bengali Hindus and Muslims joined hands to oust the Muslims of West Pakistan. Communalism was expected to be dead after Independence, but it did not end. In the past 15 years for example, we have fortunately seen ebb in communalism in India with the exceptions of a few unfortunate incidents.
- For J.L. Nehru, the Hindu right-wing was the biggest threat to India. This was contradictory to Sardar Patel's opinion that Left Wing Extremism was a bigger threat to India. This doesn't imply that the Left Wing wasn't a threat to India according to Nehru- it merely implied that the priority with which Nehru attached towards curbing the right-wing organizations was higher, and for that of Patel, it was curbing Left Wing Extremism.
- After the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi by Nathuram Godse, there was ebb in Hindu- right wing activities as they became defensive and the Government cracked down on such organizations, including banning the RSS and many leaders of the Hindutva forces were even arrested.
- The 1961 Jabalpur riots came as a shock to the nation; this was something that caught the attention of the political establishment. This forced Nehru to re-think his strategy and plans - certain corrective measures were taken after this. In the 1970's, communalism was under check, especially during the emergency period (1975-77).
- In 1986, the doors of Babri Masjid at Ayodhya were opened which were closed since 1949. A group of Muslims formed the Babri Masjid Action Committee. This committee was headed by some Muslim theologians, supported by Muslim intellectuals and the general masses. This gave a big push to organizations like the VHP and the BJP, which was formed in 1982 out of the organization called Jan Sangh. The BJP and the VHP started campaigning for a grand Rama temple at Ayodhya. The first major riot took place at Meerut in 1987. The important thing to note here was that in the 1980s and 1990s, it wasn't only communal groups that started proliferating, but state machinery was also communalized.
- The Times of India commented, "Here is a clear case of an organ of the state going out with cold-blooded calculation to raid and round up a whole group of citizens, whisk them away, shoot them while in custody, and then throw their bodies into the river."
- In 1989, riots took place in Bhagalpur. On 6th December 1992, the Babri Masjid was demolished. The Hindu hardliners blamed the Union Govt. headed by P.V. Narasimha Rao. The Rath Yatra which L.K. Advani had started in 1990, and culminated in the demolition of the mosque, is seen by many scholars as mobilization of common Hindus- emotions were heightened in the name of Rama, and this led to large-scale bloodshed in many urban pockets.
- But, the Gujarat riots of 2002 surprised and shocked many historians and sociologists because it brought a new trend which we did not see earlier: for example, out of 25 districts, almost 20 were under curfew during the Gujarat riots which meant the entire state was disturbed for

several days and weeks. In Gujarat, not only tribes but also OBC's and rural people were affected. This reflected a dangerous trend as until then, it was believed that communalism was an urban phenomenon- that it was amongst the upper caste and among certain sections of Hindus and Muslims. This trend reflected a challenge to the idea of India.

- Even though we have had bitter experiences with respect to communal divide, however, it is widely evident that the people that make 'India' are largely secular and there isn't a permanent divide between any communities. That proves the failure of the communal ideology that has time and again tried to infringe on the secularism in the country.
- There is enormous scope for transformation due to our new generation, who are looking for jobs, better careers, and not identifying themselves with caste, religion and region. They are forward-looking and progressive. Hopefully, they would make a new India which would be free from all kinds of communal and caste conflicts, prejudices, hatred, and discriminations- this is not only possible through the law but is possible only through positive collective efforts.
- Many people blame majoritarian communalism developing in many parts of the country as a direct result of the blatant appeasement policies of the Congress-led governments. Policies like a separate civil code for Muslims and Christians while secularising the marriage and civil laws for Hindus to the maximum extent cannot be seen like policies that a state which was 'secular' in the real sense of the word would have adopted.

UPSC Questions related to Communalism

The information on the topic 'Communalism' can be used while practising UPSC previous year question papers. There are a few questions where answers could be written in relation with communalism too. These questions are mentioned below:

1. **UPSC 2015 Essay Paper** - Crisis faced in India – moral or economic
2. **UPSC 2018 Essay Paper** - "The past" is a permanent dimension of human consciousness and values
3. **UPC 2018 Essay Paper** - A people that values its privileges above its principles loses both
4. **UPSC 2019 Essay Paper** - Best for an individual is not necessarily best for the society
5. **UPSC 2017 Mains GS-I** - Distinguish between religiousness/religiosity and communalism giving one example of how the former has got transformed into the latter in independent India
6. **UPSC 2018 Mains GS-I** - Communalism arises either due to power struggle or relative deprivation.' Argue by giving suitable illustrations.