

**PATTAMUNDAI COLLEGE  
PATTAMUNDAI**



**AN EXTRAMURAL SEMINAR  
ON  
SECULARISM IN INDIA: CHALLENGES AND  
PROSPECTS**

On the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2017

*Department of Political Science  
Pattamundai College, Pattamundai,  
Kendrapara, Odisha*

## REPORT

An Extramural Seminar was organized by the Department of Political Science, Pattamundai College, Pattamundai on 08.12.2017 at 11.00 A.M. in the Department Seminar room under the chairmanship of Mrs Chandrabati Swain HOD, Political Science Pattamundai College. The topic of the seminar was "**Secularism in India: Challenges and prospects**". Mr. Chinmay Kumar Pradhan, Lecturer in Political Science, Brahmani College, Kendrapara was the Resource Person in the seminar. The meeting was started with the Lightening of candle by our respected Resource Person. Mrs Chandrabati Swain, Head of the Department of Political Science gave a key note address of the topic and Mr. Bijay Kumar Mohanty, Senior Lecturer in Political Science Welcomed and introduced the resource person on this occasion. Mr. Pradhan, Resource person of the seminar beautifully explained about Secularism in India and also explained the major challenges of Secularism in India.

This meeting was ended with vote of thanks by Mr. Manoranjan Mohanty, Lecturer in Political Science, Pattamundai College at 1:30 P.M.

# Secularism in India: Challenges and Prospects

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## Abstract

*The term "Secular" means being "separate" from religion, or having no religious basis. A secular person is one who does not owe his moral values to any religion. His values are the product of his rational and scientific thinking. Secularism means separation of religion from political, economic, social and cultural aspects of life, religion being treated as a purely personal matter. It emphasized dissociation of the state from religion and full freedom to all religions and tolerance of all religions. It also stands for equal opportunities for followers of all religions, and no discrimination and partiality on grounds of religion. Secularism in the History of India Secular traditions are very deep rooted in the history of India.*

## Introduction

Indian culture is based on the blending of various spiritual traditions and social movements. In ancient India, the Santam Dharma (Hinduism) was basically allowed to develop as a holistic religion by welcoming different spiritual traditions and trying to integrate them into a common mainstream. The development of four Vedas and the various interpretations of the Upanishads and the Puranas clearly highlight the religious plurality of Hinduism. Emperor Ashoka was the first great emperor to announce, as early as third century B.C. that, the state would not prosecute any religious sect. In his 12 Rock Edict, Ashoka made an appeal not only for the toleration of all religion sects but also to develop a spirit of great respect toward them. Even after the advent of Jainism, Buddhism and later Islam and Christianity on the Indian soil, the quest for religious toleration and coexistence of different faiths continued. In medieval India, the Sufi and Bhakti movements bond the people of various communities together with love and peace.

The leading lights of these movements were Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti, Baba Farid, Sant Kabir Das, Guru Nanak Dev, Saint Tukaram and Mira Bai etc. In medieval India, religious toleration and freedom of worship marked the State under Akbar. He had a number of Hindus as his ministers, forbade forcible conversions and abolished Jizya. The most prominent evidence of his tolerance policy was his promulgation of 'Din-i-Ilahi' or the Divine Faith, which had elements of both Hindu and Muslim faith. That this was not imposed upon the

## **Education**

It is also an important factor that influences the political consciousness. Citizens should have enough educated about the ideas and values of democracy. Education can enhance the thought process their abilities of constructive criticism so as to help them to arrive at right decision.

## **Independence of media**

Media plays an important and pivotal role in conveying the functioning of the government and democratic ideas to the public and exposes the activities of corruption, nepotism, terrorism etc. Free and impartial media help in forming and expressing public opinion.

## **Economic and Social security**

Economic Freedom is a must requirement for exercising the political rights properly. Economic freedom is the eradication of poverty and providing security towards the availability of opportunities to participate in the production process in a fair manner. Concentration of wealth amongst few and the eradication of inequality are very much required to ensure economic freedom for all. Governments in democracy needs to plan various social security programmes such as pension schemes for the aged and widows and comprehensive health insurance for the uplift of these sections of people.

## **Political parties and leaders**

Political parties help to organize public opinion and create situation conducive to policy decisions. They make elections meaningful and headed by leaders who possess a wider vision and higher democratic values.

