

## **CONCEPT OF SECULARISM**

### **Meaning:**

Secularism has been defined and interpreted in different ways. Secularism is a familiar concept in India. "Seculam" means originally age or generation. We use this word in context of a social and ethical system.

### **Definition:**

It means while religion is completely free, the state includes in its wide fold various religion and culture, gives protection and opportunities to all and that bring about an atmosphere of tolerance and co-operation.

### **Secular country:**

"A secular country will not make decisions based on a person's religion and the citizens of such a country of their choice."

### **Secularism in Indian constitution:**

Our constitution has elaborated that principle of secularism in great detail. It specifies that the state should refrain from either penalizing or favoring any of its people on religious considerations. The basic outlines of secularism are listed in the following provisions of the constitution:

### **Preamble**

It is true that the word 'secular' did not first occur either in article 25 or 26 or in any other article of Preamble of the constitution. By the forty-second constitution Amendment Act of 1976, the Preamble was amended. Since then "India is a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic".

## **No State Religion**

There shall be no 'state religion' in India. The State will neither establish a religion of its own nor confer any special patronage upon any particular religion. It follows from this that:

- 1) The state will not compel any citizen to pay any taxes for the promotion or maintenance of any particular religion or religious institution (Article 27);
- 2) No religious instruction shall be provided in any educational institution wholly provided by state funds;
- 3) Even though religious instruction be imparted in educational institutions recognized by or receiving aid from the state, no person attending such institution shall be compelled to receive that religious instruction without the consent of himself or of his guardian. In short, while religious instruction is totally banned in state owned educational institutions, in other denominational institutions it is not totally prohibited but it must not be imposed upon people of other religions without their consent. (Article 28)

## **Freedom of Conscience**

Every person is guaranteed the freedom of conscience and the freedom to profess, practise and propagate his own religion, subject only

- 1) To restrictions imposed by the state in the interests of public order, morality and health,
- 2) To regulations or restrictions made by state relating to any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice, but do not really appertain to the freedom of conscience,
- 3) To measures of social reform and for throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus.

Subject to above limitations, a person in India shall have the right not only to entertain any religious belief but also to practice the observances dictated by such belief. (Article 25)

### **Management of Religious Bodies**

There is not only the freedom of the individual to profess, practise and propagate his religion, there is also the right guaranteed to every religious group or individual,

- 1) To establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes,
- 2) To manage its own affairs in matters of religion,
- 3) To own and acquire movable and immovable property and
- 4) To administer such property in accordance with law. (Article 26)

### **Equality of Treatment**

- 1) Article 14 grants equality before the law and equal protection of the laws to all.
- 2) Article 15 enlarges the concept of secularism to the widest possible extent by prohibiting discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.
- 3) Article 16 (1) guarantees equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters of public employment and reiterates that there would be no discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth and residence.

### **Respect for Minority Cultural and Educational Institutions**

Under Article 29 and 30, certain cultural and educational rights are guaranteed. Article 29 guarantees the right of any section of the citizens residing in any part of the country having a distinct language, script or culture of its own, and to conserve the same. Article 30, provides that "all minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice".

## **EDUCATION AND SECULARISM**

Education is a great force which can help in strengthening secularism in India, as well as in cultivating democratic values. In the present socio-cultural set-up in the country, it is education which can play a very constructive role in widening the outlook of the people and preparing for this new social order.

### **Need for secular based education in India**

- 1) To train the youth of the country to be good citizens and play their part efficiently in the social reconstruction and economic development of their country.
- 2) To train the youth for various vocations and occupations.
- 3) To provide training for democratic living. We must provide to than right kind of social training and inculcate right ideals.

### **Characteristics of secular education**

The following are the characteristics of secular education

- 1) It is meant for all – inspective of religion, caste or sect.
- 2) It does not cover religions education of any kind.
- 3) It is based on the national goals and objectives.
- 4) It attempts to inculcate religions tolerance mutual appreciation of other religions contributions.
- 5) It may in corporate within itself some universally accepted religion truths.
- 6) It may highlight on the biographies of the great world religions leaders and spotlight on the universal values that they have propounded.
- 7) It neither encourages religious in doctriation or fanaticism.

8) It does not attempt to condemn any religion or uphold any particular religious faith.

### **Educational implications**

Secular education develops a moral outlook.

1. Secular education helps in the development liberal attitudes and values.
2. It develops wider vision.
3. It develops an attitude of appreciation and understanding of others point of view.
4. It develops democratic values and humanistic outlook.
5. Secular education synthesis materialism and spiritualism.
6. Secular education serves as an antidote to religious fanaticism and hatred.
7. To maintain the unity and integrity of the nation.
8. Education should play a positive role in preparing people for a secular society and a purpose of life.
9. Indian present educational system promotes secular attitudes and values through its broad based aims, curriculum, enlightened teachers and appropriate activities, progressivism, rationality, freedom from bigotry and equal respect for all religion.