



Government of Tamilnadu

Department of Employment and Training

Course : TNPSC Group I Mains Material

Subject : Social Issues in India and Tamil Nadu

Topic : Religious violence, Terrorism and Communal violence

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RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE, TERRORISM AND COMMUNAL VIOLENCE

Introduction:

India is characterized by more ethnic and religious groups than most other countries of the world. Aside from the much noted 2000-odd castes, there are eight "major" religions, 15-odd languages spoken in various dialects in twenty-eight states and nine union territories, and a substantial number of tribes and sects.

Religious violence in India:

It includes acts of violence by followers of one religious group against followers and institutions of another religious group, often in the form of rioting. Violence in India has generally involved Hindus and Muslims.

Despite the secular and religiously tolerant constitution of India, broad religious representation in various aspects of society including the government, the active role played by autonomous bodies such as National Human Rights Commission of India and National Commission for Minorities, and the ground-level work being done by non-governmental organisations, sporadic and sometimes serious acts of religious violence tend to occur as the root causes of religious violence often run deep in history, religious activities, and politics of India.

Three ethnic or religious conflicts have stood out of late: Two occurred in the states of Assam and Punjab; another, the more widely known Hindu-Muslim conflict, continues to persist.

The Assam problem is primarily ethnic, the Punjab problem is based on both religious and regional conflicts, while the Hindu-Muslim problem is predominantly religious.

Different types of Religious Violence in India:

- Hindu - Muslim communalism
- Hindu - Sikh communalism
- Hindu - Christian communalism



History of Religious Violence:

Ancient text Ashokavadana, a part of the Divyavadana, mention a non-Buddhist in Pundravardhana drew a picture showing the Buddha bowing at the feet of Nirgrantha Jnatiputra (identified with Mahavira, 24th tirthankara of Jainism).

On complaint from a Buddhist devotee, Ashoka, an emperor of the Maurya Dynasty, issued an order to arrest him, and subsequently, another order to kill all the Ajivikas in Pundravardhana. Around 18,000 followers of the Ajivika sect were executed as a result of this order.

Sometime later, another Nirgrantha follower in Pataliputra drew a similar picture. Ashoka burnt him and his entire family alive in their house. He also announced an award of one dinara (silver coin) for the head of a Nirgrantha.

Religious violence against Hindus:

Hindus, particularly the Nair and Kodava communities were also persecuted by Tipu Sultan. They were subjected to forcible conversions to Islam, death, and torture. The Nairs were treated with extreme brutality by the Muslims for their Hindu faith and martial tradition. The captivity ended when Nair troops from Travancore, with the help of the East India Company defeated Tipu Sultan in the Third Anglo-Mysore War. It is estimated that out of the 30,000 Nairs put to captivity (including women and children), most perished.

In 1783, the Kodavas revolted and became subject of Tipu Sultan led religious violence. Runmust Khan, the Nawab of Kurool, attacked the Kodavas. 500 were killed and over 40,000 Kodavas fled to the woods and hid in the mountains. Thousands were seized, then forced to convert to Islam or face torture or death. Estimates of victims vary. The British administrator Mark Wilks estimated the victims to be 70,000, historian Lewis Rice as well as Mir Kirmani stated the Coorg campaign victims included 80,000 men, women and child prisoners. In a letter to Runmust Khan, Tipu himself stated.



Religious Violence during Medieval period

In early medieval India, there were numerous recorded instances of temple desecration by Indian kings against rival Indian kingdoms, involving conflict between devotees of different Hindu deities, as well as between Hindus, Buddhists and Jains.

In 642, the Pallava king Narasimhavarman I looted a Ganesha temple in the Chalukyan capital of Vatapi. Circa 692, Chalukya armies invaded northern India where they looted temples of Ganga and Yamuna.

In the 8th century, Bengali troops from the Buddhist Pala Empire desecrated temples of Vishnu Vaikuntha, the state deity of Lalitaditya's kingdom in Kashmir. In the early 9th century, Indian Hindu kings from Kanchipuram and the Pandyan king Srimara Srivallabha looted Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka.

