



Debate over the Words Socialist and Secular in Constitution

For Prelims: [Preamble of the Constitution of India](#), [42nd Amendment Act, 1976](#), [Emergency](#).

For Mains: Debate over the Words Socialist and Secular in Constitution.

Source: [IE](#)

Why in News?

Recently, some of the Members of the Lok Sabha have claimed that the words "Socialist" and "Secular" were omitted in the New Copies of the [Preamble of the Constitution of India](#).

- These two words were originally not a part of the Preamble. They were added by The [Constitution \(42nd Amendment\) Act, 1976](#) during the [Emergency](#) imposed by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

What is the Preamble of the Indian Constitution?

▪ About:

- Every Constitution has a philosophy. The philosophy underlying the Constitution of India was summed up in the **Objectives Resolution**, which was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on 22nd January, 1947.
- The **Preamble of the Constitution** puts in words the ideal contained in the Objectives Resolution.
- It serves as an introduction to the Constitution, and contains its basic principles and goals.

▪ The Preamble of the Constitution that Commenced in 1950 read:

- "WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC and to secure to all its citizens:
 - JUSTICE, social, economic and political;
 - LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;
 - EQUALITY of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all
 - FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the Nation;
- IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this 26th day of November, 1949, do HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION."

▪ Insertion of the words Socialist and Secular:

- The words "Socialist" and "Secular" were added to the Preamble through the **Constitution (42nd Amendment) Act, 1976**, during the **period of Emergency** under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's government.
- The **insertion of "socialist"** aimed to emphasize **socialism as a goal and philosophy of the Indian state**, with a focus on eradicating poverty and adopting a unique form of socialism that involved nationalization only in specific sectors where necessary.
- The **inclusion of "secular"** reinforced the **idea of a secular state**, treating all religions

equally, maintaining **neutrality, and not endorsing any particular religion** as a state religion.

What is the Debate Over Removing Socialist and Secular Words from the Preamble?

- **Political Ideology and Representation:**
 - Those advocating for the removal argue that the words "socialist" and "secular" were inserted during the **Emergency in 1976**.
 - They believe this was an **imposition of a particular political ideology** and goes against the **principles of representation and democratic decision-making**.
- **Original Intent and Constitution's Philosophy:**
 - Critics argue that the original Preamble, as adopted in 1950, didn't include these words. They emphasize that the **Constitution's philosophy already encompassed the ideas of justice, equality, liberty, and fraternity** without explicitly mentioning **socialism and secularism**.
 - They argue that these values **were always implicit in the Constitution**.
- **Concerns of Misinterpretation:**
 - Some critics express concerns that the words "socialist" and "secular" might be misinterpreted or misused, potentially **leading to policies and actions that deviate from their original intent**.
 - They argue for a **more neutral and flexible** approach in the Preamble.
- **Social Implications:**
 - The presence or absence of these words can **have implications for public policy, governance, and societal discourse**.
 - The term "secular" is particularly significant in a country with a diverse religious population, and its removal might **raise concerns about the state's commitment to religious neutrality**.

Way Forward

- Foster a well-informed and inclusive public discourse on the implications of these terms in the Preamble. This should involve **academia, civil society, political parties, and citizens** to understand various perspectives and concerns.
- Facilitate a **structured debate within constitutional bodies**, such as Parliament, to deliberate on the significance, interpretation, and historical context of the words "socialist" and "secular" in the Preamble. Encourage thorough discussions to analyze the implications of any potential amendment.
- Establish an independent committee of constitutional experts, legal scholars, historians, and sociologists to **study the historical context, constitutional philosophy, and legal implications** of the words "socialist" and "secular" in the Preamble. Their findings can provide valuable insights.

Legal Insights

[Preamble to the Constitution of India](#)

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Questions (PYQ)

Q. What was the exact constitutional status of India on 26th January, 1950? (2021)

- (a) A Democratic Republic
- (b) A Sovereign Democratic Republic
- (c) A Sovereign Secular Democratic Republic

(d) A Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic

Ans: (b)

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