

CBSE Class-12 Sociology Test Paper-04
Challenges to Cultural Diversity

General Instruction:

- Question 1-5 carries two marks each.
 - Question 6-8 carries four marks each.
 - Question 9-10 carries six marks each.
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1. What does 'communalism' refer to?
2. What does 'communal' mean in English language?
3. Give examples of the most traumatic contemporary instances of communal violence occurred where major political parties were responsible.
4. Define 'secularism' in the western context.
5. What is the Indian meaning of 'secularism'?
6. Why is it important to emphasise that communalism is about politics and not about religion?
7. Why do religious identity overrides everything else in communalism?
8. History provides us with both good and bad examples of communalism. What are these?
9. Why is communalism an important issue in India?
10. Explain one difficulty with regard to upholding secularism principle.

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1. The word ‘communalism’ refers to aggressive chauvinism based on religious identity. Chauvinism itself is an attitude that sees one’s own group as the only legitimate or worthy group, with other groups being seen as inferior, illegitimate and opposed. Thus, to simplify further, communalism is an aggressive political ideology linked to religion.
2. In the English language, “communal” means something related to a community or collectivity as different from an individual. The English meaning is neutral, whereas the South Asian meaning is strongly charged. The charge may be seen as positive – if one is sympathetic to communalism – or negative, if one is opposed to it.
3. The following are the examples of the most traumatic contemporary instances of communal violence occurred where major political parties were responsible:
 - i. The anti-Sikh riots of Delhi in 1984 took place under a Congress regime.
 - ii. The unprecedented scale and spread of anti-Muslim violence in Gujarat in 2002 took place under a BJP government.
4. Secularism in the western context refers to do the separation of church and state. This separation was related to the process of “secularisation”, or the progressive retreat of religion from public life, as it was converted from a mandatory obligation to a voluntary personal practice. Secularisation in turn was related to the arrival of modernity and the rise of science and rationality as alternatives to religious ways of understanding the world.
5. The Indian meanings of secular and secularism means one that does not favour any particular religion over others. Secularism in this sense is the opposite of religious chauvinism and it need not necessarily imply hostility to religion as such. In terms of the state-religion relationship, this sense of secularism implies equal respect for all religions, rather than separation or distancing. For example, the secular Indian state declares public holidays to mark the festivals of all religions.
6. It is important to emphasise that communalism is about politics, not about religion because:
 - i. Although communalists are intensely involved with religion, there is in fact no necessary relationship between personal faith and communalism.

- ii. A communalist may or may not be a devout person, and devout believers may or may not be communalists. However, all communalists do believe in a political identity based on religion.
 - iii. The key factor is the attitude towards those who believe in other kinds of identities, including other religion-based identities.
 - iv. Communalists cultivate an aggressive political identity, and are prepared to condemn or attack everyone who does not share their identity.
7. One of the characteristic features of communalism is its claim that religious identity overrides everything else.
- i. Whether one is poor or rich, whatever one's occupation, caste or political beliefs, it is religion alone that counts.
 - ii. All Hindus are the same as are all Muslims, Sikhs and so on. This has the effect of constructing large and diverse groups as singular and homogenous. It is noteworthy that this is done for one's own group as well as for others.
 - iii. This would obviously rule out the possibility that Hindus, Muslims and Christians who belong to Kerala, for example, may have as much or more in common with each other than with their co-religionists from Kashmir, Gujarat or Nagaland.
 - iv. It also denies the possibility that, for instance, landless agricultural labourers (or industrialists) may have a lot in common even if they belong to different religions and regions.
8. India has had a history of communal riots from pre-Independence times, often as a result of the divide-and-rule policy adopted by the colonial rulers.
- i. But colonialism did not invent inter-community conflicts – there is also a long history of pre-colonial conflicts – and it certainly cannot be blamed for post-independence riots and killings.
 - ii. Indeed, if we wish to look for instances of religious, cultural, regional or ethnic conflict they can be found in almost every phase of our history.
 - iii. But we should not forget that we also have a long tradition of religious pluralism, ranging from peaceful co-existence to actual inter-mixing or syncretism.
 - iv. This syncretic heritage is clearly evident in the devotional songs and poetry of the Bhakti and Sufi movements.
- In short, history provides us with both good and bad examples; what we wish to learn from it is up to us.

9. Communalism is an especially important issue in India because it has been a recurrent source of tension and violence.
 - i. During communal riots, people become faceless members of their respective communities.
 - ii. People are willing to kill, rape, and loot members of other communities in order to redeem their pride, to protect their home turf. A commonly cited justification is to avenge the deaths or dishonour suffered by their co-religionists elsewhere or even in the distant past.
 - iii. No region has been wholly exempt from communal violence of one kind or another. Every religious community has faced this violence in greater or lesser degree, although the proportionate impact is far more traumatic for minority communities.
 - iv. To the extent that governments can be held responsible for communal riots, no government or ruling party can claim to be blameless in this regard.
 - v. In fact, the two most traumatic contemporary instances of communal violence occurred under each of the major political parties. The anti-Sikh riots of Delhi in 1984 took place under a Congress regime.
 - vi. The unprecedented scale and spread of anti-Muslim violence in Gujarat in 2002 took place under a BJP government is another example.
10. One set of complications with regard to upholding secularism as a principle is:
 - i. Created by the tension between the Indian state's simultaneous commitment to secularism as well as the protection of minorities.
 - ii. The protection of minorities requires that they be given special consideration in a context where the normal working of the political system places them at a disadvantage vis-à-vis the majority community.
 - iii. But providing such protection immediately invites the accusation of favouritism or 'appeasement' of minorities.
 - iv. Opponents argue that secularism of this sort is only an excuse to favour the minorities in return for their votes or other kinds of support.
 - v. Supporters argue that without such special protection, secularism can turn into an excuse for imposing the majority community's values and norms on the minorities.