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Q10

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

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · GS I · 10 marks · Social Empowerment, Communalism and Secularism
Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism and secularism.

Core demand of the question

- How the Indian concept of secularism different from the western model of secularism? Discuss
- Compare state-religion distance, reform, and minority rights
- Keep the explanation within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Western secularism grew as a wall between a dominant church and the state.

Indian secularism is equal respect and **principled distance**, not a total ban on contact.

The Constitution protects faith and still allows reform of social practice around religion.

Personal laws and public aid to religious institutions show the difference in design.

Minority security after Partition is part of why India did not copy a hard **laïcité**.

Flow diagram

Western model -> Wall of separation

Indian model -> Equal respect principled distance

Equal respect principled distance -> Reform and protect

Wall of separation -> Religion as private

Reform and protect -> Constitutional values

Conclusion

- Keep equal respect without turning the state into a majority chaplain.
- Move toward uniform rights in family law by consent and constitution, not by humiliating one community.

Western secularism separates church and state; Indian secularism equalises religions and still reforms them in the name of rights. The Indian model is not a copy of Paris or Washington, and it must be judged by fairness to every faith, not by how loudly the wall is named.

Facts & figures**Articles 25-28**

Constitutional cluster on freedom of religion, including the state's power to regulate and reform.

Laïcité

French model of a strongly secular public sphere, especially in state schools.

US separation

First Amendment tradition of no establishment and free exercise, a classic western wall.

Principled distance

Idea that the Indian state may help or restrict religious practice by constitutional principle, not by a fixed wall.

Personal laws

Religion-based family laws that continue under a secular constitution, unlike a single western civil code in many states.

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