

CHAPTER-II

UNDERSTANDING SECULARISM

2MARKS QUESTIONS

Q1: What is secularism?

Ans:Secularism is the principle of separating religion from the affairs of the state. It involves maintaining a neutral stance, where the government does not favor or promote any particular religion.

Q2: Why is secularism important in a democracy?

Ans:Secularism is crucial in a democracy because it ensures that people of all religions are treated equally, and the government does not discriminate based on religious beliefs. It promotes religious freedom and prevents the dominance of any one religion in public affairs.

Q3: How does secularism differ from theocracy?

Ans:Secularism advocates the separation of religion from the state, ensuring that religious institutions do not control political decisions. In contrast, theocracy is a system where religious leaders or institutions hold political power.

Q4: Provide an example of a secular state.

Ans: India is an example of a secular state. The Indian Constitution ensures the equality of all religions and prohibits the state from favoring any particular religion.

Q5: What is the significance of the term "equal respect for all religions" in a secular state?

Ans: "Equal respect for all religions" means that the state does not show preference for any specific religion. It guarantees that individuals have the right to practice and profess their religion without facing discrimination.

Q6: How does secularism contribute to social harmony?

Ans: Secularism promotes tolerance and acceptance of religious diversity. By treating all religions equally, it reduces religious conflicts and fosters a sense of unity among people of different faiths.

Q7: Can a secular state support religious freedom?

Ans: Yes, a secular state supports religious freedom by allowing individuals to practice their religion freely without interference from the government. It ensures that no one is discriminated against based on their religious beliefs.

Q8: Explain the concept of 'Sarva Dharma Sambhava' in the context of secularism in India.

Ans: 'Sarva Dharma Sambhava' means equal respect for all religions. In the Indian context, it reflects the secular ideals of treating all religions with equality and ensuring that the state remains neutral in matters of religion.

Q9: How does secularism protect the rights of religious minorities? A9: Secularism protects the rights of religious minorities by ensuring that they are not marginalized or discriminated against due to their religious beliefs. It guarantees equal rights and opportunities for all citizens, regardless of their religious affiliations.

Q10: Can individuals in a secular state follow any religion or choose not to follow any? A10: Yes, individuals in a secular state have the freedom to follow any religion of their choice, and they also have the right to not follow any religion. Secularism upholds the principle of freedom of religion or belief.

4MARKS QUESTIONS

1. List the different types of religious practice in your neighbourhood:

- Examples may include various forms of prayer (e.g., Namaz, Pooja), worship of different gods, sacred sites (temples, mosques, churches), religious music and singing, religious festivals, rituals, etc. The diversity in these practices suggests a freedom of religious practice in the neighborhood.

Does this indicate freedom of religious practice?

- Yes, the diverse religious practices in the neighborhood indicate that people have the freedom to practice their respective religions without interference.

2. Will the government intervene if some religious group says that their religion allows them to practice infanticide? Give reasons for your answer:

- The government is likely to intervene. While freedom of religion is protected, practices that are illegal or violate fundamental rights, such as the right to life, are not protected. Infanticide is a criminal act, and the government has a responsibility to uphold the law and protect the rights of individuals.

3. Complete the following table:

Religious Practice	Example	Significance
Prayer	Namaz	Spiritual connection with a higher power
Worship of gods	Pooja	Devotion and seeking blessings
Sacred sites	Temple, Mosque, Church	Places of religious significance
Religious music and singing	Bhajans, Qawwalis	Expressing devotion and celebrating faith
Religious festivals	Diwali, Eid, Christmas	Commemorating religious events

4. Look up the annual calendar of holidays of your school. How many of them pertain to different religions? What does this indicate?

- This exercise helps understand the cultural and religious diversity reflected in the school's holidays. If there is a variety of holidays representing different religions, it indicates a recognition and respect for the diverse religious practices of the school community.

5. Find out some examples of different views within the same religion:

- Examples may include differing interpretations of religious texts, beliefs, rituals, or practices within a particular religion. For instance, within Christianity, different denominations may have variations in their beliefs or practices.

