

Unit - 3

Understanding Secularism



Learning Objectives

- ▶ To understand the meaning of secularism
- ▶ To know the importance of secularism
- ▶ To develop the appreciation of the rights guaranteed in the Constitution
- ▶ To analyse the importance of secular education
- ▶ To discuss the constitutional provisions related to secularism



India will be a land of many faiths, equally honoured and respected, but of one national outlook.

- Jawaharlal Nehru

Introduction

India is a land of multi-religious faith and multi-cultural beliefs. It is the birth place of four major religions; Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism. In our country people of diverse religions and beliefs have been living peacefully for a long time. Modern nation-states are multi-religious states, hence there is a need for tolerance of all religions. The concept of secularism is aimed at creating a society in which people of religious beliefs or people who do not belong to any religion can live together in harmony and peace.

Rajaram Mohan Roy, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar were some of the noted individuals held high in public regards who contributed towards the spread of secularism in the various spheres of Indian society. Secularism is invaluable for a society like India which is characterised by religious diversity.



- The term secularism is derived from the Latin word 'saeculum' meaning 'an age' or 'the spirit of an age'.
- George Jacob Holyoake a British newspaper editor coined the term secularism.