

# UNIT 3 – UPSC - Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism

**Social empowerment:** In societal development, conception of empowerment has vital role. This phrase is linked with gender equality. Modernization of global development will need a reappraisal of the concept and its application to many facets of human life. The notion of empowerment entails numerous things to many people. Concepts of choice, liberty, agency, capacity, contribution, self-sufficiency, and increased resources are common to almost all definitions. Most of the researchers agreed on the idea of empowerment as ways to improve quality of life and expand the basis of human well-being. Briefly, empowerment can serve as a tool for effecting deep and broad-based social revolution.



In social science literature, it is documented that the process of social change can be discovered at the personal and structural levels. At one end, social change is visualized as a consequence of the development of individuals, gained through education, training, access to material resources, and the like. From this perspective, structural change is supposed to be an automatic result of personal alteration. On the other end, the human being is seen as a part of society, and change is considered impossible unless social structures related to political power are changed primarily. Individual and structural transformation are closely associated with the individual's inner life shapes, social environment, and that environment, in turn, exerts a deep influence on one's mystical and psychological well-being. The symbol of the body politic, likening all of humanity to a single social organism gives a valuable framework to discover empowerment as means to follow the transformation of individuals and civilization. Empowerment depends on and contributes to a system in which different actors are provided the resources needed for each to make a unique contribution to the whole. From this conception, it can be established that individual and collective empowerment can be considered as the extension of vision, capacity, and choice necessary for people to act as active agents of human well-being and affluence.

**The Protagonists of Social Transformation:** It suggests that there are three elements critically important such as the individual, the institutions of society, and the community. In this view

empowerment is described as the act assisting individuals to manifest constructive capacities in creative and disciplined ways, institutions to exercise authority in a manner that leads to the progress and upliftment of people and communities to provide an environment in which culture is improved and individual wills and capacities combine in collective action. Ideas of "us" and "them" deserve particular consideration. Discourse in development spheres is often entrenched in conceptions of the "empowered" members of society that help the "disadvantaged" or "downgraded group." Many researchers revealed that the desire to eliminate social inequalities is indisputably moral feeling, but us/them dichotomies only extend and reinforce existing divisions. Careful thought needs must be given in which empowerment can be approached as a universal and shared enterprise. It has been observed that Historical processes have developed inequalities that must be addressed. But the development basis should be one in which every individual and group is presumed to have scope for progression. From this viewpoint, the marginalized are not without capacity, and the privileged are not all strong. All have capacity to develop and all have a responsibility to advance the welfare of the whole. Lastly, though empowerment signifies someone or something being invested with authority, the social dynamics of power seem to have been generally overlooked in debates on development at the United Nations.

**Prerequisites for Social Transformation:** Scholars stated that participation in the systems and structures of society is important prerequisite for social transformation. It is not sufficient for people to get projects, even if they have a voice in certain decisions. They must actively involve in decision-making processes: identify problems, formulate solutions and approaches, enjoy benefits, and determine criteria for appraisal.

At last, the ability to recognise the root causes of inequality will be decisive to the empowerment of populations to become agents of social transformation. Though population gets benefits of advancement, if it is unable to discriminate the drivers of social injustice and inequity, they cannot eliminate such practices from social structure. If empowerment is to lead to social transformation, it must involve the ability to identify the forces that modernize one's social reality, to recognise the opportunities and challenges offered by that reality, and to plan initiatives for the improvement of civilization.

**Communalism:** Communalism is practiced in society since ancient and it is part of human life. When appraising in Indian context, it is great faithfulness to one's own holy group. Communalism is defined as a mechanism to energize people for or against by raising an appeal on communal lines. It is revealed in literature that Communalism is related with religious fundamentalism and intransigence. Studies have demonstrated that the communalisation was first began in nineteenth century. The British historian (James) categorized ancient period as Hindu period and medieval period as Muslim period and this ordering was further used by both the British and Indian historians. Social literature documented that in medieval period, Muslim people were underprivileged, they were also oppressed as then people of Hindu community and the ruling class included both the Muslims and Hindus. Abdul Ahmed explained that "Communalism is a social phenomenon characterized by the religion of two communities, often leading to acrimony, tension and even rioting between them". Communalism is also described by few other eminent theorists. According to Prabha Dixit, "Communalism is a political doctrine which makes use of religious and cultural differences to achieve political ends". It is a dominant force in Indian scenario. Many factors such as casteism, communalism and religious fundamentalism pose challenge in India that are the major threats to Secular state. They deteriorate the working and strength of

