

The curse of identity politics

What is the issue?

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- A series of aggressions in India and its South Asian neighbourhoods against certain targeted communities is revealing the face of identity politics.

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- This calls for the nations to wake up and respond, to guarantee a true democracy to its citizens.

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What are the recent happenings?

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- Recently, in many South Asian countries, there is an increasing incidence of assaults on the weaker sections by mobs on caste, class, language and religious lines.

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- These include -

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1. India - assault on Dalits and Muslims employed in the cattle trade.
2. Bangladesh - a writer was attacked for speaking for the minorities.
3. Myanmar - the long pending pathetic fate of the Rohingya Muslims.
4. Sri Lanka - the racial oppression of Tamil minorities.
5. Pakistan - attacks driven by religious motives, accusations of Islamic blasphemy. Pakistan remains a State where people have suffered the most from state-sponsored identity politics.
6. Nepal - people of the hill country disempower those of its plains through

constitutional manoeuvre.

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- These acts are the outcome of **identity politics that enforce behaviour based on sectarian values** derived from religion, language, race, caste, etc.
- Notably in many of these cases, the State either remains a mere observer or in the other case an active agent of identity politics.

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What impact does this create?

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- The curse of identity politics is ripping apart the social fabric in these supposedly democratic nations.
- Identity politics is unfortunately the cause of these countries not moving forward in eliminating socio-economic deprivation.
- This is because it destroys social cohesion and stands in the way of economic progress.
- The result is that South Asia remains one of the most backward regions of the world and witnesses low levels of human development.
- States embracing identity politics, apparently compromise many of its secular and equality principals.

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What is the way forward?

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- In India, agitations for the formation of linguistic States had mostly taken the form of uniting people rather than dividing them.
- But in recent decades the human development status of certain states like Uttar Pradesh are severely strained by identity politics.

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- Also, the earlier impact on states is now taking form at national levels, further threatening the democratic rights of the minorities.
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- Peace in South Asia and India can be assured only by secular democracy; but thrust on identity politics is only hampering it.
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Source: The Hindu

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