Class 11 Political Science (Political Theory) Chapter 8: Secularism - Notes, Important Questions and MCQs (2026-27)

Free PDF notes from Nextoper.in | Session 2026-27 | Read online:
https://nextoper.in/class-11-political-science-theory-chapter-8-pdf-notes/

These Class 11 Political Theory Chapter 8 notes cover “Secularism” from the NCERT textbook Political Theory (2026-27): what secularism is, inter-religious and intra-religious domination, the secular state, the Western model of secularism, the Turkish example, the Indian model of principled distance, Nehru’s view and criticisms of Indian secularism – with tables, Q&A, 10 MCQs and a free PDF.

Use the table of contents below to jump to the part you need, or read top to bottom for a complete revision of the chapter.

Table of Contents

- Chapter Overview
- Important Topics and Concepts
- Western vs Indian Secularism
- Criticisms and Responses
- Important Definitions and Terms
- Short Answer Questions
- Long Answer Questions
- MCQs with Answers
- Quick Revision Points
- Chapter Summary
- Exam Tips and PYQ Pattern
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Conclusion

Want notes for every chapter? Explore the full Class 11 Political Science notes on Nextoper, arranged book-wise and chapter-wise.

Chapter Overview

Secularism is a doctrine that opposes all forms of domination based on religion – both domination of one religious group by another (inter-religious) and domination within a religious group (intra-religious). It promotes freedom within religions and equality between them.

The Western model separates state and religion strictly. The Indian model, developed in a deeply religious and diverse society, keeps a principled distance: the state does not favour any religion but may intervene to end discrimination and support all communities. Indian secularism faces several criticisms, which can be examined and answered.

Important Topics and Concepts

What is Secularism?

- Secularism opposes religious domination of all kinds.
- Inter-religious domination: one religious community dominating or persecuting another; communal violence (e.g. 1984 Delhi, 2002 Gujarat) shows this danger.
- Intra-religious domination: discrimination within a religion, e.g. caste-based exclusion or unequal treatment of women.
- Secularism promotes freedom within religions and equality among them.

The Secular State

- A secular state does not have an official religion and does not favour any religion.
- It must also promote peace and equality among communities.
- It is separate from religious institutions, but its policies may still engage with religion for justice.

The Western Model

- Strict mutual exclusion: the state does not interfere in religion and religion does not interfere in the state.
- Religion is a private matter; the state does not fund religious schools.
- Focuses on individual rights rather than community rights.
- Turkey under Mustafa Kemal Ataturk practised active intervention and suppression of religion – a different, assertive secularism.

The Indian Model

- Not strict separation but principled distance.
- The state may engage with religion to promote equality – e.g. banning untouchability, temple entry for all castes.
- Recognises community rights – minorities can set up and run educational institutions, which may receive state aid.
- Combines individual and community freedoms.
- Nehru saw secularism as equal respect for all religions and the state not identifying with any.

Criticisms of Indian Secularism

- Anti-religious: response – it opposes domination, not religion.
- Western import: response – it grew from Indian conditions and differs from the Western model.
- Minoritism: response – minority rights protect against majority domination and are part of equality.
- Interventionist: response – intervention is guided by principles of equality.
- Vote-bank politics: response – seeking votes is normal in democracy; problem is only when it harms others.
- Impossible project: response – it is an ongoing effort that India continues to pursue.

Western vs Indian Secularism

Most-asked comparison.

Western model	Indian model
Strict separation of state and religion	Principled distance
Religion a private matter	State may intervene for equality
Focus on individual rights	Individual and community rights
No state aid to religious institutions	Aid possible to minority institutions
Little concern with intra-religious issues	Addresses intra-religious discrimination

Criticisms and Responses

Criticism	Response
Anti-religious	Opposes domination, not faith
Western import	Rooted in Indian diversity
Minoritism	Protects against majority domination
Interventionist	Guided by equality and freedom
Vote-bank politics	Normal in democracy unless unjust
Impossible project	A continuing democratic effort

Important Definitions and Terms

Term	Meaning
Secularism	Opposition to religious domination
Inter-religious domination	One religion dominating another
Intra-religious domination	Discrimination within a religion
Secular state	State with no official religion
Principled distance	Indian state’s flexible engagement with religion
Mutual exclusion	Strict separation in Western model
Communalism	Politics based on religious hostility
Minority rights	Rights protecting smaller communities
Ataturk	Founder of modern Turkey; assertive secularism
Vote bank	Group voting together for a party

Short Answer Questions

Q1. What is secularism?

A doctrine opposing all forms of religious domination and promoting equality among and freedom within religions.

Discrimination within a religious community, such as caste or gender discrimination.

Q3. What is a secular state?

A state with no official religion that treats all religions equally.

Q4. What is the Western model of secularism?

