

*The Times of India 2nd Dec*

## 'Tolerance is intrinsic part of Indian ethos'

**Mumbai:** Justice (Retd) B N Srikrishna has said that tolerance is an intrinsic part of Indian ethos and there is no place for intolerance in Indian society as it is rooted to the principle of sarva dharma samabhav (equality of all religions) and universal amity.

Speaking at a programme called Celebrating India, Hum Panchchi Ek Dal Ke: An Inclusive dialogue on Indian ethos, organized by Wisdom Foundation, at St Xavier's College on Tuesday, Justice Krishna said all religions aimed at liberating people from mortal sins, jealousy and narrow-mindedness. "Where is the place for intolerance and hatred? The problem is that, instead of looking at the common threads that bind us, we look for the things that differentiate us," said Justice Srikrishna, who had enquired into the Mumbai riots of 1992-1993.

A Sanskrit scholar in his own right, Justice Srikrishna laced his brief talk with couplets, observations of Shankaracharyas and slokas. "Sri Ram, in whose name the Babri Mosque was razed, said nobody should fear me. We should stop being narrow-minded and understand that religions are different paths to one destination," he said. Agreeing with Wisdom Foundation's secretary general Zee-nat Shaikat Ali's theme for the multi-faith dialogue, Hum Panchchi Ek Dal Ke, Justice Krishna said humans are like birds who all have to reach one nest. Congress leader Sanjay Jha slammed the "intolerance culture" being created by the "dispensation in Delhi."

—Mohammed Wajihuddin

*p. 11*

DNA - 2<sup>nd</sup> Dec 2015  
Mumbai

07

## Secular doesn't mean being irreligious: Justice Srikrishna



Justice Srikrishna speaks at a Wisdom Foundation seminar on Indian Ethos of Tolerance, at St Xavier's College in Dhobi Talao on Tuesday

### dna correspondent

Recalling that he was meted out the same treatment as Aamir Khan by none other than then Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray, Justice BN Srikrishna (Retd) remembered how Thackeray called for sending him to Pakistan and also taunted that he be given the Nishan-e-Pakistan. He quipped, "I am yet to receive the Nishan-e-Pakistan."

After submitting the 1992-93 riots' report there was mayhem in the public sphere for Srikrishna. "I asked the then chief minister if he understood the difference between Hindutva and Hinduism. He was candid enough to admit that he did not. I explained to him that Hinduism is what I follow and Hindutva is what he does for his political gains."

He was talking at an event 'Celebrating India—An inclusive dialogue on the Indian ethos of tolerance, pluralism, and peaceful co-existence for all religions and

people'. Organised by Wisdom Foundation at St Xavier's College, it was attended by Srikrishna, Ram Puniyani, and Dr Zaheer Kazi of Anjuman-e-Islam and religious leaders from different faiths and academicians.

He questioned the debate on intolerance, stating that it meant tolerating someone while society is not to be understood that way. Recalling words of Sankaracharya, Srikrishna said, "The good lord resides in you as much as others. In every person they should see his reflection."

Talking further about secularism, Srikrishna said, "Acharya Vinoba Bhave had clarified what secularism is. It is not being irreligious. Secularism means all religions are equal."

Dr Zaheer Kazi, president of Anjuman-I-Islam brought up the regular questioning of loyalty of Muslims and said that secularism should be both ways.



TALK ON 'INDIAN ETHOS, TOLERANCE, CO-EXISTENCE'

**'Religious superiority leading to this kind of hatred'**

We tend to look at what distinguishes us from others, not at common thread, says Justice (retd) Srikrishna

**ROHIT ALOK**  
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 1

RETIRED JUSTICE B N Srikrishna, the one-man commission that inquired into the 1993 Bombay communal riots, attributed religious superiority to the growing episodes of communal hatred in the country. "We all have this religion superiority. I am Hindu, there fore I am more superior than you and vice versa". It is this, that is leading to this kind of hatred...and distinguishing characteristics," he said.

Justice Srikrishna was part of a panel and was speaking on

subjects related to 'Indian ethos, tolerance and peaceful co-existence among all religious traditions' at an event in St Xavier's College organised by NGO Wisdom Foundation. Emphasising that "religion is intended to integrate and not to differentiate", the retired Supreme Court judge said he did not like the word intolerance being used these days and would prefer to replace it with "co-existence between groups".

"Where is the need for all this jhagda? Where is the need for all this intolerance," he asked. "I don't like the word intolerance. It's your job to look at everything

with the same eye. It's your bounded necessity to treat every person with the same respect," he said. "Everyone needs to be tolerated today. All this nonsense around tolerance and intolerance and people being kicked out the country or being sent to Pakistan. All this is nonsense," Justice Srikrishna said to a gathering of people from various communities and the academic world.

"The problem is that we tend to look what distinguishes us from another person. We do not look at what is the common thread between us," he said. During his one-hour talk, he

this kind of narrow mindedness this is what the education should be now....," he replied to the large audience.

He added that everyone did not have the capability to grasp or comprehend the whole truth and hence there was only "partial truth being told".

"One person looks at one aspect of the truth and then another person looks at another aspect. It is something like that tale where ten people are describing the parts of an elephant. There are all right but it is not the complete truth," he narrated.

stressed that the ultimate destination of religion was the same and only the "methodology" to reach there was different.

Srikrishna said he did not know much about words like 'liberation' that Mahatma Gandhi spoke of but when he came in contact with a lot of people and dealt with diverse issues, he learnt the deeper meaning of the word.

"What is the liberation part that Mahatma Gandhi spoke of? Liberation from modern sins, liberation from petty mindedness, liberation from jealousy, hatred, consequential violence and liberation from



Justice (retired)  
B N Srikrishna





I think Pope Francis is a balanced and far-thinking person and he gives a lot of thought to whatever he says. When he says fundamentalism in all religions, he means the crisis around the world, and not one region in particular. Every religion has an elevated standard—it purifies, binds you together. So it's not correct for any religion to use itself as a divisive force. Religion is based on a deeper understanding of humanity and spirituality. Both are missing today. Every religion's message is to consider all humans. There's a verse in the Quran, which says, 'Prophet Muhammad has come as a mercy for all human beings.' Doesn't each religion in its own way specify the same thing? A man had issued some sort of fatwa to highlight a verse in Quran, which says, if you kill one innocent human, you kill all mankind. But why is this verse not followed? Recently, I read an article about some Boko Haram guys who didn't even know the first verse of Fatiha, which is the first thing Muslims say in prayer. Sadly, these are the voices that are being heard. Why would the Quran teach violence? It came to people who were violent and it taught them not to be violent. The fundamentalists have been wrong, but now someone has to come out and contradict that. And yes, there are people who have categorically denounced it, but they are not heard as enough.

— Zeenat Shaukat Ali, Director-General,  
Wisdom Foundation, Mumbai  
and a scholar of Islam