In the early 10th century, the Pratihara king Herambapala looted an image from a temple in the Sahi kingdom of Kangra, which in the 10th century was looted by the Pratihara king Yasovarman.

During the Maratha invasions of Bengal against Nawab of Bengal, the Marathas occupied Bihar and western Bengal up to the Hooghly River. During that time, the Maratha invaders, called "Bargi" in Bengali, perpetrated atrocities against the local population. The Marathas reportedly plundered and burned villages, murdered pregnant women and infants, and gang-raped women. An estimated 400,000 people were killed.

During the invasion, the Marathas targeted Bengali Muslims, many of whom fled to take shelter in East Bengal, fearing for their lives in the wake of the Maratha attacks. Many Bengali Hindus initially supported the Marathas, seeing them as liberators, but the Marathas also perpetrated many atrocities against Bengali Hindus, who ended up opposing the Marathas and supporting the Muslim Nawab of Bengal.

Sikh Empire

After seizing control of Kashmir, Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Sikh governors in Kashmir followed anti-Muslim policies, including the closure of the Jama Masjid of Srinagar. In 1837, Raja Gulab Singh suppressed the revolt of the Yousafzai Tribe. Thousands of

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Muslim Pashtun tribe members were killed. Few hundred of captured women were sold as slaves in Jammu.

After acquiring Jammu and Kashmir the Dogra Maharaja Ranbir Singh led a major invasion of the frontier areas of Yasin and Hunza to punish Muslim rebels in 1863. General Hooshiara Singh with 3,000 troops attacked the frontier with predominantly Muslim population. Thousands were killed during the invasion.

Partition of India, 1947

After partition, millions of populations were forced to move from both sides of the border. Hindus in Pakistan and Muslims in India were killed in masses, women were raped, and many children lost their parents. There was hatred everywhere, violence didn't see anything except bloodshed. Later, it turned in the problem of refugees and their rehabilitation became one of the biggest challenges for independent India.

Anti-Sikh riots, 1984

This is one of the bloodsheds in India, where Sikhs in large number were massacred by anti-Sikh mob. This massacre took place in response to the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by his own Sikh body Guard in response to her actions authorising the military operation.

Babri Masjid demolition in Ayodhya, 1992

According to Hindu mythology, Ayodhya is birth place of Lord Rama and therefore it is sacred place for Hindu religion. But in medieval period Mughal general Mir Baqi, built a mosque, named after Mughal ruler Babur. There were disputes since then and riots also took place. But in 1990, due to some political mobilisation, there was atmosphere of protest by Hindu religious groups and in large scale "kar sevak" visited Ayodhya from all parts of India, in support of demolishing Babri masjid and building Ram temple there. These movements caused huge amount of bloodshed and since then it is a disputed matter.

Muzaffarnagar violence, 2013

The cause of this ethnic clash between Jat and Muslim community is very much disputed and has many versions. According to few, it was started after some suspicious post on Social media platform Facebook. According to some, it was escalated after the

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eve teasing case in Shamli. Let the reasons be unknown, but what matters is, the nature and scale of loss to the country with respect to human resource and peace.

Communal Violence

Communalism is an ideology which states that society is divided into religious communities whose interests differ and are, at times, even opposed to each other. The antagonism practiced by the people of one community against the people of other community and religion is termed as communalism. Communal persons are those who practice politics through religion. Thus, communal is not one who is a man of religion but one who practices politics by linking it with religion

Evolution of communalism in India

It is a concept which developed in the last 19th and early 20th century. Communalism or communal ideology consists of three basic elements or stages.

1. First it is the belief that people who follow the same religion have common secular interests. From this arises the notion of socio-political communities based on religion.
2. The second element of communal ideology rests in the notion that in a multi - religious society like India, the secular interests i.e the social, cultural, religion, economics and political interests of the followers of one religion are dissimilar and divergent from the interests of the followers of another religion. This stage may be described as liberal communalism or moderate communalism.
3. The third stage of communalism is reached when the interests of different communities are seen to be mutually incompatible, antagonistic and hostile. The communalist asserts at this stage that different communities cannot have common secular interests and their secular interests are bound to be opposed to each other. Extreme communalism was based on fear and hatred and had a tendency to use violence of language, deed or behaviour, the language of war and enmity against political opponents.

