

Chapter-18

Secularism

Revision Notes

1. The word 'Dharma' has been derived from Sanskrit refer to adopt alongwith the basic principle to do welfare of all.
2. Secularism refers equal respect for all religions, i.e. the state does not profess any religion and treats all the religions at par.
3. Originally, India was not declared a secular state, the word secular was added by the 42nd Amendment Act.
4. The Indian Constitution declares that every Indian citizen has a right to live with freedom and dignity in any part of the country.
5. Secularism refers that political system and administration should be based upon a secular ideology to leave the task of coordination among the different religions and bring unity among them through voluntary social organisation.
6. Religion and beliefs are considered as a personal matter, hence, state should have no interference in it.
7. India is a secular state because India is impartial in religious matters, all citizens enjoy freedom to adopt any religion as per choice, no discrimination is made on the ground of religion. India has no state religion, religion is kept separate from politics, etc.
8. India used to believe since ancient times the nation of "Sarva Dharm Sam Bhava" because India respects all religions equally.
9. Hence, secular states are neither theocratic nor establish any religion.
10. Education is one way of helping to change the mindset of people. Individual examples of sharing and mutual help can also contribute towards reducing prejudice and suspicion between communities.
11. A state governed directly by a priestly order is called theocratic. Theocratic states, such as the Papal states of Europe in medieval times or in recent times the Taliban-controlled states, lacking separation between religious and political institutions, are known for their hierarchies, and oppressions, and reluctance to allow freedom of religion to members of other religious groups.

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12. A secular state must be committed to principles and goals which are at least partly derived from non-religious sources. These ends should include peace, religious freedom, freedom from religiously grounded oppressions, discrimination and exclusions, as also inter-religious and intra-religious equality.
 13. The state cannot aid any religious institution. It cannot give financial support to educational institutions run by religious communities.
 14. Indian secularism is fundamentally different from Western secularism.
 15. Indian secularism deals not only with religious freedom of individuals but also with religious freedom of minority communities. Within it, an individual has the right to profess the religion of his or her choice.
 16. The Indian Constitution grants all religious minorities the right to establish and maintain their own educational institutions which may receive assistance from the state. All these complex strategies can be adopted by the state to promote the values of peace, freedom and equality.
 17. Indian secularism allows for principled state intervention in all religions. Such intervention betrays disrespect to some aspects of every religion. For example, religiously sanctioned caste-hierarchies are not acceptable within Indian secularism.
 18. Indian secularism can be criticised on the grounds of being anti-religions, imported from western culture, charge of minoritism, interventionist based on vote bank politics and it is considered to be an impossible project.