

# How To Secularise Secularism

The Times of India, 30-11-15

Note to Rajnath Singh: just make the law intolerant of intolerance

Dipankar Gupta



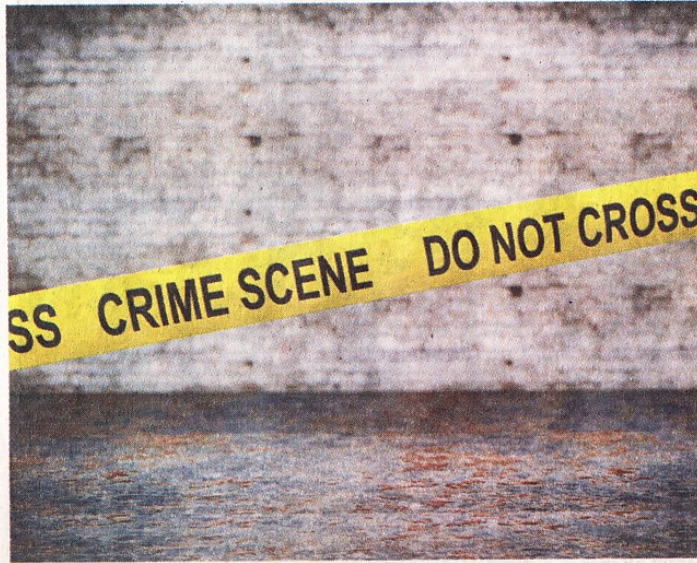
Secularism, as we know it, is an idea whose time has gone. When home minister Rajnath Singh says that it is an overused term, and several people nod in sane agreement, the season has surely come to burn the leaves.

Religious tolerance, in its purest form, is hardly a bankable commodity on a social scale. Nowhere in the world have people become tolerant because of lectures on secularism. Humankind is flawed at the start, for no matter where we are, or how developed we are, we always believe that people other than us are intrinsically inferior.

Asking for tolerance is much like whistling for the moon; yet, in practice, actions against intolerance might work if you whistle for the police instead. Ultimately, secularism is not about the milk of human kindness, or about tolerance, but about an intolerant law that will not tolerate public intolerance. It is only when the administration gets flaccid on this count that our spontaneous tendencies surface, but we nearly always rush to the wrong address for help.

The one wrong address, for a very long time, was the Congress party, but there were others too. The more the administration gave in to violence against minorities, the more it talked about secularism as tolerance; just words, nothing in deed. As legal action did not follow with the right kind of vigour, the term pseudo-secularism gained credibility. It was all talk, as neither side had any intention of calling in the cavalry to implement the law.

This process got its ribbon-cutting start when Indira Gandhi introduced "secularism" in the Constitution, much as one would a totem pole. It was revered from far but far from revered; caste politics and Sikh killings owe their origin to her brand of politics. Over time, and this had to happen, a full scale war of words ensued. This kept the fur and spittle flying, but the need to buckle down and



punish the guilty never really surfaced.

Secularism, therefore, is not about good and bad people, but about an unflinching law that won't brook public demonstrations of intolerance. It is never love, nor the urge to be hugged; secularism is just to make sure that ordinary people can lead ordinary lives without fearing what tomorrow might bring. When the law is on your side you don't need eyes in the back of your head.

It is the law, not irreligiosity, or shutting up the church, that makes us secular. In fact, Henry VIII was hardly secular because he flouted the Pope, divorced and re-married. If the Vatican did not approve of his behaviour, it could go fly a kite. From this historical act a rather simplistic idea grew that secularism was about separating church from state.

Yet, one cannot cast Henry VIII as secular just because he defied religious authorities. Religious persecution continued in Europe, not because the church

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said smell, go, hunt and kill, but because it was now the king who issued such diktats. The unquestionable authority of the priests was now replaced by that of the king. Truth was still being handed down from above and the subjects continued their weary lives as subjects.

It is only with democracy that secularism truly appeared. This is not because

we suddenly became good, and traded in our cruel hearts for loving ones. What made the real difference was that there were now legal penalties for communal and religious violence. Did all of this begin because those who birthed democracy were personally tolerant, packed with moral rectitude and goodwill? Far from it!

What had changed was the need for massive numbers to overthrow monarchy and absolutist rule. A population divided by religion and sects was far too fragmented to topple the king; a united front was essential for this purpose. It was out of this seedling that citizenship emerged, but it had to toil its way up as it kept getting stamped upon. Massimo d'Azeglio, a mid-19th century scholar, put it nicely when he said: "Now that we have made Italy, let us make Italians."

Secularism becomes a habit when the law works systematically, and without exception, against sectarian intolerance. It is this legal intolerance of intolerance that teaches us to be civil and not moral science in a classroom, nor sweet and inconstant political talk. Though it might still hurt to tolerate and make room for other communities, it would hurt a lot more to break the law. Take the law out of the frame and see hatred spew out in religious spirals even in advanced, "civilised" democracy.

