

## Indian Secularism: Greatness, Challenges, Solution

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### Abstract

This article is here to examine and analyze the concept of secularism in the context of India. Through the 42th amendments of the constitution India have accepted secularism on 1976. Even the fundamental rights of ours constitution are enough powerful to implement secularism on the soil of India. Article 25, 26 and 27 gives the prohibition of Freedom of conscience and free profession, freedom to manage religious affairs, freedom as to payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion. Even famous Dalai Lama praised Indian secularism by telling "India has a great heritage and it is a model for religious harmony where people of different religions live peacefully and in harmony." We must have to remember the fact that Secularism is the only way of development in plural society like India. But the occurrence of communal riots in recent years indicates that we are still far away to establish secularism in India truly. Communal politics, religious militancy, poverty, political corruption are posing serious threats for Indian democracy at today. But I believe Present turmoil can be solved if sincere efforts and more sound secular policy can be made.

**Key Words:** Secularism, challenges, India

### Introduction

The term secularism is added in the Indian Constitution through the 42<sup>nd</sup> constitutional amendment. So, According to our constitution India is a secular country and she has no official religion. In India every people can perform their religious activities without any challenge and interference and if anybody wants to change their opinion, they also can do. According to Indian constitution every kind of discrimination on the basis of religion, caste, and race is forbidden. Still after passing 73 year of independence, we are struggling with religious discrimination. Large-scale religious violence and riots have periodically occurred in India since its

independence from British colonial rule. The aftermath of the Partition of India in 1947 to create a separate Islamic state of Pakistan for Muslims, saw large scale sectarian strife and bloodshed throughout the nation. Since then, India has witnessed sporadic large-scale violence sparked by underlying tensions between sections of the Hindu and Muslim communities. These conflicts also stem from the ideologies of hard-line right-wing groups versus Islamic Fundamentalists and prevalent in certain sections of the population. Since independence, India has always maintained a constitutional commitment to secularism. The major incidences include the 1969 Gujarat riots, 1984 anti-Sikh riots, the 1989 Bhagalpur riots, 1989 Kashmir

violence, Godhara train burning, 2002 Gujarat riots and 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots. In spite of having lot of challenges, still we can tell that Indian form of secularism is greater than American and any other form of secularism and we can believe if we Indians become determined to solve the challenges, our model of secularism would be proved best form of secularism.

#### **Objectives:**

Through this study we are going to discuss;

- The effectiveness of Indian model of secularism.
- Great past of religious harmony.
- Present challenges of secularism.
- Solution of these problems.

#### **Literature Review:**

- We have to make intensive study on the book “Secularism in India; concept and practice” edited by Uday Mehta and Ram Puniyani.
- We have to rely much on the book “Indian Secularism; A social and intellectual History” written by Shabnum Tehanji.
- We have to take knowledge to understand legal base of Indian secularism from the book “Religious freedom in a secular democracy of India: A constitutional perspective” written by Amit Raj Agarwal.
- We have to study the book “Communalism and communal Riots in India” written by Kumar Mehta.
- We also have to study” concept of secular education in India” Written by Muktishree Ghosh.
- We have to read the article “Religious Harmony, a way to the development” written by Athar Ali Shah.

#### **The effectiveness of Indian model of secularism:**

• In this world two kind of model of Secularism is very much popular: The Western model of Secularism and the Indian model of Secularism. According to the American Model of Secularism the state and religion maintain complete mutual exclusion where both have its own independence jurisdiction. According to this model state neither can give any financial aid to religious institution nor to interfere in their matters. That’s why if any religious institution excommunicate some members or implement some strong rules and regulation then state has very little to do. But The Indian model of secularism is much flexible regarding this matter. In India all kind of religious community enjoy freedom to perform their activities independently but if state finds any kind of abuse of human right through the performing any rituals by any religious community then state has full right to stop it. That’s why through the article no-17, untouchability, the age old practice of Hindu caste system is forbidden and recently also Muslim religious practice “tin talaq” system is forbidden. According to Indian model of Secularism, state is entitled to help any religious institution to run their activity. That’s why according to article every minority groups can form their institution to develop their culture and language and state cannot make any discrimination to help it on the basic of inter religious or intra religious discrimination. India not only reject inter religious differences but also reject intra religious differences. That’s why to protect the interest lower class Hindu, tribal people, our government takes reservation policy that’s they also can get equal opportunity to

melt with the natural flow of the society. We are all known about the fact that from very ancient past huge number of the foreign community came in India and merged with the mainstream of the Indian society. That's why India is considered is multicultural country. But this multicultural factor created several unrest in India from both side like inter religious differences and intra religious differences. We can never forget the black days of the days of partition. We are all known fact that India got independence with accepting bitter fact of Partition. That's why after independence to make the environment of ours country safe from every kind of religious discrimination Indian adopted this kind of model regarding the matter of secularism.