Though the three stages of communalism were different from one another, they also interacted and provided a certain continuum. It emerged as a consequence of the emergence of modern politics. It was the by - product of the colonial character of

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Indian economy. British rule and its policy of divide and rule bore special responsibility for the growth of communalism in modern India.

Factors behind Communal Violence

Ten major factors have been identified in the etiology of communalism. These are: social, religious, political, economic, legal, psychological administrative, historical, local and international.

Social factors: social traditions, caste and class ego, inequality and religion based social stratification.

Religious factors: Decline in religious norms and secular values, narrow and dogmatic religious values, use of religion for political gains and communal ideology of religious leaders.

Political factors: Religion-based politics, religion-dominated political organizations, canvassing in elections based on religious considerations, support to agitations by politicians for vested interests and political justification of communal violence.

Economic factors: Economic exploitation and discrimination of minority, religious communities and lop-sided (unbalanced) economic development.

Legal factors: Absence of common civil code, special provisions and concessions for some communities in the Constitution.

Psychological factors: Social prejudices, stereotyped attitudes, distrust, hostility and apathy against another community, rumour, fear psychosis and the misinformation/ misinterpretation/misrepresentation by mass media.

Administrative factors: lack of coordination between the police and other administrative units ill-equipped and ill trained police personnel, ineffective functioning of intelligence agencies, biased policemen, and police excesses and inaction.

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Historical factors: Alien invasions, damage to religious institutions, divide and rule policy of colonial rulers, partition trauma, old disputes on land, temples and mosques.

Local factors: religious processions (parade), slogan raising, rumours, land disputes, local anti - social elements and group rivalries.

Hindu - Muslim Communalism

1. Historical events like Muslim invasions and looting of Hindu temples and constructing of mosques near temples gave rise to Hindu Muslim antagonism.
2. It is a British legacy as the britishers followed the policy of Divide & rule during the freedom struggle.
3. New aggressiveness of the communal political parties, Muslim League, R.S.S, Hindu Maha Sabha further aggravated the tension.
4. Neighboring countries sponsored terrorism and attempts to disturb secular spirit of India add fuel to communalism.
5. Feeling of alienation among the Muslims is misused by selfish communal leaders.
6. Ramjanam Bhoomi - Babri Masjid issue 1992 -93, Gujarat riots-2001 events further affected the communal harmony.

Hindu Sikh Communalism

1. Sikhism originated as a reform movement against the dogmas of Hindu religion.
2. The shiromani Gurudwara Prabhandak committee came in existence in 1925 and worked for liberating Gurudwaras from corrupt Mahants.
3. Nirankari movement emerged as a reformist movement against induction of Hindu religious practices in sikh System of worship.
4. A militant group led by Bhindranwale demanded Khalistan and led the sikh separatist movement in early 1980's.
5. In 1984 military launched operation Blue star for seizing weapons and arresting militants from the Golden temple.
6. In October 1984 Indira Gandhi was assassinated and thousands of sikhs were killed in Delhi & Hindus were forced to leave Punjab.

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7. In 1988 operation Black thunder was launched to clear militants from Golden temple.
 8. From 1993 onwards there is considerable improvement in the relationship of Hindus & Sikh.

Hindu Christian Communalism

1. During the British rule the role of Christian missionaries in converting Hindus led to wide discontent.
2. Large scale conversions in tribal underdeveloped areas of North East, Odisha & Chattisgrah fuels communal tensions. Ex : Kandhamal issue (Odhisia)

Major Communal Riots in India

Calcutta Riots 1946: Calcutta Riots is also known as Direct Action Day is the worst day in the India history. The Calcutta Killings in 1946 is the result of Hindu-Muslim violence and become a day of riot and manslaughter in the Bengal province of British India.

