

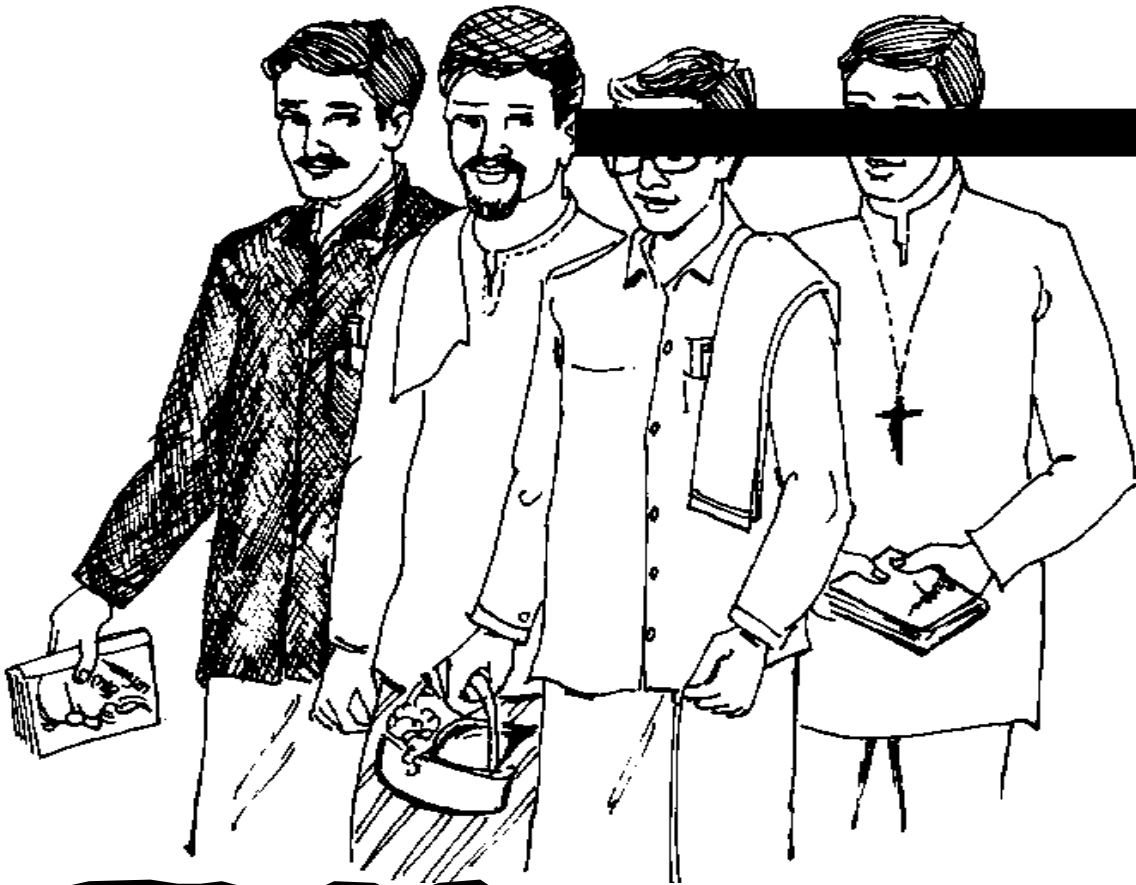
3. Discrimination
based on Religion

3. Discrimination based on Religion

Objectives

1. To create social harmony in our multi-religious country.
2. To establish that Freedom of Religion is a fundamental right.
3. To make the pupils understand that :

Religious minorities must not be discriminated against in the name of a majority religion; religious minorities have equal rights; and, at the same time, separate laws are needed to protect religious minorities.



1. Freedom of conscience and Free profession practice and propagation of religion:- Subject to public order, morality, and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equality entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and proppagate religion.

-The Constitution of India, Article 25(1)

2. Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.