## **Decentralization of power**

As per decentralization of power preferences and control of people power and administration are handed over to lower a level, which ensures greater participation of the people in governance.

Indian philosophy of secularism is related to "Sarva Dharma Sambhava" (literally it means that destination of the paths followed by all religions is the same, though the paths themselves may be different) which means equal respect to all religions. This concept, embraced and promoted by personalities like Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi is called 'Positive secularism' that reflects the dominant ethos of Indian culture. India does not have an official state religion. However, different personal laws – on matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, alimony varies with an individual's religion. Indian secularism is not an end in itself but a means to address religious plurality and sought to achieve peaceful coexistence of different religions.

### **Secularism and the Indian Constitution.**

There is a clear incorporation of all the basic principles of secularism into various provisions of constitution. The term 'Secular' was added to the preamble by the forty-second constitution Amendment Act of 1976, (India is a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic, republic). It emphasise the fact that constitutionally, India is a secular country which has no State religion. And that the state shall recognise and accept all religions, not favour or patronize any particular religion.

While Article 14 grants equality before the law and equal protection of the laws to all, 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. 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.

Article 25 provides 'Freedom of Conscience', that is, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practise and propagate religion.

As per Article 26, every religious group or individual has the right to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes and to manage its own affairs in matters of religion.

As per Article 27, the state shall not compel any citizen to pay any taxes for the promotion or maintenance of any particular religion or religious institution.

Article 28 allows educational institutions maintained by different religious groups to impart religious instruction.

Article 29 and Article 30 provides cultural and educational rights to the minorities.

Article 51A i.e. Fundamental Duties obliges all the citizens to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood and to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture.

### **Indian vs. Western Model of Secularism**

Over the years, India has developed its own unique concept of secularism that is fundamentally different from the parallel western concept of secularism in the following ways: As per the western model of secularism, the "State" and the "religion" have their own separate spheres and neither the state nor the religion shall intervene in each other's affairs. Thus, the western concept of secularism requires complete separation of religion and state. However, in India, neither in law nor in practice any 'wall of separation' between religion and the State exists.

In India, both state and religion can, and often do, interact and intervene in each other's affairs within the legally prescribed and judicially settled parameters. In other words, Indian secularism does not require a total banishment of religion from the State affairs.

As per the western model, the state cannot give any financial support to educational institutions run by religious communities. On the other hand, Indian model has chosen a positive mode of engagement. In India, the state provides all religious minorities the right to establish and maintain their own educational institutions which may receive assistance from state.

In the western model, State does not intervene in the affairs of religion till the time religion is working within the limits of the law. On the other hand, in Indian secularism, state shall interfere in religion so as to remove evils in it. India has intervened by enforcing legislation against the practices of sati or widowburning, dowry, animal and bird sacrifice, child marriage, and preventing Dalits from entering temples.

In western concept of secularism, religion is relegated entirely to the private sphere and has no place in public life whatsoever. The western model prohibits any public policy to be drafted on the basis of religion therefore; state is absolutely distanced from the religious activities and practices of its citizens. In India, state has the policy of setting up Departments of Religious Endowments, Wakf Boards, etc. It is also involved in appointing Trustees of these boards.

## **Threats to Secularism**

While, the Indian Constitution declares the state being absolutely neutral to all religion, our society has steeped in religion. Mingling of Religion and Politics that is mobilisation of votes on grounds of primordial identities like religion, caste and ethnicity, have put Indian secularism in danger. Communal politics operates through communalization of social space, by spreading myths and stereotypes against minorities, through attack on rational values and by practicing a divisive ideological propaganda and politics.

Politicisation of any one religious group leads to the competitive politicisation of other groups, thereby resulting in inter-religious conflict. One of the manifestations of communalism is communal riots. In recent past also, communalism has proved to be a great threat to the secular fabric of Indian polity. Rise of Hindu Nationalism in recent years have resulted into mob lynching on mere suspicion of slaughtering cows and consuming beef. In addition with this, forced closure of slaughterhouses, campaigns against 'love jihad', reconversion or ghar- wapsi (Muslims being forced to convert to Hinduism), etc.reinforces communal tendencies in society.

Islamic fundamentalism or revivalism pushes for establishing Islamic State based on sharia law which directly comes into conflict with conceptions of the secular and democratic state. In recent years there have been stray incidences of Muslim youth being inspired and radicalized by groups like ISIS which is very unfortunate for both India and world.