Sikh Riots 1984: The 1984 Sikh Massacre was erupted in 1 November 1984, after the assassination of Indira Gandhi and continued for days, killing around 800 Sikhs. The national capital Delhi were the worst affected area along with Yamuna river areas.

Kashmir Riots 1986: The communal riots were breaking out in the Muslim-majority state of Kashmir against the Kashmiri Hindus in 1986. Violence against Kashmiri Hindus was reported in the Anantnag area and a massive communal riot occurred.

Varanasi Riots 1989: The holy city of India is witnessed to three consecutive riots since 1989-90 to 1992. Varanasi riots of 1989 was the first communal violence erupted between Hindu and Muslim. A mini riot was also breaking out in 2007.

Bhagalpur Riots 1989: The silk City Bhagalpur was becoming notorious after the incidence of October 1989. Bhagalpur riots is one of the worst communal riots in India since Independence, which claimed over 1000 lives. The communal violence broke out between Hindu and Muslim and continued for almost two months.

Bombay Riots 1992: Bombay Riots was the worst riots in India, appeared in December 1992 and January 1993. Riots in Mumbai was a communal riot between

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Hindu and Muslim, in which over 1,000 people were killed. Babri Mosque demolition is the reason of Bombay Riots, 1993 Bombay bomb blasts was the result.

Gujarat Riots 2002: Another worst riots in India so far, Gujarat riots of 2002 was a series of communal violence incidents between Hindus and Muslims. The Sabarmati Express train was burnt as a preplanned conspiracy by Muslim mob, then Post Godhra violence Attacks on Muslims and Hindus and Naroda Patiya riots Ahmedabad. Gujarat riots was a definition of horror and brutality of human against human.

Aligarh Riots 2006: Aligarh is well known as one of the communal prone.

Measures to Meet the Challenge of Communalism

1. Initiating the process of de-communalizing the people at all levels, say by bringing home to them that communal assumptions are false, by explaining to them the socio-economic and political roots of communalism.
2. Communalization of the state and of the political elite in power has to be checked
3. Communalization of civil society also needs to be checked.
4. Role of education particularly emphasizing on value-oriented education both in schools and colleges/universities is important in preventing communal feelings.
5. Media can also prove to be significant in preventing communal feelings. Communal press can be banned and legal action can be taken against communal writers.

The solution of such problems cannot be one or two steps by government. Apart from legislative support, administrative efficiency and alertness with the help of modern tools and technology, the major onus lies on the citizens themselves by avoiding communal violence.

Each of us, have to make a balance between our own religious community and national interests, we have to unite with nationalism, and then should move forward. The teachings of a religious community may be great, but the followers of the community concerned should understand that nationalism is greater.

Rational Ideas should be taught to the children at the school level.

Policies like appeasement, fun and frolic with the sentiments of people for individual and party interests, and selection of candidates on the basis of religious community or

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sect by keeping aside the qualifications, one, certainly, does the things against national interest or nationalism; are reflections of lower national thinking.

Media, movies and other cultural platforms can be influential in promoting peace and harmony. Though all such practises in India are common, but there is still scope for improvement in this direction.

Terrorism

UN Secretariat has defined terrorism as a violent act or attempts of such acts perpetrated by state or individuals or groups of individuals against groups of innocent national or state not involved in ongoing conflict, calculated to cause fear and panic in the general public.

The Anti-Terrorism Day is observed on 21st May every year

The words 'terrorism', 'insurgency', 'civil war', 'revolution', 'extremism' etc are used interchangeably. Violence is common in all. Terrorism is an organized system of intimidation. It is a method where by an organized group or party seek to achieve its avowed (acknowledge) aims chiefly through the systematic use of violence.

Characteristics of Terrorism

1. A technique of perpetrating random and brutal intimidation, coercion, destruction of human lives and property are used intentionally to obtain realistic or illusory goals.
2. It is against the state or community. It is illegal and unlawful. It always has a political purpose. It always carries with it an element of intimidation. It contains arbitrariness in violence as victims are selected indiscriminately.
3. It stops rational thinking. Masses suffer from feeling of helplessness.

