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## RELIGION INTOLERANCE AND SECULARISM

**Dr. Medhavini S. Katti**

**M.A. M.PHIL., PhD.**

**Associate Professor, Department of Economics, V.S.K. University, Ballari.**

### ABSTRACT:

India is a land where different faiths, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, were born and have long thrived. It is believed that the Apostle Thomas introduced Christianity in the first century AD and Islam arrived in the 7th century. India now has the third largest Muslim population in the world. Given this history, the 1950 Indian Constitution declared the country to be a secular republic guaranteeing freedom of religion. But that ideal is being severely tested.

Secularism in the multi-cultural, multi-lingual and plural society of India a significant role to play in reducing religious conflicts and persecution, upholding human rights and on the whole building a 'strong' and 'unified' nation. Both the ideology and practice of secularism are, however, being questioned today by various streams of thought.



**KEYWORDS:** Hinduism and Buddhism , multi-cultural, multi-lingual.

### INTRODUCTION :

The way the religious and political leaderships in the Muslim world have joined hands to further the cause of dialogue is a potent indication that in countering the forces of clash and conflict among religions and civilizations, the religious leadership of different faiths would come forward with much more vigour and unity to intensify the process of dialogue at every level and force the political leadership to serve the cause of religious tolerance, coexistence and universal human

brotherhood.

In India, though the tradition of religious interaction and dialogue is quite old and established, the process of religious dialogue, more particularly the Hindu-Muslim dialogue, is yet to find a coherent expression and a firm ground upon which to stand. The Hindu majority has not yet responded to the necessity of dialogue in the way and on the scale it demands. Small groups of different religious traditions are indeed engaged in this process at different levels but these efforts are limited to conferences and seminars alone with practically no impact on the routine affairs of

society. The process of dialogue has still not found a systematic academic articulation mainly because there is almost no institutional support for it. Academics who are engaged in this process largely remain confined to their private efforts and generally do not join the activists of dialogue. But there is still a great hope in India for religious dialogue to grow, as this country has been a pluralist society for centuries and the Indian people share a living experience of religious tolerance and coexistence.

## CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND RELIGION AS HUMAN RIGHTS

Freedom of religion in India<sup>10</sup> is a fundamental right guaranteed by Article 25-28 of the Constitution of India. Article 15 of the Constitution stated, "Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth". Article 29 said "Protection of interests of minorities" which ensures that "no citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them". Article 30 stated, "Right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions" which enables all citizens to have equal opportunity to have access to education. Present day India appeared in 1947 and the Indian constitution's introduction was changed in 1976 to express that India is a common state. Each resident of India has an option to rehearse and advance their religion calmly. In any case, there have been a few occurrences of strict narrow mindedness that brought about mobs and viciousness, outstandingly, the 1984 Anti-Sikh uproars in Delhi, 2002 Gujarat revolts, the 2008 Anti-Christian mobs and the ethnic purging of Kashmiri Hindus. A few culprits of the 1984 Anti-Sikh uproars in Delhi have not been brought to equity regardless of broad judgment.

The Preamble of the Indian Constitution has "common", subsequently suggesting that the state/nation won't separate, belittle or interfere in the calling of any religion. In any case, it shields singular religions or gatherings by including strict rights as principal rights. Article 25 says "all people are similarly qualified for opportunity of soul and the privilege to uninhibitedly proclaim, practice, and proliferate religion subject to open request, profound quality and wellbeing. " Further, Article 26 says that all categories can deal with their very own undertakings in issues of religion. Every one of these rights are liable to be managed by the State.

In excess of 80 percent of Indians are Hindus, yet Muslims, Christians and Sikhs structure significant strict minorities with hundreds of years of history in India. Strict pluralism and opportunity are secured by India's Constitution. The issue of strict transformation is quarrelsome in India. Numerous Dalits, referred to earlier as untouchables, and other low-position Hindus and Tribals concede they convert to Islam or Christianity essentially to avoid pulverizing rank partiality and persecution. The principle draftsman of the Constitution, Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, brought into the world a Dalit, broadly changed over to Buddhism to get away from standing mistreatment under Hinduism. Secularism, State and the Political Process In the context of the increasing challenges to secularism, the State and the political parties have a significant role to play. But the question arises, have that policies contributed towards strengthening of the secular edifice? Or have they in fact reinforced the trends of fundamentalism, fanaticism and revivalism, leading thereby to the enhancement or the compound challenges to the Constitutional ideal? The impact of policies of the State and the political parties on secularism are analyzed in this chapter in order to assess whether these contribute to or detract from secularism.

## CHALLENGES TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Another important challenge for secularism is the scope and limits of freedom of expression when confronted with religious ideas, religious groups and religious sensibilities. There are different legal responses to that complex issue, among them: blasphemy laws, anti-defamation laws, criminal laws to protect religious sentiments, hate speech laws, etc. There is a growing awareness of the difficulty in reaching a satisfactory solution in national laws, especially in those cases in which the conflict becomes international or global. Different affairs concerning cartoons, sacred books burning, transgressive art, etc. lead to the provisional conclusion that State laws are hardly the last word in resolving these sensitive issues.

## CONCLUSION

This may well be the case of the claim for religious neutrality. Is religious neutrality really neutral? Probably, if we understand neutrality as a concept embracing also all kind of worldviews, it is so. But, at the same time, States cannot be neutral by definition. Neutrality is an operational State principle or attitude which applies only to certain areas of human activity. But once one of the social

forces in society has appropriated black as its colour, than that choice is no longer neutral. Secularism does not favour a wall deprived of all State symbols. It is religious symbols which are anathema. The great risk and challenge for a secularist State is then avoiding any kind of confessional neutrality, giving back to any sort of religion and welcoming the ideology of secularism under the guise of neutrality.

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