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Q11

The spirit of tolerance and love is not only an interesting feature of Indian society from very early times, but it is also playing an important part at the present. Elaborate. (250 words).

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2017 · GS I · 15 marks · Indian Heritage and Culture

Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

Core demand of the question

- Elaborate how tolerance and love have marked Indian society from early times
- Then show that the same spirit still matters in the present, with clear limits

Revision summary

Early India mixed many sects; **Ashoka**, ahimsa, Bhakti, Sufi, and **sulh-i-kul** made tolerance a public teaching.

Love in kirtan, langar, and khanqah opened the congregation beyond birth, without ending jati.

The Constitution restates that ethic as equal citizenship and freedom of religion.

Festivals, relief, and mixed cities still live by it.

Riots and caste violence prove the spirit is contested and must be enforced, not assumed.

Flow diagram

Ashoka dhamma ahimsa -> Bhakti Sufi langar
Bhakti Sufi langar -> Sulh-i-kul composite custom
Sulh-i-kul composite custom -> Constitution Arts 14 15 25-28
Constitution Arts 14 15 25-28 -> Present mixed civic life
Riot caste majoritarianism -> Limits on the ethic
Present mixed civic life -> Limits on the ethic

Conclusion

- Teach composite history without erasing conflict, enforce riot law equally, and keep mixed housing and schools so tolerance is a habit, not a slogan.

From Ashokan dhamma and Bhakti-Sufi love to constitutional secularism, Indian society has repeatedly made room for the neighbour. That spirit still holds public life together, but only if law and mixed living check communal and caste hate. Tolerance is a practised inheritance, not a finished fact.

Facts & figures

Ashoka's dhamma

Post-Kalinga royal ethic of restraint, welfare, and respect for other sects, cut on rock and pillar edicts.

Sulh-i-kul

Mughal court idea of peace with all, associated with Akbar's religious debate and policy.

Articles 25-28

Constitutional freedom of religion and limits on that freedom in the name of public order, morality, and health.

Sikh langar

Open community kitchen that practises equality of eating as a living form of love.

Article 51A

Fundamental duties that include promoting harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood.

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