

Chapter – 02 Political Science

Understanding Secularism

In history, there are various instances of discrimination, exclusion, persecution and torture on the grounds of religion and in a civilized world no one wishes for such discrimination based on the religion.

Hence Indian constitution speaks about values like Secularism.

Secularism Refers to Separation of Religion from the state:

- (i) The Indian Constitution allows individuals the freedom to live by their religious beliefs and practices.
- (ii) India adopted a strategy of separating the power of religion and the power of the state.

Why is it important to Separate Religion from the State:

- i) For proper functioning of democracy.
- (ii) It prohibits the domination of one religion over another.
- (iii) To protect the freedom of individuals to exit from their religion, embrace another religion or have the freedom to interpret religious teachings differently.

What is Indian Secularism:

- (i) The Indian Constitution mandates that the Indian state be secular state.
- (ii) One religious community does not dominate another in a secular state.
- (iii) In a secular state, some members do not dominate other members of the same religious community.
- (iv) The state does not enforce any particular religion nor take away the religious freedom of individuals.

(v)The government schools can not promote any one religion.

(vi)In order to respect the sentiments of all religions and not interfere with religious practices, the state makes certain exceptions for particular religious communities.

For Eg. Sikhs wear 'pugri' (turban) as a religious practice. Hence they need not to wear helmet while riding two wheeler.

(vii)The Indian secularism works to prevent the domination of majority religion over minority.

(viii)In order to prevent this religion-based exclusion and discrimination of lower castes, the Indian Constitution bans untouchability.

(ix) In order to end social practices, the state may have to intervene in the religion based orders.

(x)The first amendment of the US constitution prohibits the legislature from making laws “respecting an establishment of religion” or that prohibits the free exercise of religion. It means the legislature cannot declare any religion as an official religion. In the USA, seperation between the State and religion means neither the state nor religion can interfere in the affairs of each other.

(xi)The Indian state is secular and works in various ways to prevent religious domination.

(xii) Unlike USA , in India, the state can interfere in religion on the ideal laid down in the constitution. For example; Untouchability is banned by the law.