

The moral eclipse of politics in the modern age

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Indian Polity and Governance-Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.

Mains: General Studies - 2
Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

1. Ethics as the Foundation of Politics

- Aristotle viewed politics as rooted in **ethics**, aiming at **human flourishing**, not just survival.
- A **legitimate political system** must pursue a **moral purpose (telos)**.
- When politics is separated from ethics, it degenerates into **domination and power politics**.

2. Crisis of Moral Authority in Contemporary Politics

- Modern politics shows a **disconnect between moral authority and political behaviour**.
- Religious or ethical voices (e.g., papal appeals) are often dismissed as **naive or irrelevant**.
- Political leaders may **invoke sacred imagery** to legitimise power while lacking **moral credibility**.

3. War and the Collapse of Ethical Imagination

- War represents the **deepest moral failure**, rooted in **dehumanisation**.
- John Rawls proposed **justice as fairness** via the **veil of ignorance**, emphasising equality in moral reasoning.
 - ➔ The **"veil of ignorance"** is a moral reasoning device designed to **promote impartial decision making** by **denying** decision makers **access to potentially biased information** about who will benefit most or least from the available options.

- Bertrand Russell highlighted human tendencies like **power-seeking and rivalry**, leading to conflict.
- Historical examples (e.g., **Caesar's assassination, Hiroshima/Nagasaki**) show **moral justifications masking violence**.
- Modern warfare creates **distance from human suffering**, reducing people to **data and statistics**.

4. Reintegrating Ethics into Politics

- The solution is not superficial moralising but **rebuilding ethical foundations of politics**.
- Requires:
 - ➔ **Critical education** and **moral imagination**
 - ➔ A **public sphere based on truth and deliberation**
 - ➔ Revival of traditions linking **ethics and governance**
- Ethical interventions (e.g., anti-war positions) are **essential reminders**, not outdated ideas.
- Core question: **Can politics survive without morality?**

Fire and sound: On Kerala's Mundathikode tragedy

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 3
Disaster and disaster management

1. Context

- A deadly explosion on April 21 at Mundathikode near Thrissur, during preparations for Thrissur Pooram, killed around 15 people, injured over 24, and damaged nearly 50 houses.
- The incident **highlights serious regulatory failures, including poor enforcement of safety norms and licensing in the fireworks industry**

2. Safety Violations

- **Unsafe storage** of explosive materials in multiple sheds
- **No adequate distance** between gunpowder and sensitive chemicals
- **Excess stockpiling** of hazardous flash powder
- **Lack of safety gear** and firefighting equipment
- **Use of untrained workers** and possible banned chemicals

3. Regulatory Lapses

- **Weak enforcement of licensing** and safety norms
- **Guidelines** after Puttingal temple fireworks **accident ignored**
- **Lax monitoring** during festival seasons
- Repeated similar accidents (e.g., Tamil Nadu incident)
- **Poor accountability** mechanisms.

4. Socio-Political Factors

- **Influence of vote-bank politics** on festival regulation
- **Authorities reluctant to strictly enforce** safety rules
- **Competitive nature of fireworks** displays encourages risk-taking
- **Public preference** for loud, high-decibel fireworks
- Resistance to safety-based restrictions

5. Way Forward

- **Strict enforcement** of safety and licensing norms
- **Regular inspections and accountability** for violations
- **Adoption of safer alternatives** like cold spark technology
- **Training and certification of workers** in pyrotechnics
- **Balancing cultural practices** with public safety priorities

The crisis of urban electoral disenfranchisement

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 2
Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

1. Context: Adult Franchise and Democratic Promise

- B. R. Ambedkar envisioned that political democracy ("**one person, one vote**") must lead to economic democracy ("**one person, one economic unit**").
- This vision remains unfulfilled as inequalities and marginalisation of the poor, migrants, and minorities have increased.
- Adult franchise is the foundation of inclusion, yet recent developments like **SIR(Special Intensive Revision)** indicate its weakening.
- **T. N. Seshan**(Former Chief Election Commissioner of India) stressed that even pavement dwellers must have voting rights, reflecting the inclusive intent of the Constitution.