## **Way Forward**

In a pluralistic society, the best approach to nurture secularism is to expand religious freedom rather than strictly practicing state neutrality. It is incumbent on us to ensure value-education that makes the younger generation understands and appreciates not only its own religious traditions but also those of the other religions in the country. There is also a need to identify a common framework or a shared set of values which allows the diverse groups to live together. The prerequisites to implement the social reform initiative like Uniform Civil Code are to create a conducive environment and forging socio-political consensus.

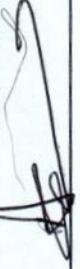
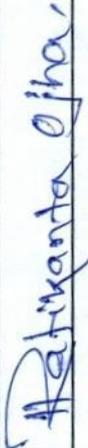
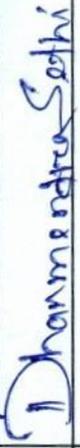




ATTENDANCE SHEET OF STUDENTS FOR EXTRAMURAL SEMINAR TOPIC ON "SECULARISM IN INDIA: CHALLENGES  
08.12.2017

ORGANISED BY DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
PATTAMUNAI COLLEGE, PATTAMUNDALAI, KENDRAPARA, ODISHA  
ATTENDANCE SHEET OF STUDENTS

Sl.No	Name	Roll No	Department	Signature
1	Suryakant Sethi	BA-17-114	Pol-Sc	Suryakant Sethi
2	Srikant Malik	BA-17-123	Political Science	Srikant Malik
3	Biswajit Das	BA-17-126	Pol-science	Biswajit Das
4	Anaswaya Rout	BA-17-015	Political science	Anaswaya Rout
5	Supriya Behera	BA-17-093	Political science	Supriya Behera
6	Srikant Jena		Pol-science	Srikant Jena
7	Rajashree Panda		POL-Sc	Rajashree Panda
8	Priyanka Sutar	BA-16-063	Political science	Priyanka Sutar
9	Aparajita Samal	BA-16-011	Pol-Sc	Aparajita Samal
10	Luchismita Das	BA-16-62	Pol-Science	Luchismita Das
11	Biswasanjan Panda	BA-	Political Science	B- Panda
12	Rajesh Kumar	BA-16-264	Political Science	Rajesh Kumar
13	Kalpana Panda	BA-17-118	Political Science	Kalpana Panda

Sl.No	Name	Roll No	Department	Signature
14	Abhinna Sundara Podhi	BA17-061	Economics	
15	Lopamudra Nath	BA-17-094	Pol. sc.	
16	Puspakata Behera		Pol. science	Puspakata Behera
17	Rajivanta Ojha		Pol. science	
18	Sushree Sangita Dash	BA17-194	Pol. science	5.3 Dash
19	Gitanjali Rout		Political science	
20	Deepika Barik	BA17-100	Political science	Deepika Barik
21	Rajashree Sahoo		Pol. science	Rajashree Sahoo
22	Prasant Kumar Sethi	BA-17-167	Political science	Prasant Kumar Sethi
23	Dharmendra Sethi		Pol. Sci	
24	Kusum Behera	BA17-171	Pol. science	Kusum Behera
25	Manaswini Biswal	BA-17-089	Political science	Manaswini Biswal
26	Jyotirmayee	BA-17-183	Pol. science	Jyotirmayee
27	Alishree Barik		Pol. Science	
28	Sanghamitra Rout	BA-17-124	Pol. Science	Sanghamitra Rout
29	Rajashree Sahoo	BA-17-198	Pol. science	Rajashree Sahoo



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Ref No. :.....१२७.....

Date...15.12.2017.....

To

Mr. Chinmaya Kumar Pradhan  
Lecturer,  
Dept of Political Science  
Brahmani College, Dandisahi, Kendrapara

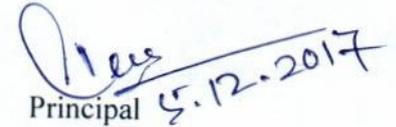
Sub - Invitation as a Resource Person in the Extramural seminar of political science Dept at Pattamundai College, Pattamundai on 08th December 2017.

Sir,

We are organizing an Extramural seminar in the Dept of political Science on **“Secularism in India: Challenges and Prospects”** on 08th December 2017. We would appreciate it very much if you would accept our invitation to deliver your talk in the said topic.

Your cooperation in this regard will be highly encouraged us and make the seminar a grand Success.

Thanking you

  
Principal 15.12.2017

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