Society & Social Justice · GS - I

How the Indian concept of secularism different from the western model of secularism? Discuss.

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

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Religious neutrality; principled distance; separation of religion and state; freedom of religion; equal respect; social reform; constitutional guarantees; pluralism

Model Answer

Introduction

Secularism seeks to ensure freedom of religion and prevent religious domination. India and Western countries share these broad objectives, but their institutional approaches differ across historical and constitutional contexts.

Indian Concept of Secularism

1. **Equal religious freedom:** Articles 25–28 of the Constitution protect religious freedom, subject to constitutional limitations.
2. **Principled state engagement:** The state may engage with religious institutions to promote reform, equality and social justice.
3. **Pluralistic approach:** India accommodates multiple religious communities within a diverse society.
4. **Reform-oriented intervention:** State action may address discriminatory practices and regulate secular aspects of religious institutions.

Western Models of Secularism

1. **Institutional separation:** Some Western systems, particularly the United States, emphasise separation between religious institutions and the state.

2. **Historical variation:** France follows a stricter model of *laïcité*, while other European countries retain different arrangements, including established churches.
3. **Individual liberty:** Freedom of conscience and protection against religious coercion remain central principles.

Key Difference

Indian secularism generally permits context-sensitive engagement with religions, whereas some Western models place stronger emphasis on institutional separation. Neither approach is uniform, and both face debates over equality, religious expression and state neutrality.

Conclusion

Indian secularism seeks to combine religious liberty, equal citizenship and social reform within a plural society. Its success depends on impartial governance and equal protection of constitutional rights.

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