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Q4(c)

Discuss the challenges thrown by religious revivalism to a secular nation-state.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · Sociology GS 1 · 15 marks · Politics and Society

Politics and Society: Sociological theories of power; Power elite, bureaucracy, pressure groups, and political parties; Nation, state, citizenship, democracy, civil society, ideology; Protest, agitation, social movements, collective action, revolution.

Core demand of the question

- Discuss the challenges thrown by religious revivalism to a secular nation-state
- Keep the discussion within a 15-mark length

Revision summary

Revivalism politicises faith and crowd.

It challenges secular law, public space, education, and the monopoly of force.

Bellah's civil religion can turn exclusive.

Indian principled distance is strained by majoritarian and street politics.

The live defence is equal citizenship, not forced unbelief.

Introduction

A secular nation-state claims citizenship above a single church. Religious revivalism re-sacralises public life and often a people. The challenge is to law, monopoly of force, and equal membership.

Body**What revivalism does**

- It intensifies practice, organisation, and political claim, not only private piety.
- Max Weber's prophets and Max Weber's later charisma help; so does Durkheim's sacred crowd, now on television.

Challenges to the secular state

- **Personal law and uniform codes:** which community's family is the nation.
- **Public space:** procession, conversion politics, and blasphemy as tests of equal protection.
- **Education and history:** textbooks as sacred memory.
- Violence and vigilantism rival the state's monopoly of force.
- Majoritarian revival can turn the nation itself into a church, which Robert Bellah's civil religion warned can be inclusive or exclusive.

Indian present

- Constitutional secularism as principled distance, after Rajeev Bhargava, is strained by street veto and party- mobilised faith.
- Minority security and majority hurt become competing languages.

What the state can still do

- Equal civil rights, prosecution of violence, and refusal to baptise one faith as the nation.
- It cannot pretend Weberian disenchantment is complete.

Flow diagram

Religious revivalism -> Personal law street school

Religious revivalism -> Nation as church

Secular state -> Equal citizenship

Nation as church -> Challenge

Personal law street school -> Challenge

Conclusion

Religious revivalism challenges the secular nation-state by recoding law, street, school, and belonging. The state is tested on equal citizenship, not on emptying belief. Civil religion can support the republic or swallow it.

Facts & figures

Bhargava

Principled distance as a model of Indian secularism under strain.

Bellah

Civil religion: national sacred that can include or exclude.

Weber

Charisma and prophecy as sources of religious-political rupture.

Personal laws

A standing institutional site where revival meets the civil state.