

Revision Notes

Class – 8 Political Science - Civics

Chapter 2 - Understanding Secularism

- History has witnessed all the gruesome discrimination, persecution, exclusion, & the torture done to people based on the religion which they follow. In the present civilized world, matters like this can be strictly prevented to safeguard communities & protect a person's right. That's why the word secularism is inscribed in the preamble of the constitution of India. Below is the vital information you'll need to learn about India, and its secularism.

- **What is secularism?**

Secularism generally refers to the separation of the religion from a State. It is very essential to separate religion from the state for the country to practice its democracy. Most of the countries have people of more than one religion who reside within the state. We ought to safeguard individuals' right to preach and practice the religion of their choice.

- **What is Indian Secularism?**

According to the Indian Constitution, a secular state ought to ensure that:

1. One religious community should not assert dominance over the other.
 2. Members of the same religious community should not dominate each other.
 3. The state would not enforce any specific religion or take away the freedom and support of the other religions.
- Government spaces in India like police stations, law courts, & government institutions are prohibited from promoting any particular religion. The state can make exceptions for specific religions to respect the sentiments of the religion. For example, Sikhs are generally permitted to wear a turban while riding a bike instead of the helmet.

- Secularism in India also prevents the dominance of one majority over the minority through various strategic interventions. For example, the Indian Constitution bans untouchability in any form or kind.

- **Why is it generally Important to Separate the Religion from the State?**

For the functionality of a democracy, it's imperative to separate religion from state.

 - ❖ Most of the countries have mixed religious groups living amongst each other. If a majority group has state powers, they can easily dominate the minority religious groups by misusing their power.
 - ❖ We need to safeguard individuals' freedom to embrace any another religion, exit from their religion & comprehend religious teachings differently.

- **How Indian secularism is different from that of other countries?**
 - ❖ Indian secularism very much varies from other democratic countries. For example, let's take the case of the United States of America- there is a strict separation b/w the state and religion in America. In contrast, the state can practice strategic interventions in religious affairs in India time to time.
 - ❖ Although in Indian secularism, the state does not entirely separate itself from religion, it does maintain a principled distance. It means any action or intervention by the state will be based on constitutional principles.
 - ❖ The Constitution warrants Fundamental Rights, which is based on secular principles.

Important Questions and Answers

1. What do you mean by coercion?

Ans: In English, coercion generally means forcing a person to do something. In politics, it refers to the force exerted by various legal authorities, for instance, the state.

2. What is Freedom to Interpret?

Ans: It refers to the freedom given to all the people to comprehend things in their way. This chapter pertains to the individual liberty to formulate their understanding and meaning of the religion they choose to practice.

3. What is State Intervention?

Ans: The state normally has the power to intervene in specific matters that align with the Constitution. It refers to the state's efforts to influence situations, for example, religious matters.

4. What do you mean by secularism?

Ans: Secularism is generally a belief that nobody should be discriminated based on the religion they follow. Regardless of the religion he/she follows, they are equal according to the laws & regulations that govern the nation.

5. What are the reasons to separate the power of the state from religion?

Ans: Everyone should have the freedom to choose or to leave any religion and join another one. People should also have the freedom to interpret religious teachings as they please.

6. What is Article 17 in the Constitution?

Ans: Article 17 consists of the Right to Equality. It is also directly related to the 'Abolition of untouchability.'

It states that-

"Untouchability" is abolished, and its practice in any form is absolutely forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of "Untouchability" shall be an offence punishable by law."

7. Give the strategies followed by the Indian government in order to establish and maintain secularism.

Ans:

1. The strategy of non-interference.
2. The strategy of distancing itself from a religion.
3. The strategy of intervention

8. What do you mean by religion?

Ans: Religion is normally a set of personal beliefs and related practices to divinity. It refers to people's opinions and beliefs concerning the existence, worship, and divinity of nature.

9. What does the 1st Amendment of the US Constitution prohibit?

Ans: The first amendment of the US Constitution prohibits the legislature from creating laws "respecting an establishment of religion" or laws which "prohibit the free exercise of religion." This means that the legislature cannot declare any particular religion as the official religion or any religious community's preferences.

10. Why does a country need laws?

Ans: So as to avoid people from socially unjust and cultural practices. To establish equality between people as society discriminates against the underprivileged lower caste people.