Great past of Religious harmony in India:

As it is unknown to none that India is the homeland of numerous religions, and when we read the holy scripts of every religions we can come across to know that each and every religion of this land preaches to its follower peace and harmony. One religion tells us "salam alaikum" may be peace with you" while the other religion says "love your neighbor" still another religion tells "bhavatu sabha mangalam or sarve bhavantu sukhinha" may all beings be happy. Be it Islam, Christianity or Hinduism every religion promotes peace and amity. The promotion of compassion is the sole objective of all religions.

When every religion encourages its followers to make them compassionate then why atrocities on the name of religion are done even today? Actually, there are some people who use their scriptures in advocating hatred and intolerance to other religions. They break out a particular passage from its context to justify their

actions, first actions are done then the people escort to the scriptures for the justification, no doubt it is an act of irreverence to the religious scriptures.

We are the sons of an ancient land that has promoted many different schools of philosophy and spirituality over the millennia. Despite some remote and rare instances of bloodshed, our country has been a model of peaceful co-existence. Approximately, in 3th century B.C this land was ruled by Ashoka the Great, whose realm stretched from present-day Afghanistan to Bangladesh. During his magnificent ruling period, this sympathetic ruler spearheaded constant efforts to all group of religions of the time and caused edicts to be inscribed on stone, proclaiming that all faiths should be respected; and as a result, followers of all spiritual traditions felt secure under his sway. In some places such governments and rulers even now exist. An example is the noble king of Oman, who has showed his friendly relation for other religions as he sponsored land for churches and temples of other faiths while practicing his own religion with all devotion and diligence.

We should keep always in our minds that the country where we are living is not state of any monarch, but it is a democratic country ruled by the people for the people. Above this all we have also a set of laws in the form of written constitution which every Indian citizen trust on. The preamble to the constitution describes India as a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic and republic. It secures to all citizens the liberty of thoughts, expression of belief, freedom of faith and worship. Articles 25 to 30, in particular guarantee to everyone the right of religion, freedom of conscience and the right to freely

profess, practice and propagate his or her religion.

This is actually a glad tiding for the new generation that today the distance between different religions is gradually decreases. Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus and Christians are showing their capability of living in peace together like they have done for centuries in India. As a matter of fact there are even now some mischievous and malignant elements in our society who divide people, much like the British divided and ruled India for years.

### **Present challenges of secularism:**

There is no doubt that some provisions of the Constitution and some of the laws passed do interfere with the religious customs and practices of Hindus. The religious tolerance or non-intervention does not mean secularism. Rather partial non-intervention has led to religious fundamentalism in place of growth of humanism. The conflict on Ramjanmabhumi and Babri Mosque is the bright example of fundamentalism. Thus religious fundamentalism has been indicative of a 'breakdown' of secularization process in India. It has brought escalation of ethno-religious conflicts and national disintegration. A problem of uniform civil code is essential in the direction of bringing about national identity and the integration of members of all religious communities into one bond of common citizenship. Following independence, it was hoped that this step would be taken to usher in secular society. But unfortunately till now no progress has been made in the evolution of a uniform Civil Code and today its adoption appears to be more problematic than it was at the time when the Constitution was framed. The political parties in India have tended to use