Strict separation of state and religion.

Q5. What is principled distance?

The Indian state's approach of engaging with or staying away from religion based on principles of equality and freedom.

Q6. How did Ataturk practise secularism?

Through active intervention in and suppression of religion in Turkey.

Q7. Give one criticism of Indian secularism.

That it is a Western import.

Q8. Can the Indian state aid minority institutions?

Yes, minority educational institutions can receive state aid.

Long Answer Questions

Q1. Differentiate between Western and Indian secularism.

Western: strict separation; Indian: principled distance.

Western: religion private; Indian: state may intervene.

Western: individual rights; Indian: also community rights.

Indian state can aid minority institutions.

Indian model tackles intra-religious discrimination.

Q2. Explain inter-religious and intra-religious domination with examples.

Inter: one community dominating another – communal violence.

Intra: discrimination within a religion – caste, gender.

Secularism opposes both.

Promotes equality and freedom.

State laws like abolition of untouchability address intra-religious domination.

Q3. Discuss the criticisms of Indian secularism and respond to them.

Anti-religious – opposes domination, not religion.

Western import – grew from Indian conditions.

Minoritism – minority rights ensure equality.

Interventionist – based on principles.

Vote-bank and impossible-project charges – democratic and ongoing effort.

MCQs with Answers

1. Indian secularism follows(a) strict separation (b) principled distance (c) state religion (d) suppression of religionAnswer: (b) principled distance

2. Caste discrimination within a religion is(a) inter-religious domination (b) intra-religious domination (c) secularism (d) pluralismAnswer: (b) intra-religious domination

3. Assertive secularism in Turkey was led by(a) Nehru (b) Ataturk (c) Gandhi (d) RawlsAnswer: (b) Ataturk

4. Western secularism focuses on(a) community rights (b) individual rights (c) state religion (d) casteAnswer: (b) individual rights

5. A secular state has(a) an official religion (b) no official religion (c) many state religions (d) no lawsAnswer: (b) no official religion

6. Temple entry for all castes is an example of(a) non-intervention (b) state intervention for equality (c) communalism (d) vote bankAnswer: (b) state intervention for equality

7. Minority institutions in India(a) cannot get aid (b) can get state aid (c) are banned (d) pay extra taxAnswer: (b) can get state aid

8. Secularism opposes(a) all religions (b) religious domination (c) festivals (d) educationAnswer: (b) religious domination

9. Calling secularism a “Western import” is a(a) criticism (b) definition (c) law (d) rightAnswer: (a) criticism

10. Equal respect for all religions was emphasised by(a) Nehru (b) Ataturk (c) Mill (d) HobbesAnswer: (a) Nehru

Quick Revision Points

- Secularism: against religious domination.
- Inter- vs intra-religious domination.
- Secular state: no official religion.
- Western model: strict separation; Turkey’s assertive version.
- Indian model: principled distance, community rights.
- Criticisms and responses.

Chapter Summary

Secularism opposes domination based on religion, both between and within religious communities, promoting freedom within religions and equality among them. A secular state has no official religion and treats all faiths equally.

The Western model separates state and religion strictly, while Turkey under Ataturk practised assertive secularism. India’s model of principled distance allows the state to intervene for equality and support community rights. Indian secularism faces criticisms, but it remains a principled response to India’s diversity.

Exam Tips and PYQ Pattern

- Western vs Indian table is a sure question.
- Define inter- and intra-religious domination with examples.
- Explain principled distance clearly.
- Learn criticisms with responses.
- Mention Nehru’s view in long answers.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is this chapter in the 2026-27 CBSE syllabus?

Yes. It is part of the NCERT Class 11 Political Science textbook “Political Theory”, prescribed in the CBSE 2026-27 syllabus.

Can I download these notes as a PDF?

Yes. Use the free PDF link at the top of this page – no signup needed.

What is principled distance?

The Indian approach where the state neither strictly separates from religion nor favours any, but engages with religion to promote equality and freedom.

How is Indian secularism different from Western secularism?

Western secularism strictly separates state and religion; Indian secularism allows principled intervention and protects community rights.

Conclusion

Secularism explains how India manages religious diversity fairly. Learn the comparison and criticism tables, practise the Q&A here and save the free PDF for revision.

More Notes: Class 11 Political Science (Political Theory) Chapter 7: Nationalism notes | All Class 11 Political Science notes

Author Bio: Written and reviewed by the Nextoper Editorial Team, a group of CBSE political science educators who build chapter notes directly from the NCERT textbook and past board paper patterns.

Freshness Note: These notes follow the NCERT Class 11 Political Science (Political Theory) textbook, Political Theory (NCERT reprint 2026-27, rationalised syllabus), and the CBSE syllabus for the 2026-27 session. Last checked on 25 November 2026.