2. Systematic Disenfranchisement in Urban India

- Urban voters have faced **systematic exclusion** over time due to bureaucratic and procedural barriers.
- Around **28% of the urban population is below 18**, already excluded from voting.
- As per the **World Bank**, nearly **40% of urban Indians live in slums**, many lacking documentation for voter registration.
- Migration and informal housing make it difficult to provide **proof of residence (2002/2005 requirement)**.
- SIR has increased documentation burdens, reducing accessibility to voter registration..

3. Impact of SIR: Exclusion of the Urban Poor

- Marginalised groups - including **Dalits, ethnic and religious minorities, migrants, and unorganised workers**- face the highest rates of deletion from voter rolls.

- These groups suffer a **dual burden**: difficulty in new registration and deletion of already registered voters.
- Significant deletion data from cities highlights the scale of exclusion:
 - ➔ **Patna (Bihar): 16.5 lakh names deleted**
 - ➔ **Ghaziabad (Uttar Pradesh): 36.67% deletions**, linked to high workforce mobility
 - ➔ **Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh): 30.88% deletions** after SIR
 - ➔ **Purnia (Bihar): 2.73 lakh voters removed**
 - ➔ **Kanpur (Uttar Pradesh): 25.62% deletions**, mainly among unorganised workers
 - ➔ **Kolkata (Gulshan Colony): 90% voters missing in one locality**
 - ➔ **Mumbai: 14 lakh names deleted**, with only around **50% of informal housing residents registered**
- The process appears **exclusive and bureaucratically controlled**, discouraging voter participation rather than promoting inclusion.

KEYWORDS

Cold spark technology

- Cold spark technology uses **fine metal alloy powders like titanium and zirconium instead of explosive combustion** to create spark effects.
- Devices such as **cold sparklers heat these powders and release them into the air, producing bright, sparkler-like visuals** without loud noise.
- Unlike traditional fireworks, it avoids high-energy explosions.
- It **operates at much lower temperatures (60–100°C vs ~1200°C)**, reducing risks of burns, fire accidents, and noise-related harm.
- However, **it remains costly and not widely adopted in India**, with limited domestic manufacturing and reliance on imports.

Naegleria fowleri

- *Naegleria fowleri*, commonly called the **“brain-eating amoeba,”** is a **free-living, single-celled organism** found in **warm freshwater** bodies like lakes, rivers, ponds, hot springs, and sometimes poorly maintained pools or tap water.
- The **brain-eating amoeba infects humans when contaminated water enters through the nose**, travels to the brain, and causes **Primary Amoebic Meningoencephalitis (PAM)**; it **does not spread by drinking water or person-to-person contact**.
- Infection is **extremely rare but highly fatal** and death usually occurs within- **118 days**.
- **Early symptoms** include headache, fever, nausea, and vomiting, which rapidly progress to **stiff neck, confusion, hallucinations, coma, and death**, often within **5 days** after severe onset.
- Risk can be reduced by **preventing water from entering the nose** (nose clips, avoiding diving), using **distilled/boiled water for nasal rinsing**, and avoiding **warm shallow water**; **diagnosis is difficult** and fatality exceeds **97%**.

4. Structural Concerns: Secrecy, Selective Filtration, and Democratic Erosion

- Booth-wise vote disclosure in EVMs (Electronic Voting Machine) can **compromise secrecy**, especially in small polling units.
- Voting patterns of specific groups can be inferred, weakening confidential franchise.
- Rigid documentation norms lead to **selective filtration**, disproportionately excluding the urban poor.
- SIR reflects a **structural weakening of democracy**, with concerns of exclusion aligning with political and economic interests, **highlighting the need for inclusive voter registration, flexible documentation norms, protection of voting secrecy, and proactive outreach to migrant and informal populations to restore the true spirit of universal adult franchise**.