

CBSE Class–VIII Social Science

NCERT SOLUTION

Political Science Chapter 2

Understanding Secularism

1. List the different types of religious practice that you find in your neighbourhood. This could be different forms of prayer, worship of different gods, sacred sites, different kinds of religious music and singing etc. Does this indicate freedom of religious practice?

Ans: The different types of religious practices found in my neighbourhood strongly indicate freedom of religious practice. The various forms of prayer, worship of different gods, sacred sites and different kinds of religious music found in my locality are of Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Jews and the Baha'is. The Christians sing hymns, the Hindus bhajans, while the Muslims offers namaaz five times a day. The Jews visit synagogues and the Bahai's believe in world unity and peace. There are churches, temples, mosques, and gurudwaras in my locality. This indicates that all citizens are able to practise their religion with freedom in a secular environment.

2. Will the government intervene if some religious group says that their religion allows them to practise infanticide? Give reasons for your answer.

Ans: The government in any democratic nation would intervene if some religious group says that their religion allows them to practice infanticide because this tradition goes against the Fundamental Right to Life. It involves the killing of an innocent and is, hence, unacceptable. The government, in this case, interferes by coercion or via support. The government should intervene in religion to end a social practice that discriminates and violates the "Fundamental Rights" of citizens. Ending such practices ensures that there is freedom and equality in our society.

3. Complete the following table:

		Example of a
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Objective	Why is this important?	violation of this objective
One religious community does not dominate another.		
The State does not enforce any particular religion nor take away the religious freedom of individuals.		
That some members do not dominate other members of the same religious community.		

Ans: (a) This is important to protect the Fundamental Right to Freedom of Religion.

Example of violation: The demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya on 6th December, 1992 by Hindu nationalists is an example of the violation of the objective. Hindu nationalists turned violent, overwhelmed security forces and demolished the mosque.

(b) This is important to uphold the ideals of a democratic nation which allows its citizens freedom to choose whichever religion they wish to follow.

Example: In February 2004, the French government banned headscarves and turbans in public places, thereby hurting the sentiments of Muslim and Sikh minorities.

(c) This is necessary to uphold individual freedom to practise religion in the light of pressure from the group or religious community that one belongs to.

Example: The Christian community is divided into Protestants and Catholics; Irish Catholics are looked down upon and troubled by the officials of the Church of England who are predominantly Protestants.

4. Look up the annual calendar of holidays of your school. How many of them pertain to different religions? What does this indicate?

Ans: Many holidays on a school's annual calendar pertain to different religions. For example, schools are usually not open on holidays like Buddha Purnima, Holi, Eid-al-Fitr, Diwali, etc. This indicates that India is a secular country where religious freedom is granted to its citizens and all religions are equally respected.

5. Find out some examples of different views within the same religion.

Ans: Among Muslims, many people believe in 'Parda system', whereas many do not approve of it and see it as interference in the freedom of women. Another example is that of Hindus; some Hindus keep fasts on certain festivals, others do not.

6. The Indian State both keeps away from religion as well as intervenes in religion. This idea can be quite confusing. Discuss this once again in class using examples from the chapter as well as those that you might have come up with.

Ans: (i) The Indian State distances itself from the religion and it is not ruled by a religious group nor does it support any one religion. At the same time, the Indian Constitution grants the right to religious communities to set up their own schools and colleges. It also gives them financial aid on a non preferential basis.

(ii) Equal respect is given to all the religions. In order to prevent domination by one particular community, the state may interfere in the religion via coercion or support.

(iii) The State may interfere in religion to ensure that all religions are treated equally. **(iv)** Sometimes, the State may have to intervene in religion based on 'personal laws' of the communities to ensure that laws relating to equal inheritance are protected. Similarly, the State also intervenes in case of unwanted religious practices such as untouchability and infanticide by banning such practices. **(v)** The State also uses 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. For example, Sikh motorists are allowed to not wear helmets while riding two-wheeler.