Across time, intolerance is spurred by social and economic insecurity. When jobs are scarce, when one's self-esteem has got a hiding, we start blaming other communities and see all kinds of evil in them. How is this best combated, with words or with deed? Recall post-Partition's hot and heady mood, and yet how Nehru succeeded in keeping religious passions from taking over our just born democracy. He succeeded, in large measure, because he promised jobs, dams and steel mills. He hardly talked of pure tolerance, or even secularism; he just did it.

If secularism and pseudo-secularism are bandied about freely, and abusively, today it is because partisans on both sides are clueless on how to develop our economy. This is bipartisanship for you, Indian style!

# Needed, a National Water Policy & Law

*The Economic Times, 20-11-15*  
India, with 18% of the world's population and 4% of its water resources, is clearly a water-stressed nation. Constitutionally, water is a state subject. But after two consecutive deficient monsoons, the need for a national framework law on water is an idea whose time has come. A central law is needed to bring coherence and force to largely uncoordinated and ad-hoc water policy. True, several states have enacted laws on water and related issues. Yet, states tend to have varied legal positions and perceptions, say, on riparian water use and ownership.

None of the concerned states, for example, have laws or executive notifications specifying the basis for water allocation among different segments of river basins in their jurisdiction. Hence the need for national consensus on water, complete with attendant rules, tenets and principles that can apply across states and regions. The rules of allocation and entitlement must be made and revised through a transparent process nationally. Besides, polluted rivers and other water sources call for focused



policy attention. Water policy has ecological implications, and the concerns on climate change require national action. So does integrated inland water transport.

Consider, for instance, our rising groundwater use, which is plain unsustainable. It has led to dropping water tables and depleting aquifers. Perverse incentives like free power have meant that groundwater now accounts for over 50% of the irrigated area. Also, 80% of domestic water supply in India now comes from groundwater and primarily as a coping mechanism, given the widespread mismanagement and ill-maintenance of piped water supply. The fast-growing urban population compounds the problem. The bottom line is that there's overarching need for a national water law.

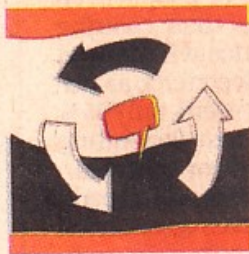
# Solar Should Not be Sole Climate Basket

*The Economic Times, 30-11-15*

Solar alliance welcome but consider other options, too

India is taking a proactive role in combating climate change by spearheading a global solar alliance. This is welcome. There are energy economists who are so sanguine on the prospects of solar energy as to forecast all energy in the globe being drawn from this source by 2030. They extrapolate the steady reduction in the cost of solar power and of electricity storage to reach this conclusion. If it happens, well and good. India should have an aggressive research project in solar energy, so as to both contribute to new cutting-edge technology in the field and also usefully absorb advanced technologies that others produce. Yet, it would be a mistake to put all our climate change fighting eggs in the solar basket.

India must be equally aggressive, if not more, in exploring clean coal technologies, to exploit the country's most abundantly available fossil fuel in the least damaging fashion. The technology options are not limited to going ultracritical with power plants, so as to double thermal efficiency, and deploying high-quality filters and precipitators and catalytic converters to minimise emission of greenhouse gases from thermal plants. Another route is to convert coal into natural gas, preferably in situ, and burn the gas in combined-cycle plants to raise thermal efficiency to close to 60%. Experiments are on elsewhere in the world to crack natural gas, that is, separate the molecules of carbon and hydrogen that combine to form methane, and use hydrogen as fuel. When hydrogen burns, the output is heat and water. Some try to use biotechnology to raise sunlight-to-food conversion in photosynthesis. Others seek to grow tough plant fibre, absorbing carbon dioxide in the process, and use the fibre to reinforce concrete. Nuclear fission and fusion remain attractive research propositions for the future.



Apart from energy source, India has to also focus on how cities are planned to minimise commutes and to maximise use of public transport for the commute that cannot be avoided. As India urbanises fast, how well it is planned will determine our carbon footprint.

मन की बात | आपदाओं का स्वरूप और नुकसान बढ़ रहा है, इस पर जताई चिंता

# जलवायु परिवर्तन से निपटना सबकी जिम्मेदारी : प्रधानमंत्री



भास्कर न्यूज़ नेटवर्क | नई दिल्ली

प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने रविवार को कहा कि अब कई बार ऐसी आपदाएं सुनने को मिलती हैं जो पहले कभी सुनने को नहीं मिलती थीं। पहले आपदाएं अकाल तक ही सीमित रहती थीं लेकिन अब इसका रूप ही बदल गया है। यह जलवायु परिवर्तन की वजह से हो रहा है। इससे निपटना हम सभी की जिम्मेदारी है।

आकाशवाणी ने 14वीं बार मोदी के 'मन की बात' कार्यक्रम का प्रसारण किया। मोदी ने कहा कि नेपाल में आए भूकंप के बाद उन्होंने पकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री नवाज शरीफ से बात कर सुझाव दिया था कि दक्षेस देशों को मिलकर आपदा से निपटने के लिए काम करना चाहिए। स्वच्छ ऊर्जा के संबंध में कानपुर की नूरजहां का जिक्र किया, जो सौर ऊर्जा का इस्तेमाल कर कई घरों को रोशन कर रही है।

