

Essay on Secularism in India

The word 'secular' is used with reference to the Church. In the Middle Ages religion was the most dominant force and the State was more or less ecclesiastical (guided by the Church or the religious head). So secular means free from religious consideration. In India, it broadly means a non-communal approach. In 1947 the country was partitioned (divided) on communal lines. Pakistan and later on Bangladesh opted for remaining Islamic or religion based states. But free India has made her appearance in the Comity of Nations as a secular democratic State. Our Constitution says that the State is not identified with any particular religion. This means that India has no officially recognized state religion. Every citizen of India has the full freedom to profess his or her own faith, interfered by the Govt. The Hindus are in the large majority in India. Yet Sri Nehru, our First Prime Minister, took the bold step of ridding (freeing) the society of the communal bias.

The administration of India is ideally free from all communal considerations. Here in India man of any religion or faith can occupy the highest position in the state. There are equal opportunities given to all citizens to compete and come on top. Men like Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Dr. Radhakrishnan, Dr. Zakir Hussain, Fakuruthlin, All Ahammed, Zail Singh, Sri K. R. Narayan—i.e. Hindus, Muslim, Sikhs, and Horizons have held the posts of the highest honor—that of the President and Vice-President. Similarly, our Union State ministers, our Governors, and Ambassadors, our administrators belong to all communities—Hindus, Muslims Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Christians, Parsecs etc. India enjoys a fair measure of communal harmony, illustrating the principle of unity in diversity.

Still fundamentalists and other communal forces, mostly paid agents of foreign governments, strike discordant (harsh and unpleasant)

notes and seek to create communal troubles. The Govt. should put down such elements with a strong hand and impartially. These agents are out to tarnish (blacken) the fair name of India. Yet there is no scope for complacency (feeling safe and satisfied). We shall have to remain alert and watchful and bundle out the mischief-mongers (makers). The school books, especially the history books, should have to be written on a new pattern – to foster (step up) secularism. India Govt. is trying hard to delink religion from politics. There are political parties still in India that are organized on communal fines. There are parties which have taken up anti-Muslim attitude to secure more Hindu votes. Likewise, there are parties that seek to go out of their ways,—to please the Muslims so as to cash in Muslim vote banks. Fortunately, the secular outlook is fast developing and secular forces have struck roots in India.

To ensure secularism all the citizens shall have to be more cordial and tolerant. The responsibility of the mass media—Newspapers and Periodicals, the Cinema and Theatre, Radio, Television etc. is still greater,—to educate the common public on proper lines. All religion is essentially the same. It is to be noted that God is one, people call Him by different names. Pandit Nehru has pithily (pointedly) said—. “We may belong to different religions but we can equally become sons of mother India.”