Objectives of Terrorism

1. To cause or provoke the government to react and over react so that they can demonstrate to the people that the government is repressive and unresponsive.
2. To compel the government to concede their demands.
3. To mobilize mass support and to urge sympathizers for involvement in order to increase their support base.

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4. Show of strength and to demonstrate the incapacity of the regime to protect the people so that people's faith in the security system is eroded.
 5. To eliminate opponents and informers and to ensure obedience of the followers.
 6. Publicity and magnification of their cause and strength.
 7. To break internal stability and check growth.
 8. Morale building within the ranks.
 9. Disorientation and psychological isolation of the people.

Causes of Terrorism

1. Insensitive and unresponsive attitude of the establishment.
2. Presence of corruption and inefficiency among the security forces.
3. Existence of an ideology that condone violence.
4. Worldwide improvement of communication technology which facilitates exchanges of ideas and information among the terrorists.
5. Easy availability of arms and ammunitions.
6. Funding within and from outside the country for acts of terrorism.
7. Widespread publicity given to the terrorist activity.
8. Inefficient intelligence network and failure of the criminal justice system which allows the terrorists to escape even after they are caught.
9. Archaic laws and loopholes in them.
10. Safe hideouts to the terrorists.
11. General moral degradation, perceived injustice, inequality, discrimination etc.
12. Low level of economic and social development leading to high level of poverty and unemployment which forces the youth to act for terrorists for monetary gains.
13. Lack of education among the youth and religious affiliation with the terrorists.

Terrorism in India

1. Militants terrorism in Kashmir
2. Khalistan oriented terrorism in Punjab
3. Naxal terrorism in Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgrah , Andhra Pradesh etc

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4. Terrorism in North Eastern states.
 5. Khalsa led terrorism was based on the dream of a theocratic state through secession.
 6. North eastern terrorism is based on identity crisis, alienation, discrimination and underdevelopment.
 7. Naxal terrorism is a class based enmity against the land distribution system.
 8. Terrorism in Kashmir has its roots in the ethnicity, alienation, impoverishment, under development, historical factors, religion and support from Pakistan due to miscalculations in International diplomacy.

Consequences of Terrorism

1. Terrorism leads to erosion of the credibility and legitimacy of the government and in the security system of the nation.
2. It causes political unrest, political instability and uncertainty, sense of insecurity among the individuals prevail, loss of live and property, hampering of economic growth and social progress, misallocation of economic resources, low level of industrialization due to fear, mass level migration which created demographic unrest and decreased tourism.

Combating Terrorism (Strategy)

1. Terrorism is a multi dimensional problem. Hence the measures taken should be holistic in approach.
2. Emphasis should be both on prevention and elimination of terrorism. A mix of long term and short term strategies should be focused.

Short term Strategy (Protection)

1. It involves nabbing, punishing and reforming the terrorists.
2. Strong and prompt punishment so as to instill fear in the mind of the terrorist and to boost the faith and courage of the citizenry in the system.
3. Modernization of the security forces and the intelligence network.
4. Plugging of the loopholes in the laws and if necessary making special laws to deal with terrorism.

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5. Setting up of special counter terrorist forces that are well equipped and well trained to tackle the terrorists.
 6. Encouraging and giving protection to the informers.
 7. Streamlining and making the criminal justice system more efficient and prompt. Special tribunals to hear the cases of terrorists should be set up.
 8. Creating of a village defence committees by boosting up the morale and confidence of the people and by providing them adequate training , skills and arms which would enable them to resist terrorist attack.

Long term strategy (Prevention):

1. Long terms strategy of countering terrorism is the identification of the susceptible group of youths and keeping constant vigil on their activities, generation of patriotic fervour through the use of mass media
2. Providing employment to the misdirected youth so that they can afford a decent standard of living
3. Highlighting the national identity, use of media in order to disseminate the menace of terrorism
4. Use of surrendered terrorists as role models who can teach people about the pains and sufferings they have undergone, and the support that he is now receiving from the government for rehabilitation.
5. Improving economic progress of the nation through rapid industrialization which would provide employment to the disgruntled youth
6. Help disseminating education which would have people in understanding the true nature of terrorism.

