Polity & Governance · GS - II

What can France learn from the Indian Constitution’s approach to secularism?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Indian secularism; French laïcité; religious freedom; equal respect; principled distance; religious diversity; minority rights; state neutrality; constitutional accommodation; social harmony

Model Answer

Introduction

France follows *laïcité*, emphasising state secularism and the separation of public authority from religion. India adopts a model that combines religious freedom, equal citizenship and the possibility of state intervention to promote social reform.

Lessons for France

- **Accommodation of diversity:** India's approach recognises that religion may be closely connected with community identity and cultural practices.
- **Equal respect:** Articles 14–16 guarantee equality, while Articles 25–28 protect religious freedom subject to constitutional limitations.
- **Principled intervention:** The state may intervene in religious practices to address social reform and discrimination, rather than treating all religious practices as beyond public concern.
- **Minority protection:** Articles 29–30 protect cultural and educational rights of minorities.

- **Context-sensitive policy:** India's experience highlights the importance of balancing public order and individual rights with religious expression in a diverse society.
- **Dialogue and coexistence:** Interfaith engagement and constitutional guarantees can support peaceful coexistence among different communities.

Limitations of the Indian Model

India also faces communal polarisation, disputes over personal laws and concerns about inconsistent state intervention. Its approach cannot simply be transplanted into France without accounting for different historical and constitutional contexts.

Conclusion

France may draw lessons from India's experience of accommodating religious diversity while upholding equality and reform. However, the objective should be context-sensitive secularism that protects individual liberty, minority rights and social cohesion rather than the wholesale adoption of another country's model.

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