7MARKS QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important to separate religion from the State? Explain with examples.

Answer: There are two main reasons why the separation of religion from the State is important:

(i) The first is to prevent the domination of one religion over another.

Example: Almost all countries of the world will have more than one religious groups living in them. Within these religious groups, there will most likely be one group that is in a majority. If this majority religious group has access to State power, then it could quite easily use this power and financial resources to discriminate against and persecute persons of other religions. This would violate Fundamental Rights.

(ii) The second is to protect the freedom of individuals to exit from their religion, embrace another religion or have the freedom to interpret religious teachings differently.

Example: We can give example of untouchability in Hindu religious practice. If state power were in the hands of those Hindus who support untouchability, then it would be a difficult task for anyone to abolish this practice.

2. Explain with an example that in Indian secularism the State can intervene in religious affairs.

Answer: An important aspect of Indian secularism is that the State can intervene in religious affairs. We can prove this fact with an example of untouchability. It was a practice in which the members of the same religion, i.e. upper caste Hindus, dominated other members, i.e. lower caste people, within it. In order to prevent this religion-based exclusion and discrimination of lower castes, the Indian Constitution banned untouchability. In this instance, the State intervened in religion in order to end a social practice that it believed discriminated and excluded and that violated the Fundamental Rights of Lower castes.

3. What is secularism?

Answer: The Indian Constitution contains Fundamental Rights. These rights are very important because they protect us against State power as well as against the tyranny of the majority. The Indian Constitution allows individuals the freedom to live by their religious beliefs and practices as they interpret these. Thus, our Constitution gives religious freedom to all and to maintain it India adopted a strategy of separating the power of religion and the power of the State. Secularism is, in fact, the separation of religion from the State.

4: Secularism is separating religion from the power of the state. Discuss why it is vital to separate the power of the state from religious practices.

Answer: Secularism is very essential for the smooth functioning of a democratic country. In today's world people go to other countries to work or do business. So you will find that people of different religions live in the same locality.

In the event of people of different religions living together in the same locality there is a possibility that people belonging to one particular religion being in the majority. If this majority has access to State power, there is likelihood that it will use it to discriminate and dominate the minority group which practices another religion.

In a secular democratic country any form of domination or tyranny, based on religion is in violation of the rights that a democratic society guarantees to each and every citizen irrespective of their religion.

Therefore it is important not to allow any one religion, even though it may be the majority, to violate the fundamental rights of all citizens. If this right has to be maintained it is vital to separate the power of the state from religious practices.

5. In what different ways does the Indian State work to prevent religious domination?

Answer: Indian secularism works in various ways to prevent religious domination:

(a) It uses a strategy of distancing itself from religion. The Indian State is not ruled by a religious group. It also does not support any one religion. In our country, government places like law courts, police stations, government schools and offices are not supposed to demonstrate or promote any one religion.

(b) The second way in which Indian secularism works to prevent the domination of religion is through a strategy of non-interference. This means that in order to respect the sentiments of all religions and not interfere with religious practices, the State makes certain exceptions for particular religious communities. Just take the example of the Sikh community. For Sikhs, wearing a pagri is a very important part of their religion. The government cannot force them to wear a helmet while driving a two-wheeler.

(c) The third way in which Indian secularism works to prevent the domination of religion is through a strategy of intervention. Untouchability presents a good example where members of the same religion, i.e. upper caste Hindus, dominate other members, i.e. lower castes within it. In order to prevent this religion-based discrimination of lower castes, our Constitution banned untouchability. Here, the State intervened in religion in order to uproot a social practice that it believed discriminated and excluded, and that violated the Fundamental Rights of the people belonging to lower caste.

MULTIPLE CHOICES

Q1- Hitler had prosecuted _____ during his region in Germany.

- A) Muslims
- B) Christians
- C) Jews
- D) Hindus

Q2- Israel is a _____ majority state.