democratic secular Federal state and influence against the fundamental beliefs of national life and provide means to new individuality. 'Casteism' and 'Communalism' are destroying the Indian cultural diversity.

In academic literature, Communalism is elucidated as multi-dimensional, complex, social fact. Numerous social, political, economic, cultural and religious factors affect the occurrence of communalism and communal ferocity. Communalism is sometimes aggravated by non-religious forces. A careful inquiry of the demands which have been and are made by communal leaders will reveal the true character and objective of communal politics under the cover of religion, ritual and culture. It has been documented in reports that Previously, British imperialism used communalism as a divide and rule policy. Similar kind of policies are continued by leaders after independence using various factors. The origin of communalism is very deep and diversified. Some of the roots lie in the structure and nature of Indian civilization which has different religions, multi-racial, multi-lingual, multi-castes and multi-regional. A society divided on these grounds helps the development of communal organizations. It may be emphasised that the financial condition of the Hindu and the Muslim and other communities and their different development also contributes to the development of communalism. It is established that the communalism of society is a response of the communalism of another community.

Communalism has three stages. First stage include insight of people believing in a particular religion that have similar interests such as political, financial, social and cultural interests. For political perspective of India, Indian society is group of people from different religion, language and regions but not as a country. For citizen of India, different people have different leaders, who declare themselves as national/regional/religious/caste leaders. The second stage of communalism begins when people consider that the social, monetary, cultural and political interests of people following a particular religion are dissimilar from that of the believers of other religions. This phase of communalism is termed as Liberal Communalism. People who have belief in Liberal Communalism assumed that the interests of the people of India can be amalgamated and India can be integrated as one country. The third stage of communalism is considered when people of one religion are the opponents of the people of other religions. The third phase of communalism is extremist communalism which has a concept of fear and revulsion.

## Characteristics of Communalism

1. Communalism is a philosophical notion.
2. It is a multifaceted process.
3. It has a wider base which incorporates social, economic and political aspects for its manifestation.
4. It causes competition, ferocity and tension among different communities.
5. Communalism is used by the upper class people and elites as advice for separation and mistreatment of the communal identities of the poorer groups of their co-religionists.
6. Communalism is simply planned by opportunistic political and economic interest of contending groups and factions within a political party or by political parties.
7. Communalism assaults at the roots of egalitarianism, secularism and national amalgamation.
8. The consequences of Communalism are ruinous.

# Causes of Communalism

There are numerous of causes for the occurrence of communalism. First is the tendency of the Minorities. The Muslims fail to be intermixed in the national mainstream. Some reports indicated that majority of Muslim people do not partake in the secular nationalistic politics and insist to sustain separate identity. Another cause of communalism is Orthodoxy and Obscurantism. The orthodox members of minority groups feel that they have a distinct entity with their own cultural pattern, personal laws and thought. There are strong elements of conservatism and fundamentalism among the Muslims. Such feeling has prevented them from accepting the concept of secularism and religious tolerance.

Design of the Leaders is also a cause of communalism. It has grown in India because the communalist leaders of different religious communities such as Hindu and Muslim desire to succeed it in the interest of their communities. The demand for separate electorate and the organization of Muslim league were the practical indicators of this belief. The British rule which gave the divide and rule policy, separate electorate on the basis of religion, reinforced the basis of communalism in India. Finally the partition of the country into India and Pakistan provided further an aggressive feeling towards each other.

The cause of communalism is due to weak Economic Status. Most of Muslims in India did not embrace the scientific and technological education and they lagged behind on educational front. Due to poor education, they have not been represented satisfactorily in the public service, industry and trade. This leads the feeling of withdrawal which causes communalism.

