Polity & Governance · GS - II

“The protection of religious freedom requires both respect for faith and adherence to constitutional limitations.” Discuss in the context of disputes over public religious practices.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 27/11/2026	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~ 250 words

Answer Hint

Articles 25 and 26, freedom of conscience, public order, essential religious practices, secular administration, proportionality, judicial review

Model Answer

India's constitutional framework protects religious freedom while recognising the state's responsibility to maintain public order, health and equality. Disputes over public religious rituals therefore require balancing individual and collective rights with legitimate public interests.

Constitutional dimensions

1. **Freedom of conscience:** Article 25 protects the freedom to profess, practise and propagate religion, subject to specified constitutional limitations.
2. **Denominational autonomy:** Article 26 enables religious denominations to manage their own affairs in matters of religion, subject to public order, morality and health.
3. **Secular regulation:** Article 25(2) permits legislation regulating secular activities associated with religious practices and providing for social welfare and reform.
4. **Equality and dignity:** Restrictions must also remain consistent with other fundamental rights, including equality under Article 14.

Balancing competing interests

1. **Public order:** Restrictions may be justified where credible threats to public safety or communal harmony exist.
2. **Religious autonomy:** Administrative convenience alone cannot automatically override constitutionally protected religious practices.
3. **Judicial review:** Courts examine the legal authority, constitutional purpose and proportionality of restrictions.
4. **Dialogue:** Consultation with religious representatives and local communities can reduce tensions and facilitate peaceful arrangements.

Conclusion

Neither unrestricted religious activity nor arbitrary state intervention is consistent with constitutional governance. Decisions concerning public religious practices must be lawful, evidence-based, proportionate and respectful of fundamental rights.

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