- A) Hindu
- B) Jewish
- C) Islamic
- D) Christian

Q3- _____ is one of the former colonies of France.

- A) Indonesia
- B) South Africa
- C) Morocco
- D) China

Q4- In Saudi Arabia, _____ can't practise their religion in public.

- A) non-Muslims
- B) Muslims
- C) Government
- D) People

Q5- Separation of religion from the State is referred to as _____.

- A) Monarchy
- B) Democracy
- C) Secularism
- D) Republic

Q6- All citizens are permitted by _____ to practise their own religion.

- A) State
- B) Indian constitution
- C) Judiciary
- D) President

Q7- In a secular state, one religious state does not _____ the other.

- A) support
- B) discriminate
- C) follow
- D) resist

Q8- _____ are not allowed to celebrate the festivals of any particular religion to promote secularism.

- A) Private schools
- B) Government schools
- C) madarsas
- D) Pathshalas

Q9- The tyranny of Majority people can result in _____ of religious minorities.

- A) education
- B) discrimination
- C) freedom
- D) biasness

Q10- The Government of India does not support any one _____.

- A) Democracy
- B) monarchy
- C) religion
- D) Judiciary

Answers:

Q. No.	Answer
1	C
2	B
3	C
4	A
5	C
6	B
7	B
8	B
9	B
10	C

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Q1- _____ is an example of government office.

Ans:Police stations

Q2- In _____, there are upper castes who dominate lower castes.

Ans: Hinduism

Q3- Indian Constitution allows religious minorities to set up their own _____.

Ans:Educational setups

Q4- _____ is a former colony of France.

Ans:Algeria

Q5- For Sikhs, wearing a _____ is an important part of religion. So, they can avoid helmets.

Ans:Turban

Q6- _____ is a Republic country

Ans:United States of America

Q7- _____ is the main religion of Saudi Arabia.

Ans:Islam

Q8- _____ are allowed to celebrate festivals.

Ans:Private Schools

Q9- Pledge of Alligiance' takes place in the schools of the _____.

Ans:USA

Q10- Tunisia was a colony of _____ earlier.

Ans:France

understanding secularism summary

Secularism is a concept that emphasizes the separation of religion from government and public affairs. In an 8th-grade context, understanding secularism involves grasping the following key points:

1. Separation of Church and State:

- Secularism advocates for the separation of religious institutions from government and political decision-making.
- It ensures that no single religion dominates or influences government policies.

2. Freedom of Religion:

- Secularism supports the idea that individuals should have the freedom to practice any religion or none at all.
- It safeguards the right to believe in and practice one's faith without interference from the state.

3. Equality for All Religions:

- Secularism promotes the idea of treating all religions equally, without giving preferential treatment to any specific faith.
- It discourages discrimination based on religious beliefs.

4. Neutral Government:

- A secular government remains neutral in matters of religion. It does not endorse or promote any particular religious belief.
- Public policies and laws are expected to be based on reason, evidence, and the well-being of all citizens, irrespective of their religious affiliations.

5. Public Spaces:

- Secularism extends to public spaces, ensuring that government-funded institutions such as schools and offices do not promote or favor any particular religion.
- It encourages an inclusive environment where people of diverse religious backgrounds can coexist peacefully.

6. Religious Freedom vs. Religious Coercion:

- Secularism protects individuals from being compelled to adhere to a specific religious doctrine.
- It safeguards against the imposition of religious beliefs through laws or societal pressure.

7. Tolerance and Respect:

- Secularism encourages tolerance and respect for different religious beliefs.
- It fosters a society where people can engage in constructive dialogue and cooperation despite differing religious views.

8. Cultural Pluralism:

- Secularism supports the coexistence of diverse cultural and religious practices within a society.
- It recognizes the richness that comes from embracing a variety of traditions and perspectives.

In summary, for an 8th-grade understanding of secularism, it is crucial to recognize its emphasis on the separation of religion from government, the protection of religious freedom, equality among religions, and the promotion of tolerance and respect in a diverse society.