There are geographical Causes for communalism. The regional settlement of different religious groups particularly Hindus Muslims and Christians causes more variation in the style of life, social standards and belief system. These patterns are clashing and leads to communal tension.

Communalism also evolves from historical causes. It has been revealed in literature that the Muslims in some of the regions are converted from Hinduism under the compulsions of Muslim rulers. The problems of social separation, illiteracy and poverty that had set apart the low caste people remain unresolved for them, as the foreign elite that polished never shared power with them. Their work ended with the conversion of the Indians and the converts began by replicating the masters in thought, speech and costume. It caused their hostility. Progressively, communalism developed in the Muslim community.

Social Causes of communalism also emerges as there is cultural similarity in fostering harmonious relations between any two social groups. But the social institutions, customs and practices of Hindus and Muslims are so deviating that they think themselves to be two different communities.

Psychological factors have vital role in increasing communal tension. The Hindus group considers that the Muslims are crusaders and fundamentalists. They also have a feeling that Muslims are unpatriotic. On the other hand, the Muslims believe that they are not treated as superior group in India and their religious beliefs and practices are sub-standard. These feelings causes communal tension.

Aggravation of rival Countries is also cause of communalism. Some overseas countries weaken Indian nations by setting one community against the other through their representatives. They encourage and promote communal riots in the nation.

Negative Impact of Mass Media also create communal tension. The messages related to communal tension or riot in any part of the country spread through the mass media. This results in further tension and riots between two rival religious groups.

Communalism has been a severe threat to national unity in India. It harmed numerous elements of modern India, such as, secularism, democracy and world harmony. Communal ideology leads to many cases of communal violence and riots. Gujarat violence of February -March 2002 which terrorized the whole country was consequence of prior spread of communal ideology (Chandra, 2004).

**Ways to eradicate Communalism:** Communalism can be lessen between different religious groups through taking some measures.

1. **Eradication of Communal Parties:** All the political parties which prosper on religious loyalties should be banned or abolished by the government. Even non-political cultural organizations should always be kept under constant watch so that they cannot expound communalism.
2. **Spread of the Past Heritage:** Feelings of patriotism should be taught to the people by reminding them about the wonderful moments of history in Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs who were united for the wellbeing of the nation.
3. **Public Opinion:** Mass media must play imperative role to generate awareness about harmony between different communities and make efforts to change the attitude of people towards other communities. People must be aware of the dangerous consequences of the communalism.

Both the Government and people should create mindfulness to eradicate communal tension and clash.

Abundant of literature have demonstrated that the practice of communalism leads to communal politics and communal violence. It is supposed that communalism is the bequest of the past because they use the thought of ancient and medieval times. But communalism is a modern thought and political movement. The origin of communalism is linked to the politics of modern times when the people are more inclined towards politics. The economic slowdown of the people of India was primary reason for communalism.

**Regionalism:** In current global trade system, regionalism is spreading at great pace. The huge spread of regionalism is encouraged by the explosion of regional institutions that give rise to substantial academic interest in both their sources and consequences. In bulk of academic literature, Regions are described as groups of countries situated in the same geographic space but it is not clear where one region ends and the next begins. According to Russett (1967), a region is based on geographic closeness, social and cultural similarity, shared political attitudes and political institutions, and financial interdependence. Deutsch et al. (1957) stated that high levels of interdependence across multiple dimensions that include economic transactions, communications, and political values as determining whether a group of countries constitutes a region. Thompson (1973) debated that regions comprises of states that are geographically close to each other, interact extensively, and share numerous facts, behaviours and culture. Regionalism is an arguable concept among scholars, sociologists and theorists. Regionalism is a national phenomenon and took shape of organized agitations and campaigns. Regionalism has widely

spread in Indian politics since the independence of India. It has the major basis of various regional political parties. In Indian scenario, regionalism has increased in close identification with the regions. After independence, it is a great force of conflicts as well as collaboration, which depends on the manner of accommodation. Regionalism is elaborated as situations in which different religious or ethnic groups with idiosyncratic identities exist within the same state borders, often concentrated within a particular region and share strong feelings of shared individuality.

