

UPSC Civil Services Examination

Subject – UPSC GS-II

Topic – Secularism

Indian Constitution stands for a secular state. The meaning of a secular state is that it does not prioritize any one religion for the country and its people. Secularism calls for a doctrine where all religions are given equal status, recognition and support from the state or it can also be defined as a doctrine that promotes separation of state from a religion.

The term in itself is important for [IAS Exam](#) aspirants.

This article will provide you with all relevant facts about Secularism, the definition of Secularism in India and its constitutional significance. Aspirants can also download the notes PDF for upcoming exam.

What is Secularism in simpler terms?

Secularism is a doctrine that states religion is kept separate from the social, political, economical and cultural spheres of life. Religion is open to one and all and is given as a personal choice to an individual without any different treatment to the latter.

What is Indian Secularism?

In India, the first face of Secularism is reflected in the [Preamble of India](#) where the word ‘Secular’ is read. The Indian Secularism is also reflected in its fundamental rights (Article 25-28) where it guarantees each of its citizens the right to practice any religion.

In the words of P B Gajendragadkar, a former Chief Justice of India, secularism is defined as ‘The State does not owe loyalty to any particular religion as such: it is not irreligious or anti-religious; it gives equal freedom to all religions’.

Secularism & Article 25 of the Indian Constitution

Indian Constitution guarantees to its citizens six [fundamental rights](#), one of which is the right to freedom of religion. Article 25 of the Indian Constitution gives each citizen:

- Freedom of Conscience
- Right to Profess any religion
- Right to Practice any religion
- Right to Propagate any religion

Note: Article 25 covers not only religious beliefs (doctrines) but also religious practices (rituals). Moreover, these rights are available to all persons—citizens as well as non-citizens. However, there are

reasonable restrictions on the fundamental rights of the citizens and central government/state government, in time of need, can interfere with religious affairs of the citizens.

Read more about [Right to Freedom of Religion](#) in the linked article.

Secularism - Facts for UPSC

The list given-below mentions a few important facts about Secularism for UPSC 2020.

- The word 'Secular' was added in the Preamble of India by [42nd Amendment Act](#)
- Fundamental Rights of India strengthen the secular fabric of the country
- Secular character of the Indian Constitution stands as basic feature of it and cannot be amended by any act
- In the Bommai Case 1994, Supreme Court upheld the validity of 'Secularism' as the basic feature of the Constitution
- Secularism is sometimes understood with two concepts:
 - Positive
 - Negative
- The negative concept of secularism is the Western concept of secularism. It connotes a complete separation between the religion (the church) and the state (the politics)
- This negative concept of secularism is inapplicable in the Indian situation where the society is multireligious
- The positive concept of secularism is reflected by India. The Indian Constitution embodies the positive concept of secularism, i.e., giving equal respect to all religions or protecting all religions equally.
- Secularism is a fundamental reality of India's fabric hence any state government pursuing anti-secular politics is liable to action under Article 356

Secularism in West Vs. Secularism in India

The difference between Indian Secularism and Western Secularism is given in the table below:

Secularism in India	Secularism in West
Indian citizens are given a fundamental right to religion however, this right is subject to public order, morality and health.	In West, typically The USA, the state and religion are separated and both don't interfere in affairs of each other
There is no one religion that dominates Indian society as a citizen is free to practice, profess and propagate any religion	Christianity is the most reformed, caste neutral and single dominant religion in the state
India, with its outlook, focuses on intra-religious aspects and try to remove the stigma (if any) attached with any religion on the society	West doesn't focus on intra-religious aspects of Christianity and let the religion act on the society as it is
Due to accessibility to many religions, there are inter-religious conflicts and Indian government has to intervene to maintain peace and harmony	Since Christianity is the one dominant religion, the focus is less on inter-religious conflicts

In India, due to the presence of multiple religions and multiple communities, the government has to focus on both inter-relatedly. Example, Article 29 grants protection to both religious minorities as well as linguistic minorities.	West, by far, focuses on the equality and harmony among the people of the same religion
With the presence of multiple religion, the role of religious bodies also gets enhanced and it furthers their role in Indian politics	The role of religious bodies is very small in the national politics
Indian states can aid religious institutions	States don't aid religious institutions in the West

Also read:

Sources of Indian Constitution	Overview of Indian Constitution	Fundamental Duties of India
--	---	---

UPSC Preparation:

UPSC 2020	UPSC 2020 Calendar
Documents Required for UPSC Exam	Language Papers in UPSC - Tips to Study
UPSC Admit Card 2020	IAS Eligibility Criteria