## तापमान घटाना है तो ऊर्जा बचाओ

मोदी ने कहा कि 'तापमान से बचने का सबसे पहला रास्ता है ऊर्जा की बचत। 14 दिसम्बर को राष्ट्रीय ऊर्जा दिवस मनाया जाएगा।'

### फसल के टूट जलाने से

**नुकसान :** पंजाब के जालंधर के लखविंदर सिंह ने खेतों में आग लगाने का मुद्दा उठाया। मोदी ने कहा- 'फसलों के टूट अगली फसल के लिए महत्वपूर्ण होते हैं। उसे जलाना धरती मां की चमड़ी जलाने जैसा है।'

### विकलांगों का जीने का

**तरीका प्रेरणाप्रद:** तीन दिसंबर को विकलांग दिवस है। मोदी ने 1996 में आतंकवाद का शिकार हुए जम्मू-कश्मीर के जावेद अहमद का जिक्र किया। 20 साल से बच्चों की पढ़ाई के लिए काम कर रहे हैं।

### 'एक भारत-श्रेष्ठ भारत' योजना

**हो रही है तैयार:** 31 अक्टूबर को सरकार वल्लभ भाई पटेल की जयंती पर 'एक भारत-श्रेष्ठ भारत' की चर्चा की थी। योजना पर सुझाव आए हैं। और आने चाहिए। लोग बताएं कि इस मंत्र से हर भारतीय को कैसे जोड़ा जा सकता है।

### छोटे कारोबारियों पर ज्यादा

**ध्यान दें बैंक:** मोदी बोले- भोपाल की ममता शर्मा को महंगा कर्ज लेना पड़ता था। मुद्रा बैंक योजना से 40 हजार रुपए का कर्ज मिला। अब हर महीने एक हजार रुपए अतिरिक्त बच रहे हैं।

## जलवायु परिवर्तन की चुनौती से निपटने पेरिस में जुटे दुनिया के बड़े नेता

पेरिस/नई दिल्ली | जलवायु परिवर्तन सम्मेलन सोमवार से पेरिस में शुरू हो रहा है। प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी सहित दुनिया के तमाम बड़े नेता इसमें शामिल हो रहे हैं। प्रधानमंत्री ने जलवायु परिवर्तन सम्मेलन में हिस्सा लेने रवाना होने से पहले ट्वीट किया कि सम्मेलन में हम महत्वपूर्ण मुद्दे पर चर्चा करेंगे। फ्रांस में कुछ दिन पहले ही बड़े आतंकी हमले के कारण सम्मेलन के लिए कड़ी सुरक्षा व्यवस्था की गई है। सम्मेलन का लक्ष्य यौनहाउस गैसों के उत्सर्जन को सीमित कर धरती के तापमान को बढ़ने से रोकने के लिए एक वैश्विक समझौते पर पहुंचना है।

इसमें नरेंद्र मोदी के साथ अमेरिकी राष्ट्रपति बराक ओबामा, चीन के राष्ट्रपति शी जिनपिंग, रूस के राष्ट्रपति व्लादिमीर पुतिन और पाकिस्तान के प्रधानमंत्री नवाज शरीफ सहित लगभग 150 देशों के नेता मौजूद रहेंगे।

## मोदी जलवायु सम्मेलन के लिए पेरिस रवाना

मोदी रविवार को 21वें जलवायु शिखर सम्मेलन की कॉन्फ्रेंस ऑफ पार्टिज में शिरकत करने के लिए पेरिस रवाना हो गए। सम्मेलन सोमवार से शुरू हो रहा है। विदेश मंत्रालय के प्रवक्ता विकास स्वरूप ने ट्विट किया, प्रधानमंत्री ने 'हमारे साझा घर' की हिफाजत में भारत के सहयोग का संकल्प लिया है। मोदी को सोमवार को फ्रांस के राष्ट्रपति फ्रांस्वा ओलांद के साथ 122-देशीय सौर गठबंधन लांच करना है। मोदी को जलवायु शिखर सम्मेलन के मौके पर अमेरिका के राष्ट्रपति बराक ओबामा के साथ एक द्विपक्षीय बैठक भी करनी है।

## भारत इन प्रमुख बिंदुओं पर देगा जोर

- सौर महागठबंधन का निर्माण।
- न्यायसंगत जलवायु समझौते पर पहुंचने की कोशिश।
- विकसित देशों से वित्तीयन और प्रौद्योगिकी हस्तांतरण पर जोर।
- परंपरा, संरक्षण और संयम पर आधारित स्वास्थ्य और टिकाऊ जीवन शैली का प्रस्ताव।
- वन क्षेत्र का विस्तार बढ़ाकर 2030 तक कार्बनडाईऑक्साइड उत्सर्जन में 2-3 अरब टन की कटौती का प्रस्ताव।
- समृद्ध देशों से कोष जुटाना।
- प्रौद्योगिकी और सहयोग के त्वरित प्रसार के लिए वैश्विक ढांचा।