

- Secularism

## Secularism

The Constitution of India guarantees every citizen the right to live with freedom and dignity anywhere in the country. Secularism is a doctrine of religious freedom, promoting freedom within religions and equality between and within religions.

Religions often fragment into sects, leading to sectarian violence and persecution of dissenting minorities. Secularism seeks to create a society free from religious domination. A theocratic state is one ruled by religious leaders, which secularism opposes by advocating for a state with no formal alliance with any religion.

### The Western Model of Secularism

The Western model of secularism maintains a strict separation between religion and state. The state does not intervene in religious affairs, nor does it fund religious institutions. This model does not support state-sponsored religious reform.

### The Indian Model of Secularism

Indian secularism differs fundamentally from the Western model. It evolved from the interaction between India's religious diversity and Western religious communities. Indian secularism allows for state-supported religious reforms like banning untouchability and child marriage.

The Indian state adopts a policy of principled distance, engaging with religion when necessary to oppose tyranny or support reform, while also supporting religious institutions with possible state assistance. The secular state may treat some aspects of organized religions with equal disrespect to uphold constitutional principles.

### Criticisms of Indian Secularism

**Anti-religious:** Some argue secularism is anti-religious, but it actually opposes institutionalized religious domination and promotes religious freedom.

**Western import:** It is claimed secularism is a Western concept unsuitable for India. However, secularism in India is adapted to protect peace and religious freedom.

**Minoritism:** Critics say secularism favors minorities excessively. In reality, minority rights protect fundamental interests and are not special privileges.

**Interventionist:** Some view secularism as coercive and interfering with religious freedom. Indian secularism balances intervention and non-interference.

**Vote bank politics:** Secularism is accused of encouraging politics based on religious vote banks. While vote bank politics can be problematic, secularism aims to ensure equal representation.

**Impossible project:** Critics claim secularism cannot succeed due to deep religious differences. However, Indian civilization's history shows coexistence of different religions.

## Exam Questions

**Q1. What is secularism and how does it oppose religious domination?**

A1. Secularism is a doctrine opposing all forms of inter-religious and intra-religious domination. It promotes freedom within religions and equality between religions.

**Q2. How does the Indian model of secularism differ from the Western model?**

A2. The Indian model allows state engagement with religion to protect minority rights and support reforms, while the Western model strictly separates church and state.

**Q3. What are some criticisms of Indian secularism?**

A3. Criticisms include claims that it is anti-religious, a Western import, favors minorities excessively, is coercive, encourages vote bank politics, and is inconsistent.

## Solved Examples

**Example 1:** Explain why secularism is not anti-religious.

**Solution:** Secularism opposes institutionalized religious domination but promotes freedom of religion and equality. It does not oppose religion itself.

**Example 2:** Describe the principle of 'principled distance' in Indian secularism.

**Solution:** Principled distance means the state may engage with religion to oppose tyranny or support reforms but also disengage when appropriate.

## Practice Set

Easy:

- Define secularism.
- What is a theocratic state?

Moderate:

- Explain the Western model of secularism.
- How does Indian secularism protect minority rights?

Challenging:

- Discuss the criticisms of Indian secularism and provide counterarguments.
- Analyze the role of education in promoting secularism.

## Answer Key

Easy:

- Secularism is the doctrine opposing religious domination and promoting freedom and equality among religions.
- A theocratic state is governed by religious leaders or a particular religion.

Moderate:

- The Western model separates religion and state strictly, treating religion as a private matter without state intervention.
- Indian secularism protects minority rights by allowing state support for minority educational institutions and opposing religious tyranny

### Challenging:

- Criticisms include claims of anti-religious bias, Western origin, favoritism towards minorities, coercion, vote bank politics, and impractic fundamental rights, balanced intervention, democratic success, and historical coexistence.
- Education helps change mindsets, promotes understanding, and supports secular values of equality and freedom.

### Quick Reference

- **Secularism:** Opposition to religious domination, promoting freedom and equality.
- **Theocratic State:** State ruled by religious authority.
- **Western Model:** Strict separation of religion and state.
- **Indian Model:** Principled distance, state engagement with religion to protect rights.
- **Principled Distance:** Balanced state intervention and non-interference in religion.

### Glossary

- **Secularism:** Doctrine advocating separation of state and religion and opposing religious domination.
- **Theocratic:** Relating to a government ruled by religious leaders.
- **Principled Distance:** Policy allowing the state to engage or disengage with religion as needed.
- **Religious Domination:** Control or oppression by one religion over others or within its own sects.
- **Minority Rights:** Constitutional protections for religious minority communities.

Year	Event	
1950	Adoption of Indian Constitution	Established India as a secular stat
1950s-60s	Implementation of social reforms	State-supported reforms like banr
1976	42nd Amendment to Constitution	Declared India a secular state exp

It is argued that secularism is anti-religious. Secularism is against institutionalized religious domination

Secularism is linked to Christianity that is western, therefore unsuitable to Indian conditions.

Indian secularism is accused of advocating the rights of the minorities.

Secularism is coercive & that it interferes excessively with the religious freedom of communities

Secularism encourages the politics of vote banks

It tries to do too much, to find a solution to an intractable problem.

Anti-religious

Western import

Minoritism

Interventionist

Vote Bank Politics

Impossible Project

Criticisms of Indian Secularism

Secularism

The Indian Model of Secularism  
The Western Model of Secularism

- (i) The deep religious diversity that exists in India is not the result of western modern ideas and nations.
- (ii) Indian secularism deals not only with the freedom of individuals but also with the freedom of minority communities.
- (iii) Since a secular state must be co-existent with intra-religious domination, Indian secularism has made room for and is compatible with the existence of state-supported religious institutions.