

# CIVICS

## Chapter 5: Understanding Secularism



## Important Questions

### Multiple Choice Questions-

Question 1. Who were persecuted in Hitler's Germany?

- (a) Jews
- (b) Christian
- (c) Muslims
- (d) Hindus

Question 2. What is referred to as the separation of religion from the State?

- (a) Diversity
- (b) Fraternity
- (c) Secularism
- (d) Discrimination

Question 3. Which community in Indian society cannot be forced to wear Helmet as they wear Turban.

- (a) Muslims
- (b) Buddhist
- (c) Christians
- (d) Sikhs

Question 4. In which country most children in the government schools have to begin their school day reciting 'Pledge of Allegiance'?

- (a) France
- (b) India
- (c) UK
- (d) USA

Question 5. In which year and month France passed a law which banned wearing any conspicuous religious or political signs.

- (a) In Feb 2004
- (b) In Feb 2005
- (c) In Mar 2006
- (d) In Jan 2008

Question 6. In February 2004, which country has prohibited the wearing of conspicuous religious or political signs by the students?

- (a) France
- (b) India
- (c) America
- (d) None of these

Question 7. What is the status of U.S legislature in the matters of the religion?

- (a) Prohibit making new gender law
- (b) Prohibit making new reservation law
- (c) Prohibit making new religion law
- (d) None of these

Question 8. What was the names of the Muslim dominant former French colonies?

- (a) Tunisia
- (b) Morocco
- (c) Algeria
- (d) All of these

Question 9. What was the names of two non-secular countries?

- (a) Saudi Arabia
- (b) Israel
- (c) Both a and b
- (d) None of these

Question 10. Which one of the following is a fundamental right?

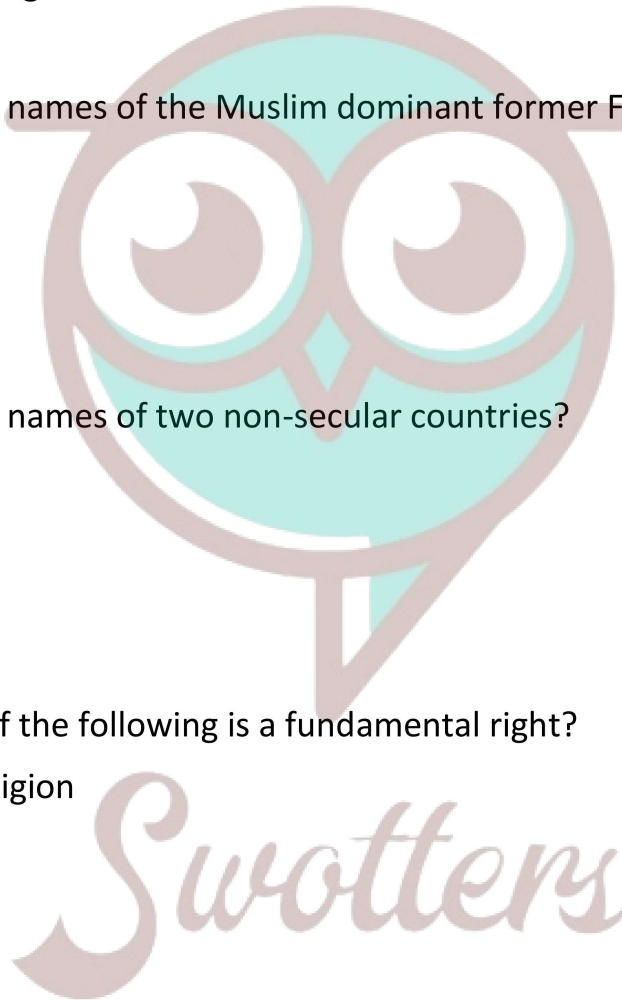
- (a) Right to freedom of religion
- (b) Right to property
- (c) Right to work
- (d) All of these

Question 11. Where do Christians go for prayer?

- (a) Temple
- (b) Church
- (c) Mosque
- (d) Gurudwara

Question 12. What happened in Hitler's Germany?

- (a) Several million people were killed
- (b) Bomb blast took place in Nagasaki



- (c) Assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi
- (d) All of these

Question 13. What does 'to force someone to do something' mean?

- (a) Coercion
- (b) Intervene
- (c) Interpret
- (d) None of these

Question 14. Indian Constitution contains

- (a) Fundamental rights
- (b) Discrimination
- (c) Unequality
- (d) All of these

Question 15. What could the tyranny of majority result in?