Regionalism is basically an intense feeling of a particular region or an area in preference to the nation or any other region. It often involves ethnic groups whose major objective is to get freedom from a national state and the development of their own political influence. In Indian perspective, regionalism denotes to proclamation of different ethnic, linguistic or economic interests by various groups within the nation. It has been well documented that the roots of regionalism lie in linguistic, ethnic, economic and cultural identities of the people who stay in particular geographical area. Political scholars have elaborated various types of regionalism which include economic regionalism, linguistic regionalism, political regionalism and even sub-regional movements. Various political scientists have contested that regionalism is a political process discernible by cooperation and policy harmonization, whereas regionalization is viewed as an economic process in which trade and investment within the region develop more fast than the region's trade and investment in other part of world (Haggard 1993). Pempel (2015) described regionalism in different manner. According to him, regionalism involves the process of institution creation and is the deliberate product of interstate collaboration. Regionalism is a topic of debate among theorists. Katzenstein (2006, p. 1) described regionalism as institutionalized practices and regionalization as "a process that engages actors". According to Fawcett (2004), regionalism is as a policy or a project. Regionalism is basically associated with ideas, identities, and ideologies to a regional project. Munakata (2006) stated that regionalism comprises of institutions established by governments to support regional economic integration but emphasizes the changeable degrees of promise by members. Extensive research has been conducted on regionalism that focused on preferential trading arrangements (PTAs), institutions that offer each member state with better access to the other participants' markets. Such arrangements involve states in close geographic closeness, for example the European Union or Mercosur.

In Indian context, regionalism is extremely engrossed in its diversity of languages, cultures, tribes, religions, communities. It instigates from the sense of regional awareness, which is often powered by a sense of regional withdrawal. In India, there is huge population of different castes, creeds, customs and cultures and its broad regions are dissimilar from one another. For example, southern India, the home of Dravidian cultures, itself a region of many regions is very different from the north.

## Major Characteristics of Regionalism

1. Regionalism is accustomed by economic, social, political and cultural inequalities.
2. Regionalism sometimes is a psychic phenomenon.
3. Regionalism is developed as an expression of group identity as well as devotion to particular region.
4. Regionalism assumes the concept of development of one's own region without considering the interest of other regions.

5. Regionalism proscribes people from other regions to be benefited by a particular region.

## Causes of Regionalism

There are many reasons for the eruption of regionalism in Indian setting. First is the efforts of the national government to execute a particular ideology, language or cultural pattern on all people and groups. People are forced to cultivate the regionalism movements. With these policies of regional groups, the states of the South began to fight the imposition of Hindi as an official languages they feared this may make north more powerful. Second major cause for the development of regionalism is constant negligence of an area or region by the ruling parties and focus of administrative and political power has given rise to demand for decentralization of authority and divide of unilingual states. Thirdly, there is a wish of the various units of the Indian federal system to maintain their sub cultural regions and self-government has promoted regionalism and given rise to demand for greater independence. Fourth reason for the rise of regionalism is the desire of regional leaders to gain power. In Southern state, political parties like DMK, AIADMK, Akali Dal, Telugu Desam, Asom Gana Parishad have encouraged regionalism to dominate these regions. Other reason for huge growth of regionalism is the interaction between the forces of modernisation and mass contribution in India. Feeling of regionalism is developed among the people of backward areas as they are being discriminated from other powerful groups. The local political leaders exploited this issue and stimulate people against Central Government for deliberately trying to maintain regional imbalances by neglecting social and economic development of some regions.

**Types of Regionalism in India:** Regionalism in India is of various types that include demand of the people of certain areas for separate statehood, demand of people of certain Union Territories for full-fledged statehood, demand of certain people for favourable settlement of inter-state disputes, and the demand of the people of certain areas for secession from the Indian Union.

