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Q1(e)

"Secularism was an outcome of 20th century humanistic radicalism." Comment on this statement.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2020 · Sociology GS 2 · 10 marks · Perspectives on the study of Indian society

Perspectives on the study of Indian society: Indology (G.S. Ghurye); Structural functionalism (M.N. Srinivas); Marxist sociology (A.R. Desai).

Core demand of the question

- "Secularism was an outcome of 20th century humanistic radicalism." Comment on this statement
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length

Revision summary

European humanist radicalism is one root of secularism.

Indian secularism is equal citizenship among public religions.

It is not the decline-of-faith thesis.

Disharmony remains between legal equality and ranked honour.

The outcome is unfinished where communal violence persists.

Introduction

The statement captures a Western story of secularism as humanist revolt against the church. Indian secularism is only partly that outcome. It is also a constitutional arrangement among living faiths.

Body**The European radical strand**

- Twentieth-century humanism, rights, and anti-clerical politics treated the person, not the altar, as the measure.
- That radicalism travelled through Indian reformers, **Ambedkar**'s constitutionalism, and Nehruvian statecraft.

Indian difference

- Here religions did not empty the public square. Secularism meant equal citizenship and principled distance, not the death of ritual.
- **Beteille's disharmonic structure:** equality as value, ranked religious honour as fact.
- Ghurye's civilisational Hindu frame resists a hard split of society from the sacred.

Comment

- Humanistic radicalism is one parent. Plural coexistence and anti-colonial nation-making are the others.

- Communal violence shows the outcome is unfinished.

Flow diagram

Humanist radicalism -> Secularism

Plural faiths nationalism -> Secularism

Secularism -> Constitutional equal citizenship

Conclusion

Secularism owes a debt to humanist radicalism of the last century. In India it is also a political technology for a multi-religious society. The statement is true as genealogy, incomplete as sociology.

Facts & figures

Constitutional secularism

No state religion and equal civil status.

Nehruvian distance

State reform of some religious institutions with a claim of neutrality.

Ambedkar

Radical civic equality that treats religion as not above the Constitution.

Public ritual

Indian evidence against a simple secular emptying of faith.

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