



GANDHIAN SECULARISM - GS I AND II MAINS

Q. Should we adopt Gandhian secularism for today's India with increasing polarisation and religious conflicts? (10 marks, 150 words)

News: *Gandhi's patriotism was a model for practice of true secularism*

What's in the news?

- Gandhi's idea of secular unity was tremendously useful in shaping the course of the Indian Independence Movement as well as reflected in the ideologies and policies of independent India.

Ideals of Gandhian Secularism:

- **Peaceful co-existence** - provides all religions - an equal space to flourish and practice.
- **Tolerance and fraternity** - were the twin principles forming the base of Gandhian secularism.
- **Pluralism** has the basis in the principles of acceptance and diversity. It is promoted as a system for the common good of all.
- **Humanity** - Gandhiji propagated the essential unity of all religions to provide basic humanity values and the basic unity of all humanity.
- **Promote harmony and common brotherhood** - amongst all the people transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities.
- **Not viewed as a separate principle** - religious values and discourses should cherish all spheres of life including politics and economics of nations. It is different from the western view of secularism which separates religion from politics.

Gandhian secularism for today's India:

- Gandhi believed that all religions should get equal opportunity to flourish and not one should be dominant over others. The present situation where the idea of hindutva or hindu rashtra is being pushed by fundamentalists is just opposite what Gandhi thought about religion.
- Gandhi's idea of secularism is a bottom-up approach. In which, communal harmony emanated from the concept of fraternity. The Brotherhood feeling will not allow the hatred to spread. This will subsequently eliminate the hate speech and mob lynching in the society.



- Gandhian Secularism promotes tolerance and accommodates diversity. E.g. exchange of sweets to each other during the religious festivals like Diwali and Ramjan.
- Gandhian Secularism promotes the identity of humankind over the other narrow identity of religion. The kind of humanity emanated from Gandhian Secularism ends in no place for vote bank politics and political polarisation in India.
- Reaction from majoritarianism and fear of minorities both are absent in the idea of Gandhian Secularism. Because Gandhian Secularism secures a bond beyond identity. The underlying theme of Gandhian Secularism is fraternity. E.g. Cow vigilantism has been seen as a reaction of majoritarianism that can be eliminated by Gandhian Secularism.
- Unlike modern Western secularisms that separate church and state for the sake of individual freedom and equality and have place for neither community nor fraternity, the Gandhian conception demands that the state be secular for the sake of better relations between members of all religious communities, especially if they are mutually estranged. The Gandhian conception is indispensable in times of religious disharmony.
- It is sometimes said that Gandhi's views were influenced by Jaina teachings. "All religions are true and all have errors," he said, implying that all religions are inevitably partial, incomplete, fragmentary, so that different traditions need to complement and enrich one another rather than behave as mutually exclusive rivals. Thus Gandhiji claimed that Ram, Allah, 'Satya' (Truth) refer to the same entity. If this is so, every attack on someone else's god was a denial of one's own god; every claim that one's own god is better than the others were tantamount to the humiliation of one's own god.

CONCLUSION:

When good, God-loving, ordinary men and women free from the trappings of power, wealth and fame — precisely what makes them ordinary and good — get together, they release non-violent creative energies that morally sustain and improve our world. Alas, it seems that such men and women have gone missing in our times. Gandhian secularism is badly needed