8. Secularism

Q1. Which of the following do you feel are compatible with the idea of secularism? Give reasons.
(a) Absence of domination of one religious group by another.
(b) Recognition of a state religion.
(c) Equal state support to all religions.
(d) Mandatory prayers in schools.
(e) Allowing separate educational institutions for any minority community.
(f) Appointment of temple management bodies by the government.
(g) Intervention of state to ensure entry of Dalits in temples.

Answer:

(a) This idea is compatible because:
(i) Due to equality, majority of religious people will not dominate minority religious people.
(ii) Minority religious people also enjoy freedom to practice any religious beliefs, way of worship and to preach as well.
(b) It is not compatible because such situation prevails only in religious dominated state.
(c) Equal support to all religions by state can be provided because:
If we value peace, freedom and equality, religious institutions and state institutions must be separated. Many states which are non-theocratic continue to have a close alliance with a particular religion. For example, the state in England in the sixteenth century was not run by a priestly class but clearly favoured the Anglican Church and its members. England had an established Anglican religion, which was the official religion of the state. Today Pakistan has an official state religion, namely Sunni Islam. Such regimes may leave little scope for internal dissent or religious equality. Till state shall not look at all religions in the same way, social justice and non-discrimination cannot be imagined. In India, Religious minorities have the right to maintain their own culture and educational institutions. This proves that state may provide similar support to all the religions.
(d) It is not compatible because students, teacher and employees are free to adopt their own way to offer prayer.
(e) It is compatible to provide protection and security to people of minority religions group.
(f) It is not compatible to be the direct involvement of state and or government in religious affairs.
(g) **It is compatible because:** Religion has its share of some deep-rooted problems.For example, one can hardly think of a religion that treats its male and female members on an equal footing. In religions such as Hinduism, some sections have faced persistent discrimination. For example dalits have been barred from entering Hindu temples. In some parts of the country, Hindu woman cannot enter temples. When religion is organised, it is frequently taken over by

its most conservative faction, which does not tolerate any dissent. Many religions fragment into sects which leads to frequent sectarian violence and persecution of dissenting minorities. To curb such practices state's intervention is required.

Q2. Some of the key characteristics of western and Indian model of secularism have got mixed up.Separate them and make a new table.

Western Secularism	**Indian Secularism**
Strict non-interference of religion and state in each other's affairs	State supported religious reforms allowed
Equality between different religious groups is a key concern	Equality between different sects of religion is emphasized
Attention to minority rights	Less attention to community-based rights
Individual and his rights at the Centre	Rights of both individual and religious community Are protected

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Q3. What do you understand by secularism? Can it be equated with religious tolerance?

Answer:
Secularism is

(a) State has no religion of its own
(b) No, discrimination among the people on the basis of religion.
(c) Every religion is equal before law
(d) Every citizen enjoys freedom to reside with freedom and dignity in any part of country.
Equating of secularism with religious tolerance:
(a) Religious tolerance is a powerful base of secularism, i.e. state has positive attitude due to sense of religious tolerance but they do not treat all sects equally.
(b) Secularism provides fundamental rights to minority religious groups within the dominion of state.
(c) The religious tolerance is not a right but a mutual sympathy.
(d) Secularism opposes to intra-religious domination because, if religious tolerance is allowed only, then the people of majority will dominate the people of minority.
(e) Indian secularism emphasizes on peaceful co-existence refer to equal respect towards all religions and their practices and clarity in case of ambiguity.
(f) Under Indian secularism, religiously sanctioned caste-hierarchy are not acceptable.
(g) Though secular state does not have to treat every aspect of every religion with equal respect, but it stops disregard towards the genuine aspects of other sects or religion.

Q4. Do you agree with the following statements? Give reasons for supporting or opposing any of them.
(a) Secularism does not allow us to have a religious identity.
(b) Secularism is against inequality within a religious group or between different religious groups.
(c) Secularism has a western-Christian origin. It is not suitable for India.

Answer:
It is opposed because secularism believes and supports protection of religious identity, as being a part of human rights.
It is supported because:

* Secularism is not against inequality
* It allows religious institutions
* Secularism believes in equality of all religions.
* The people belonging to different religions or communities enjoy equal opportunity of jobs. It is opposed because

* Secularism neither have western origin nor it is not suitable for India.
* After Independence, India has been declared a secular state and it cannot interfere in the religious matters of individuals.
* Its example can be sited even from ancient History when Hindu and Buddhist rulers behaved equally with the people of different religions.

Q5. Indian secularism focuses on more than the religion-state separation. Explain.

Answer:

(a) In India, secularism opposes all kinds of interreligious domination and institutionalized religious domination.
(b) Indian secularism promotes freedom within religions, i.e. no discrimination on the basis of religion, colour, race, etc. and equality among different religions.
(c) India has promoted religious harmony to value peace, freedom and equality.
(d) Indian secularism separates clearly the religious institutions and state institutions.
(e) A secular state must be committed to the principle and goals of peace, religious freedom,freedom from religious oppressions,discrimination and exclusion of inter religious and intra-religious equality.
(f) Indian constitution declares that every citizen enjoys a right to reside with freedom and dignity
in any part of country.
(g) Indian secularism follows all concepts related with principled distance.

Q6. Explain the concept of principled distance.

Answer:

* To be secular, a state must not only refuse to be theocratic but also have no formal legal alliance with any religion because separation of religion and state is necessary but not a sufficient ingredient of a secular state.
* A secular state must be committed to principles and goals to be derived from non-religious sources including peace, religious freedom, freedom from discrimination and inter-religious and intra-religious equality.
* Secular states are neither theocratic nor establish a religion. Separation of religion and state is a mutual exclusion not to interfere in the affairs of religion and as well as religion will not interfere in the affairs of state.
* No policy of the state can have an exclusively religious rationale because state and religion both exercise separate spheres of their own.
* The state cannot aid any religious institutions or provide any financial support to religious communities as well as it cannot hinder the activities of religious communities which are within the broad limits set by the law of land.

* A secular state may keep a principled distance from religion to promote peace between communities and it may also intervene to protect the rights of specific communities..