

An Idea of A Secular State Through Its Traits in Context of India

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Abstract

Any state in this world is called a happy and a peaceful state if it is a secular state. Secular state is a community where differences of things like religion, sect, clan, caste, belief and class are not taken into consideration. Because these things underestimate the human existence and divide people in unacceptable ways if they are categorised. When people give less importance to such things or treat these things respectfully, they lead a better life full of peace, compassion, empathy, sympathy and understanding. A state where people happily reside together despite having different backgrounds can be called a secular state. Any state always operates at the hands of people through a social machinery called politics. Politics can be responsible for upliftment as well as deterioration of a state. When it is used on the basis of religion and things like it, a state gets limited to certain aspects and experiences less flourishing. But a state where governments equal importance to all religions and other such things, it emerges as an ideal abode of humanity. The idea of a secular state and its traits can be understood through this article.

India is lately experiencing religious intolerance and deterioration of human and moral values. There have been a significant rise in instances involving communal violence, inhuman activities and other such things done on the basis of caste, class and religion. So it is very much mandatory to throw light on the idea of a secular state and get to know its traits.

Keywords : Secularism, Secular State, Idea, Traits, Religion, Community, Caste, Human Values, Moral Values, Equality, Indiscrimination, Non-interference, Indian Society

Introduction

Secularism is one of the most sought after aspects of an ideal state in this world. Secularism means a state where government and politics are run without having any biases and treating all citizens equally. All the religions are treated equally with respect and people from different backgrounds are given equal recognition and place in the society. A country which treats all its citizens equally even though they come from different religious backgrounds can be called a secular state. The government of a secular state is neutral when it comes to things like religion and is never involved in things related to it.

Human and moral values are at the core of such states. As we all know, humans came first and things like religion, caste, clan and community were later developed by them as they evolved into a social animal. As they advanced in their endeavors, they started using these things for their own benefits. Politics is one the best examples of how such things influence humans at a large scale.

India was said to be a secular state. But it never was. So much so that when the new government was formed in 2014 after the general elections, the majoritarian Indians started showing their true faces. India is like a delicate dough which can be kneaded into anything as per the needs of the ruling governments.

In order to stay in power, politicians and parties fuel religious and communal intolerance and control the masses. Not just India, most of the extremist countries in this world use religion, class and community as their disposal. Minorities like Muslim, Dalit and Christian are being discriminated and suppressed by the majority.

Such practices are against the core purpose of our existence. We were never meant to fight with each other and have bitter relationships on the basis of religion, community and belief. Instead, we were supposed to lead a peaceful and an ideal life full of compassion, love, affection and support. But political power and high social stature make some of us act like propellants of discriminative mindset of the society. This clearly shows that we have forgotten the soul purpose of our existence in this world.

India has been experiencing religious intolerance, communal violence and casteist discrimination ever since its ancient period. Even its independence in 1947 was achieved at the cost of its partition based on religion. Religious conflicts and communal riots full of butchering, murders, rapes and abductions were at its backdrop. The same things have been happening lately in India. People are being discriminated on the basis of religion and community. Local politics involves around castes and money. It is nothing but deterioration of human and moral values. These things show us that India was never a democracy even if it we call it the largest democracy in terms of population. But this population has been divided on the basis of religion, community and caste. So how can it be a democracy if citizens are categorised intentionally? In such scenario, it becomes very important to remind ourselves of the idea of a secular state and its traits and look towards today's India without having any biases. In order to lead India towards the status of a global superpower and to enable it to be a leader, we must adhere to the things which form the base of a democracy and enable ourselves to have a better future. Such things which are the traits of a secular state have been discussed in this research paper.

Discussion

We should take into consideration the following traits of a secular state :

1) Freedom of Speech

Speech means to speak. Freedom of speech refers to a social system where all the citizens can express their views and opinions without any hesitation. Many of the countries in the world lawfully enable its citizens to express their thoughts without fearing any legal actions. But India has been taking social actions against people who talk about things freely which come out to be true. Those who speak the truth are being punished while those who indulge in hate speeches, derogatory talks are being hailed. A secular state can never deny truth and freedom of speech. It always advocates freedom of speech and fair expressions. But we must not forget that it must be accompanied by human and moral values.

2) Religious freedom

Religion is a thing which makes humans behave morally. All the religions in the world and their holy texts teach us to share love and compassion with all the living beings. No any religion in the world teaches us to hate or discriminate other religions. A secular state never indulges in partiality when it comes to many religions gathered together. Instead, it enables its citizens to practice desired religions and lead a normal life. And it also should teach them to respect other religions. A secular state or its citizens can never force others to advocate a specific religion. On the contrary, India and its citizens have been backing a specific religion in recent times and are denying the peaceful co-existence. Isn't it the violation of law and denial of traits of a secular state?

