Polity & Governance · GS - II

Explain the constitutional significance of secularism in India. How should public authorities balance the secular character of government institutions with the fundamental right to freedom of religion?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 03/11/2026	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Constitutional secularism; Preamble; Articles 25–28; freedom of conscience; religious neutrality; government premises; public order; equality before law; reasonable restrictions; constitutional governance

Model Answer

Introduction

Secularism is a fundamental feature of India's constitutional framework. It requires the State to maintain religious neutrality while protecting the freedom of conscience and religious rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

Constitutional Framework

The Preamble describes India as a secular republic. Article 25 protects freedom of conscience and religious practice, subject to constitutional limitations. Articles 26–28 address other aspects of religious freedom, including the management of religious affairs and certain restrictions concerning religious instruction and public funding.

Balancing Secularism and Religious Freedom

Government institutions must function impartially and must not discriminate on religious grounds. Decisions concerning religious structures on public premises should be based on applicable law, land ownership,

administrative rules and relevant judicial directions. Authorities should apply consistent standards and follow due process rather than act arbitrarily against any religious community.

At the same time, religious freedom is not absolute and may be subject to lawful restrictions. The constitutional assessment must distinguish legitimate regulation of public premises from unjustified interference with protected religious rights.

Way Forward

Transparent policies, equal treatment, legal scrutiny and effective grievance-redressal mechanisms can help prevent discrimination and strengthen public confidence.

Conclusion

India's secular character requires both religious neutrality in government institutions and meaningful protection of constitutional freedoms. A lawful, impartial and proportionate approach is essential.

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