

Chapter – 2: Understanding Secularism

- History – example – discrimination, exclusion, persecution (oppression) – religious
 - Hitler's Germany – Jews – killed in millions
 - Saudi Arabia – non-Muslims – not allowed – build religious centre
- Above examples – one community (majority) – oppress – other community (minority)
 - Easier – State (country) – one religion – official religion
- No one wants to be discriminated

What is Secularism?

- Indian Constitution – fundamental rights – protects against –
 - State power
 - Tyranny of majority
- Constitution – right to religious freedom
- India – strategy – separating power of religion and power of State
 - This separation is Secularism

Why is it Important to Separate Religion from State?

- Most imp. aspect – secularism – separation of religion from State power
- Reasons to separate –
 - 1.
 - Different religion – same country – one religion – majority
 - Majority religious group – State power – use power – discriminate – minorities
 - Tyranny of majority – discrimination – killing of minorities
 - Majority – stop minority – practice their own religion
 - Domination – based on religion – against democracy
 - 2.
 - Protect – freedom of individual – exit from religion – take another religion – interpret same religion differently from others
 - Untouchability – you dislike – want to change
BUT
 - State power – Hindus who support untouchability – difficult to change it
 - You are part of dominant group – yet discriminated

What is Indian Secularism?

- Indian Constitution – mandates – Indian State – secular
- Secular State – ensures –
 - One religious community does not dominate others
 - Some members do not dominate others in the same community
 - State does not enforce any religion or take away religious freedom
- Indian State – various ways – prevent domination

1. Distancing itself from religion – does not support any one religion – public (government) places – do not promote – any one religion
 - Government school – children want to celebrate – religious festival
 - Teacher denies – government school – public place – no religious celebration
 - Religious festival – public holiday – celebrate in your locality
 - Private schools – not a public place – celebrate whatever they want
2. Strategy of non-interference – respect sentiments of all religions – State makes certain exceptions – accommodate religious beliefs
 - Sikhs – wear *pugri* (turban) – very imp. part of their religion
 - State – allows exception in law – not compulsory to wear helmet
3. Strategy of intervention – State intervenes in religion – stop social practice – discriminates and violates fundamental rights of citizen
 - Untouchability – Upper Caste dominate Lower Caste within same religion – violates fundamental rights of Lower Caste people
 - Indian Constitution – bans untouchability
 - State support – religious communities – set up – schools / colleges – financial aid – without preferences

Indian secularism different from other democratic countries – how?

- USA – strict separation between State and Religion – none can interfere with the other
 - India – State can interfere / intervene – when and if necessary – according to Constitution
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- Indian State – secular – prevents domination in different ways
 - Indian Constitution – guarantees fundamental rights
 - However – violation occurs – if we are aware of the rights – we can take action against violation