

The 'faithful' Republic and its representations in the Indian Literary and Public Discourses:  
A study of the changing natures of secularism in Post-Independence India

### **THESIS ABSTRACT**

The purpose of the proposed doctoral project is to embark on a historiographic study of the gradual changes to the secularism discourse stemming from the Constitutional debates of 1946–49, right up to the landmark Babri Masjid judgement of the Supreme Court and the subsequent Ram Mandir Bhoomi Poojan in 2020. It is my contention that the idea of Nehruvian 'Progressive Secularism' has transmuted into a form of 'confrontational secularism' in contemporary times, that chooses to circumscribe itself into a bigger discourse of 'essential practices' rather than as something encouraged by the state. If 'Progressive Rationalism' was built on the Nehruvian idea of 'principled distance' of the state from all religions; 'confrontational secularism', in my argument, have a different origin and an even more distinct ultimatum.

It is my hypothesis that this move from Nehruvian Secular Consensus to the act of 'inducing political consent' is caused by the negotiation that goes on within the underbelly of populist politics. The secular movement, which should have remained a rational project of the civil society, almost becomes a form of a vulnerable declaration that appears today in the Preamble. Starting from an encouragement transforming into a forcible declaration, secularism in the contemporary times, arguably, remains firmly entrenched within the state policy, which privileges the cosmological against the rational. This phenomenon pits religion against the very freedom to 'essentially practise' religion. In my thesis, I shall consider Non-Anglophone Indian novels (emphasising on Bengali, Hindi and Urdu), party resolutions, electoral manifestoes and memoirs as primary texts to navigate the changes within the 'secularism discourse' in the Indian Republic.