- (a) Discrimination
- (b) Coercion
- (c) None of the above
- (d) Both (a) and (b)

### Very Short:

1. What examples does history provide us on the grounds of religion?
2. What happened in the Jewish state of Israel?
3. How are non-Muslims treated in Saudi Arabia?
4. What does the term 'secularism' refer to?
5. What do you mean by 'freedom to interpret'?
6. Why cannot government schools celebrate religious festivals?
7. Why is Paramjit allowed to drive in pagri?
8. How is Indian secularism different from that of American secularism?
9. What is meant by 'principled distance'?

### Short Questions:

1. What is religion?
2. Name the major religions practiced all over the world.
3. What is secularism?
4. State the 4th point of the Fundamental Rights of the Indian constitution.

5. What are the three objectives of a secular State?
6. What are the other reasons for separating the power of the State from religion?
7. What do you understand from the statement 'freedom to interpret religious teachings differently' in context with the practice of untouchability?
8. What are the objectives of the Indian constitution that advocates secularism?

### Long Questions:

1. Why is it important to separate religion from the State? Explain with examples.
2. Explain with an example that in Indian secularism the State can intervene in religious affairs.
3. What is secularism?
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.
5. In what different ways does the Indian State work to prevent religious domination?

### Answer Key:

### MCQ:

1. (a) Jews
2. (c) Secularism
3. (d) Sikhs
4. (d) USA
5. (a) In Feb 2004
6. (a) France
7. (c) Prohibit making new religion law
8. (d) All of these
9. (c) Both a and b
- 10.(a) Right to freedom of religion
- 11.(b) Church
- 12.(a) Several million people were killed
- 13.(a) Coercion
- 14.(a) Fundamental rights
- 15.(d) Both (a) and (b)

### Very Short Answer:

1. History provides us with several examples of discrimination, exclusion and persecution on the grounds of religion.
2. Muslim and Christian minorities were treated badly in the Jewish state of Israel.
3. In Saudi Arabia, non-Muslims are not allowed to build a temple, church etc. They also cannot gather in a public place for prayers.
4. The term 'secularism' refers to the separation of the power of religion from the power of the State.
5. Freedom to interpret' means an individual's liberty to develop his own understanding and meaning of the religion that one practices.
6. Government schools cannot celebrate religious festivals because it will be a violation of government's policy of treating all religions equally.
7. Paramjit is a Sikh youth and for him wearing a pagri is a very important part of his religion.
8. Unlike Indian secularism, there is strict separation between religion and the State in American secularism.
9. This means that any interference in religion by the State has to be based on the ideals laid out in the Constitution.

### **Short Answer:**

**Ans: 1.** Religion is the personal beliefs and practices relating to the divine. It is also people's beliefs and opinions concerning the existence, nature, and worship of the divine.

**Ans: 2.** Buddhism; Christianity; Hinduism; Islam and Judaism are the major religions practiced all over the world.

**Ans: 3.** Secularism is the belief that no one should be discriminated on the basis of the religion he or she practices. Every citizen, irrespective of which religion he or she follows, is equal in the eyes of the laws and policies that govern the Nation.

**Ans: 4.** The 4th point of the 'Fundamental Rights' is ...

(i) Right to Freedom of Religion

(ii) 'Every person has the right to practice, profess and propagate the religion of their choice'.

**Ans: 5.** The three objectives of a secular State are:

(a) One religious community does not dominate another.

(b) Some members do not dominate other members of the same religious community.

(c) The State does not enforce any particular religion, nor does it take away the religious freedom of individuals.

**Ans: 6.** People should have the freedom to leave the religion they have been practicing and join another religion. They should also have the freedom to interpret religious teachings differently. It is for these reasons that it is important to separate the power of the state from religion.

**Ans: 7.** Untouchability refers to the social practice of excluding a minority group (untouchables) by regarding them as “ritually polluted” and segregating them from the mainstream by social custom. According to the Indian constitution everyone has the freedom to interpret religious teachings in their own way. Similarly the Dalits who are called untouchables have the freedom to interpret religion in their own way. The Indian constitution has abolished ‘Untouchability’.

**Ans: 8.** The objectives of the Indian constitution that advocates secularism are... One religious community should not dominate another. Some members of a religious community should not dominate other members of the same religious community. The State should not enforce any particular religion nor take away the religious freedom of individuals.

### Long Answer:

**Ans: 1.** 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.

**Ans: 2.** An important aspect of India 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.

**Ans: 3.** 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.

**Ans: 4.** 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.

**Ans: 5 .** 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.

*Swotters*