1. Supra-state regionalism is a manifestation of group identity of numerous states. In this form of regionalism, the group of states unites to make common views on the issue of mutual interest vis-à-vis another group of states or at times against the union. The group identity forged is negative in character and based on specific issue. But it is not permanent unification of state identities in the collective identity. Even at times of inter-group rivalries, tensions and conflicts may tend to continue, concurrently along with their cooperation. North-eastern states in India have the supra-state regionalism.
2. Inter-state regionalism is coterminous with local territories and involves contrasting of the identities of one or more states against another. This form of regionalism is issue specific. For example disagreements between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu over the distribution of Kaveri water may be interpreted as inter-state regionalism.
3. Intra-state regionalism is a type of regionalism that signify that wherein a part of the state strives for self-identity and self-development and therefore, it is taken in a positive sense. In negative terms, it affects against the collective interest of the state as well as the nation. For instance there is a feeling of coastal region and western region in Odisha, coastal region and Telangana region in Andhra Pradesh.

**Process of combating regionalism:** Regionalism is considered as significant facet of Indian political system. Sometimes, it poses threat to the harmony of the nation. Therefore, it is imperative to take immediate steps to curb such feeling among Indian populace. Social scholars have recommended numerous measures to reduce the propensity of regionalism. First major step is to promote uniform development of the hitherto abandoned areas so that people feel a part of the national mainstream. Secondly, the central government must not interfere in the matters of the State unless it is unescapable for national interest. Another remedy for reducing regionalism is to resolve Problems of people in a peaceful and constitutional manner. Politicians must not be allowed to misappropriate the issue of regional demands. The states must be given authority to resolve their issues except the major issues that are related to national interest. Some necessary changes must be done in the Central-State relations in favour of the states, and to introduce a system of national education that would assist people to overawed regional feelings and develop patriotic sense towards the country.

It is established in political studies that regionalism has unfavourable impacts which lead to a reduction of world welfare as compared to free trade. A clash between regionalism and global free trade occurs, but these negative effects are lessened by the continuing globalisation process and the efforts for multilateral liberalisation. Regional parties have dominant role for spreading regionalism and generating awareness for regional issues among inhabitants. Since these parties have their political reality in regional support, they give rise to regionalism for their interest and to gain power. It is a recognised strategy of the regional leadership to propagate their agenda against the Centre, such as blaming the opposition party for discriminating against the state with political motives. Alongside, the regional press, which is mainly language-oriented, immensely play lead role in developing the feeling of regionalism.

**Secularism:** Secularism is contrasting phenomenon of communalism. It was adopted by Indian Constitution, which signifies respect for all religions and broad-mindedness of all faiths, no State religion and support or favour to any religion by the State. Secularism is a form of government process that enhance democracy and commitment to financial development.

When appraising historical records, it is documented that Indian secularism started with the protest movements in the 5th century B.C. There are three main a secularist and materialistic philosophical movement, Buddhism, and Jainism. All three secularism movements discarded the authority of the Vedas and prominence of belief in a divinity. In the 18th century, when the British East India Company had dominance over India, secularism have more impact on the Indian populace. Secular India has undergone several tremors in many decades. Many professionals relate these convulsions to the nature of Indian civilization, to which they attribute centrality to religion in both personal and public matters. The Indian concept of secularism is based on respect for all religions by the state and separation of religion from public institutional practices. The obsession with the European experience supervises the historicity of the Indian phenomenon.

The process of secularisation is not alike in all societies. With technical progression, human culture has undergone the process of secularisation. In India, secularism is huge political and constitutional struggle and disagreement. The perception was promoted by Mahatma Gandhi and it has been the central model of secularism after Independence of India. Indian secularism is based on a more functional approach to the belief of equal respect and acceptance of all religions, which has allowed for the defence of religious minority rights principally through temporary special



measures, which is similar to the positive action in the United States. But, the Hindu Right has progressively been trying to cast itself as main successors of India's secular practise, that is, as promoters of new secularism. There is a good understanding of secularism in India and the Hindu Right visualized secularism based on a formal approach to impartiality. In their views, secularism entails that all religious communities must be treated equally. Any protection of the rights of religious minorities is cast as appeasement, and a violation of the principles of secularism. In secularism, religious minorities are to be treated the same as the majority groups.

