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Q7(c)

Problematize the concept if secularism in the present context

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2017 · Sociology GS 1 · 10 marks · Sociology

Sociology - The Discipline: Modernity and social changes in Europe and emergence of sociology; Scope of the subject and comparison with other social sciences; Sociology and common sense.

Core demand of the question

- Problematise the concept of secularism in the present context
- Keep the note within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Secularism is a family of settlements, not one wall.

Indian practice leaned toward equal respect and principled distance, with unfinished personal-law reform.

Revival and majoritarian politics problematise neutrality.

Weber's full disenchantment did not arrive.

Specify which secularism rather than treat the word as self-explaining.

Introduction

- **Secularism names a settlement between state and faith:** distance, equal respect, or privatisation of belief. In the present it is a problem because those meanings clash, and because religious publics have not quietly gone home.

Body**Competing meanings**

- Western privatisation of religion versus Indian **sarva dharma sambhava** as principled distance with reform of personal law still unfinished.
- Rajeev **Bhargava**'s contextual secularism tries to hold principled distance without a wall.

Present problems

- Religious revival and majoritarian politics test the neutrality of the state.
- **Personal laws**, uniform civil code debates, and **Census** religion tables keep faith public.
- **Max Weber**'s secularisation as disenchantment never fully arrived; **Durkheim** expected new cults, including the nation.

What problematising is not

- It is not a call to abandon equal citizenship.
- It is a call to specify which secularism, whose injury, and which public ritual the state blesses.

Flow diagram

Secularism -> Privatisation

Secularism -> Principled distance

Revival majoritarianism -> Tests the state

Principled distance -> Equal citizenship

Conclusion

Secularism is problematic today because it is several doctrines at once, and because religion remains a public power. The live task is equal citizenship under principled distance, not a pretend emptying of the sacred.

Facts & figures

Bhargava

Contextual secularism and principled distance as an Indian-capable model.

Sarva dharma sambhava

A popular Indian formula of equal respect among faiths, not identical to French laïcité.

Weber

Disenchantment as a process that remains incomplete in public life.

Personal laws

A standing test of how the Indian state relates to religious community.