religion and caste factors for the promotion of their political interests and thus greatly undermined the secular values. The growing communalism has also greatly hampered the growth of genuine secularism in India. Despite abandonment of communal electorates and a ban on the use of religion for soliciting votes, the various political parties and groups have frequently made use of communal factors to get into power. In this regard both the minorities as well as the majority communities are equally to blame. Unless this feeling of communalism is shunned, secularism cannot take firm roots in the Indian soil. The failure of the government to evolve a just economic order and eliminate poverty also gave a serious setback to secularism. Many public rituals and ceremonials like bhoomi puja, breaking of coconuts on inaugural or auspicious occasions, performing of 'aarti' and applying to 'tilak' to distinguished guests are perceived by Hindus as cultural or nationalistic expressions, but to non-Hindus these are manifestations of Hindu culture. Such rituals are performed even on state functions and therefore, create unnecessary misgivings about the neutrality of the State. The defective educational system which has encouraged the people to think in terms of groups and communities, has also failed to inculcate secular ideas in the minds of young students and promote feeling of mutual give and take. Apart from education and jobs, prejudice and discrimination are perceived as operating in the matter of intergroup violence and conflict. There is now ample evidence to show that at times the administrative machinery of the State does not operate impartially at the time of communal riots; those responsible for ensuring law and order act in a non-secular

way and tend to victimize members of minority groups. The minorities are in fear of the giant majority, which has the brute strength to overpower them and divests them of their distinctive characteristics. Furthermore, loyalties continue to be particularistic rather than universalistic. Among several religious riots in post Independence India, the exodus of Kashmiri Hindu in between the year 1989-1990, Gujarat communal Riots on 1969, Anti Sikh riots 1984 were most drastic. But hundreds of more riots have been occurred in different parts of India which took lots of lives. *In Mumbai* Communal violence under the National Democratic Alliance government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party increased 28 percent over three years to 2017 – 822 “incidents” were recorded that year – but it was short of the decadal high of 943 in 2008, according to an *India Spend* analysis of home ministry data Uttar Pradesh (UP) – the most populous state in the country – reported most incidents (1,488) over the last decade. Kasganj in western UP witnessed communal violence on 26 January, 2018, in which a 22-year old youth – Chandan Gupta – was killed after being hit by a bullet. As many as 44 people were arrested in connection with the violence, which erupted over an unauthorized march on Republic Day, *The Indian Express* reported on 27 January, 2018.

**Solution:**

In initiating the process of de-communalizing the people at all levels, say, by bringing home to them that communal assumptions are false, by explaining to them the socio-economic and political roots of communalism, and by telling them that what the communalists project as problems are

not real problems and what they suggest as remedies are not real remedies.

Communalization of the state and of the political elite in power has to be checked because it leads to inaction against communal violence, and covert or overt political and ideological support to communalism by the state apparatuses, including the media under state control.

The communalization of civil society also needs to be checked because it leads to more communal riots and other forms of communal violence. People with communal ideas and ideologies pressurize the government to act in a manner which is always against the principle of secularism. The secular state, the secular party in power and the secular power elite many a time succumb to the pressures of these communal people. It is here that intellectuals, political parties and voluntary organizations can be most effective.

The role of education, particularly emphasizing value-oriented education both in schools and colleges/universities, is important in preventing communal feelings. Education based on new cultural ideologies can protect the young people against philosophies and ideologies of hate. Particularly harmful in the Indian context has been the role of teaching of history. Communal interpretation of history, specially of

The medieval period, forms the bedrock of communal ideology in India. Teaching of history along scientific lines in educational institutions has to be a basic element in any ideological struggle against communalism.

The media can also prove to be significantly useful in preventing communal feelings.

Communal press can be banned and legal action can be taken against communal writers.

The ideology that economic development, industrialization, growth of capitalism and the growth of the working class would automatically weaken and ultimately eliminate communalism should not be overplayed. This economic reductionist approach of the left parties and organizations like Naxalites only increases communal poison.

**Conclusion:**

We must have to remember the fact that India is a country of having cosmopolitan religious variety. Every religious community are different from each other regarding the matter of food habits, custom, rituals, believe etc. So there is no doubt that it is very tough to maintain religious harmony in

the country like India. But, to save Indian integrity we must have to ensure Indians unity. Here the responsibility of the government is very big. Our judicial system, election commission should be active to ensure that no political party can use any religious issue to use as political weapon. Any political party based on any single religious philosophy should not be grant by Election commission of India. If any person or group of people are involved to spread communal message by the use of internet or any kind of social media then they should be immediately punished. Most important things we all the people individually should be responsible to save ours unity, give respect to other religion and believe and we must have to remember practically we all have only one religion. This is the religion of Humanity.

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