Secularism is essential for India because it enables people of different religions to live in politeness with respect for all faiths. It is a part of democratic system, which grants equal rights. It protects democracy by limiting the powers of the majority and it protects the equal rights of minorities to populace. Secularism also regulates the relation between the State and various religious groups on the belief of equality that the State shall not differentiate against any religion. When evaluating the history, it has been demonstrated that in the period of freedom struggle, Mahatma Gandhi made great efforts to unite various communities. He explored many beliefs and dogmas to connect people of different conviction. This principle had to assure the marginal groups that they would not be differentiated against and to caution the majority groups that the majority rule is inequitable since democracy supports freedom and egalitarianism for all factions. Mr. Gandhi became understood this theory in the principle of 'sarva dhharma samadbhava' which entails that all religions should be treated uniformly. It was not a political belief meant to integrate people. It was a normative that everyone must identify the value of religion in people's lives. Indian society has vast religious diversity therefore it is imperative to respect all religious feelings. People have right to religion and culture. The fight against the British was not only a struggle for independence but also a struggle to maintain impartiality and democratic system in the nation. This was Gandhi's contribution to the decree of religious conflict in India.

Jawahar Lal Nehru also contributed for the development of secularism and raised the concept of 'Dharma Nirapekshata'. This principle signified that the State would not be impacted by religious considerations to devise its strategies. Later on, Pt. Nehru realized that policy making could not be detached from the realm of religion and that religion could not be exiled from the political and public area. During independence, the violence happened and followed the partition of the country which proved that religion had become an inherent part of political area. Nehru asserted that secularism did not signify a state where religion is discouraged, instead it denotes freedom for all religion, including the freedom for those who have no religion. Pt.Nehru stated that the secular was not opposed to religion. It is a state which respects all faiths uniformly and it does not permit any religion to presuppose the status of the State religion.

Copious studies have revealed that secularism is the main tool to develop a modern society. It was anticipated that in a secular democratic establishment, government and people would get involve in monetary development collectively, thus they can build modern Indian society. There is no theology in the secular character of the State. Principles of secularism is not against Deity. It treats similarly the devout, the agnostic and the atheist. The main aim of secular approach is to eradicate religious feeling from the matters of the State and guarantees that people should not be victim of discrimination against the ground of religion. According to scholars, secularism is a system of social ethics which is based upon a policy that ethical standards and conduct should be determined exclusively with reference to the present life and social security without considering religious factor.

Heterogeneity is basis of Indian culture and religious tolerance is the core factor of Indian secularism. Secularism belief states that all religions are equally good and effective to attain the God. It is evident in the constitutional scheme that secularism ensures impartiality on religious ground to all individuals and groups regardless of their faith emphasizing that there is no religion of the State itself. The Introduction of the Constitution read with Arts 25 to 28 highlights that this aspect of the concept of secularism represented in the constitutional scheme. The notion of secularism basically ascribes the right to equality intertwined in the scheme of the Indian Constitution. The term "secular" has not been explained in the Constitution of India, "because it is very flexible terms that do not have exact meaning. It is considered that secularism is one of the basic structures of the Indian Constitution which can neither be condensed nor be spoiled. The indispensable principle of secularism is to explore human improvement by material means alone. In brief, secularism permits people to live in standard of politeness. It forces people to admire on other religious believes. Secularism is a part of democratic state which grants to citizens equal rights. It guards democracy by restricting the power of the majority. Secularism is therefore advantageous for a plural culture in India.

In the Indian framework, secularism and communalism are considered to be two contrasting facts. Secularism is a symbol of modernity, plurality, co-existence, rationalism and developing with a fast growing multicultural society. The raucous attack on religious minorities is representative of a deep crisis troubling secularism in India. Communalism has come to acquire the disparaging meaning of an attitude that is narrow, based on prejudices about the 'other' and almost based on abhorrence and violence. In India, communal politics as religion is the main factor and also act against the interests of the others.