Society & Social Justice · GS - I

‘Communalism arises either due to power struggle or relative deprivation.’ Argue by giving suitable illustrations.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2018	GS - I	Society & Social Justice

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Religious identity; political mobilisation; competition for power; relative deprivation; economic insecurity; historical grievances; social polarisation; constitutional secularism

Model Answer

Introduction

Communalism is an ideology that treats religious communities as separate political interests and may portray their interests as incompatible. Power struggles and perceived relative deprivation can contribute to communal tensions, though neither alone explains every instance.

1. Communalism as a Power Struggle

Political actors may mobilise religious identities to secure electoral support, influence institutions or consolidate authority.

Illustration: Communal appeals during elections can portray one religious community as a threat to another, deepening polarisation and weakening shared citizenship.

2. Communalism as Relative Deprivation

Relative deprivation occurs when a group perceives itself as disadvantaged compared with another group, even when the perception does not fully reflect actual conditions.

Illustration: Competition over employment, educational opportunities, public resources or representation may be interpreted through religious identity, especially when misinformation and historical grievances intensify mistrust.

3. Other Contributing Factors

Colonial policies that institutionalised religious distinctions, segregation, hate speech, rumours, economic inequalities and weak law enforcement can further aggravate communal tensions.

Critical Assessment

Communalism cannot be reduced entirely to power struggles or deprivation. Prejudice, social isolation, historical narratives and organised violence also matter. Economic disadvantage does not automatically produce communal hostility; institutions and leadership influence how grievances are expressed.

Way Forward

Impartial law enforcement, inclusive development, interfaith dialogue, responsible political communication, media literacy and equal access to public services can reduce communal mobilisation.

Conclusion

Power competition and perceived deprivation are important explanations for communalism, but its causes are multidimensional. Constitutional values, social trust and equitable governance are essential to prevent religious differences from becoming sources of conflict.

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