3) Tolerance

If a state has citizens with different religions, classes and communities, they should tolerate each other when it comes to practices. No matter what their practices, norms values are, they must tolerate it. There is no point in hating other religions as no religion teaches wrong things. So tolerance is at the core of peaceful co-existence backed by respect for others. India, being a Hindu state, has been witnessing intolerance about people of minorities.

4) Equality

The term equality applies to everything that happens around us. It is one of the prime traits of a secular state. Financial equality, social equality, gender equality and academic equality enables a state to be called secular. A state like India being run by a handful of people involved in financial sector, people involved in religious practices, involved in politics and academia can not be called secular as it denies equal opportunities. Their supremacy in all these sectors make India an unhappy state. When people are denied equality, their state can not be secular and can never lead a better life and have bright future.

5) Moral Values

Morality comes at the cost of sacrifice. Moral values are formed combining compassion, gratitude, honesty, respect, cooperation, responsibility, courage and kindness. All these righteous things make a state morally right. India, having deeply involved in corruption, terrorism, communalism and cruelty, can never lead towards happiness if it and its citizens are not right on the moral grounds. Morality and secularism are correlated to each other.

6) Human Values

During the early phase of human evolution and before the creation of well-structured human societies, there was no any religion, class, caste and community. Early humans lived happily without any concerns as they were not involved in such things. They had no any idea about them. Humanity was their religion and human was their caste. Their existence has been marked by love, accountability, peace, honesty, integrity and truth. Modern India has been experiencing incidents fuelled by hatred, disownment, violence, dishonesty and lies. A state where citizens carry on their shoulders responsibilities because of love, peace, honesty, accountability, integrity and truth can be called a secular state.

7) Indiscrimination

A state which happily accepts differences in religion, caste, class and community can be called secular. This refers to the term indiscrimination which involves equality and co-existence. It is one of the purposes of human existence. Indiscrimination can happen only when there are no moral and human values involved in the upbringing of a society. A state which treats everyone fairly and respectfully can be called a secular state.

8) Non-interference

In order to lead a peaceful and normal life, people should not interfere in things of other religions, castes, classes, communities and even others' personal lives. One can not decide what other will do. It is a matter of will and choice. So a state like modern India where people usually interfere in matters involving people from other identities needs to have a approach more inclined towards freedom for taking decisions. It can happen only when they respect each other and try to coexist without any hesitation.

9) Equal Opportunities

If the citizens of a country are not getting equal opportunities and are being judged on the basis of religion, caste, class, community and finances, then it can not be a secular state meant to provide equal opportunities to its citizens in all walks of life and at different stages of life. This leads to deterioration of educational

sector, financial sector as well as social sector. If people are not offered free and fair life and are treated according to prejudices and preferences, then equality, one of the traits of a happy country, gets harmed. People in India have remained downtrodden because they were never given equal opportunities. In a democracy, people are entitled to equality in everything. Democracy and secularism go hand in hand.

10) Need of a Strong Secular Discourse in Today's India

India has been facing issues related to religion and caste ever since antiquity. Its main social structure is based on classes named Brahmin, Kshatriy, Vaishya and Shudra. The first class is in the role of ruler, the second looks after defence and security, the third works for business and trade while the fourth works for the first three and is meant to remain in their service from generations after generations. Further it involves countless castes, subcastes and classes. It is a very complicated social setup. When a country is divided in such manner, how can it be called a secular state. If equality is denied and fair opportunities are not provided, people are made to remain in their suppressing roles forever, then how can a country become great if its own citizens do not treat each other equally. So India needs to have a strong secular discourse and needs to work on the traits of a secular state mentioned above. Only then we can lead a good, happy and peaceful life.

Conclusion

To conclude, we can say that a state where people from all religions live together happily, they seldom care about each other's caste, class and community can be called a secular state. Not just religious freedom, if people can express their thoughts freely without any hesitation, it means they respect different opinions. Tolerance and equality are also the qualities people must possess to lead a good life. Only then they can get equal opportunities without any interference and discrimination. All these traits of a secular state are the need of the hour for today's India. India has been indulging in things which deny all these traits. Such unacceptable and unconstitutional practices tarnish the image of a country and make it deprived of its own rights and powers. So India needs to have a strong secular discourse.

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