Government Actions:

1. Preventive Detention Bill was table in the parliament in 1950 which was further enacted as preventive detention act. It empowered the government to detain any person suspected of committing an offence.
2. In 1971, Maintenance of Internal security act (MISA) was passed.
3. 1980 National security act (NSA) was passed

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4. 1985 the most controversial Terrorist and disruptive activities prevention act (TADA) was passed which superseded the MISA and NSA. It was criticized for its misuse and low rate of conviction. It was annulled in 1995.
 5. 2001 Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) was passed which authorized the government to take stern action against the terrorists. However, due to opposition from several sections, as being discriminatory UPA government annulled this Act in 2004.
 6. Government has also passed money laundering Act 2002 which punishes financing of terrorism.
 7. In 2001, India also became a signatory of UN legislation on terrorism and security councils' anti-terrorism resolution 1373.
 8. Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. It was amended in 2004 to deal with terror activities. It was last amended in 2012.

TADA- Terrorist and Disruptive Activities prevention Act 1985 Passed in May 1985. To deal with terrorism and terrorist.

Features:

1. Created special courts
2. Prohibited grant of bail
3. Allowed detention in judicial custody and investigation for up to 1 year without any formal charges.
4. All proceedings were conducted in camera.
5. Confession of accused to police officers Admissible as evidence.

Criticisms against Tada:

1. State government are using this act against the interest of minorities.
2. Police misused this act against public.
3. Conviction rate was less than 1%
4. Most of the cases were related to Arms and Ammunition.
5. Even for minor cases like possession of weapons, harsh punishments were given.
6. Getting Bail were extremely difficult.
7. Confessions made before a police officer custody was treated as judicial evidence.



Major Terrorist Attack in India:

1. Mumbai Terror Attack - 26 Nov 2008
2. Mumbai Serial Bomb Blast - 12 March 1993
3. Attack on Akshardham Temple Ahmadabad - 24 Sep 2002
4. Delhi Serial Bomb Blast - 29 Oct 2005.
5. Bombay Train Blast - 11 July 2006
6. Samjhauta Express bombings, 2007
7. Jaipur Blast - 13 May 2008.
8. Assam Bombing, target - Capital Guwahati - 30 Oct, 2008.
9. Attack on Indian Parliament - 13 Dec 2001.
10. Coimbatore Bombing - 14 Feb, 1998.
11. Jammu & Kashmir legislative Assembly attack - 1 Oct, 2001.

Naxalism

1. Naxalism is an informal name given to radical often violent, revolutionary communist groups that were born during the Indian communist movement.
2. Ideologically, they belong to various trends of Maoism. Initially the movement had its epicenter in West Bengal.
3. In recent year, they have spread into less developed areas of central and eastern India like chhattisgarh, Andra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar etc through the activities of underground groups like communist party of India (Maoist).

Objectives of Naxals:

1. To capture the power of the state with the might of its armed strength.
2. To capture as much territories as possible and to establish their rule in such territories.
3. To maintain a guerilla group and to set up a liberated zone.
4. To attack the landlords and the rich people whom they consider as the symbol of oppression and tyranny.
5. To capture land and property of the landlords and to redistribute it among the landless.

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6. To create fear among the public by killing people, policemen and elected representatives so that people remain docile to their rule.

Causes of Naxalism

1. Unequal distribution of land and other resource which leads to exploitation and oppression of the poor and landless.
2. Concentration of wealth.
3. Presences of a revolutionary ideology. Mass poverty and unemployment among the people of the lower state.
4. Support of the common masses.
5. Weak democratic structure and inefficient and corrupt police forces.
6. Unresponsive government.
7. Failure of the land reforms.

Questions:

1. Religious violence in India- Elaborate.
2. Explain the evolution of communal violence.
3. Define terrorism. Explain the consequences of terrorism in long term effect and short term effect.
4. Naxalism – their objectives and causes detail.