-The Constitution of India, Article 29(1)

3. All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

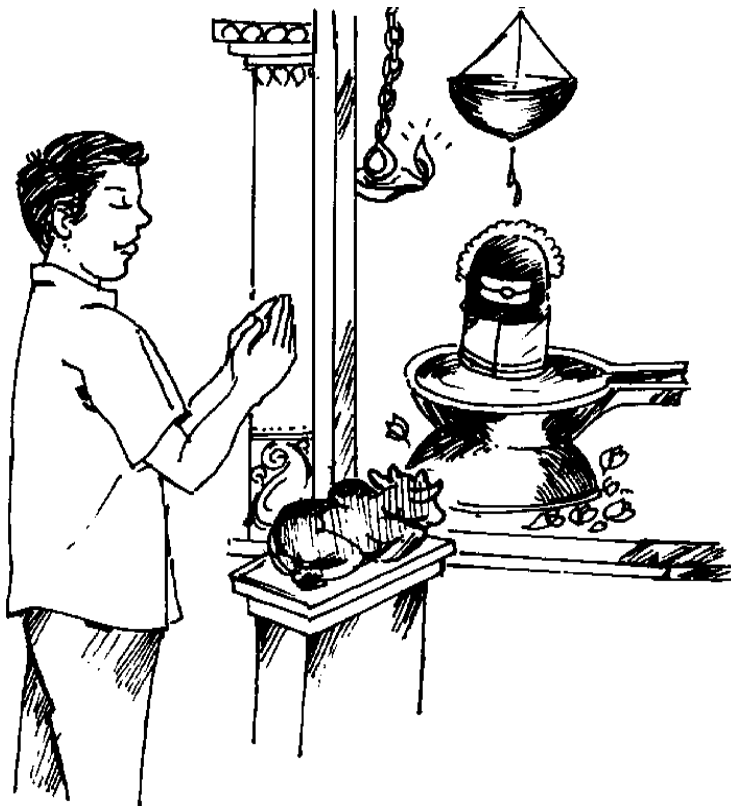
-The Constitution of India, Article 30(1)

4. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion;this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom; either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

-Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Preamble

Teacher's Activity

- Teacher** : Dear children, I am going to ask you an important question. You must be frank. Do you believe in God?
- Students** : (Together) Yes sir. We pray to God every day before we go to school.
- Students** : Sir, I smear the sacred ash on my forehead.
- Student** : I wear the cross.
- Girl Student** : I wear purdah.
- Teacher** : So, all of you believe in God and worship Him. But, you don't worship the same God, but different gods.. in different ways.
- Student** : I don't believe in God... Nobody at home worships God.
- Teacher** : See now! There are people who worship God but their way of worship differs. At the same time, there are people who don't believe in God. See the variety! We have the right to believe in God. Worshipping the same God or different Gods is also within our rights. We also have the right not to worship God.
- Another question** : Has anybody here seen God?
- Students** : No Sir



Teacher : We have never seen God. Yet we love him. Show devotion to him. We pray; we dance; we sacrifice animals, and at times even human beings. Your parents advise you to be devoted to God. What do Your parents say if you do wrong? Don't they say that believers should not commit sins?

Your parents say God does not like the evil-doers. God hates evil and so He will, one day or other, punish the evil doers.

We say 'Love is Siva' and 'Love is God'.

How happy you are when you celebrate the festival of the village deity!

We do all these things in the name of an invisible God.

We say God created the world.

It means, we believe that God created man also.

Then, why do we consider the fellow human beings enemies?

Why do we kill them? Discriminate against them?

Do we love the creation of God viz, man, as much as we love the Creator?

Religions have been founded in the names of Gods. Religious clashes are

organised by these religions. People are killed. Who are the killers? Who are killed? In whose name are the killings undertaken? Why are people killed in the name of religion? What can be the motive?

Dear Students !

Did God found religions? No, not at all. Religions were founded only to teach the principles about the Gods of our choice.

God is of course the centre of all religions. Without God, there is no religion. But, at the same time, without religion, God can very well exist. Why do we fight in the name of religion that are centred around God? Why do we clash?

In our country, we witness a number of religious clashes. A number of people die. But, such clashes are not unique to our nation alone. There have been so many instances of violence in almost all countries in the world.

If we believe in God, if we believe that He is good, if we believe that He is universal, why should there be so many clashes in the name of God?

So many religions have been founded in the name of a single God! What does it mean?

Article 1

1. States shall protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territory, and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity.
2. States shall adopt appropriate legislative and other measures to achieve these ends.

Article 2

1. Person belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities (hereinafter referred to as persons belonging to minorities) have the right to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, and to use their own language, in private and in public, freely and without interference or any form of discrimination.

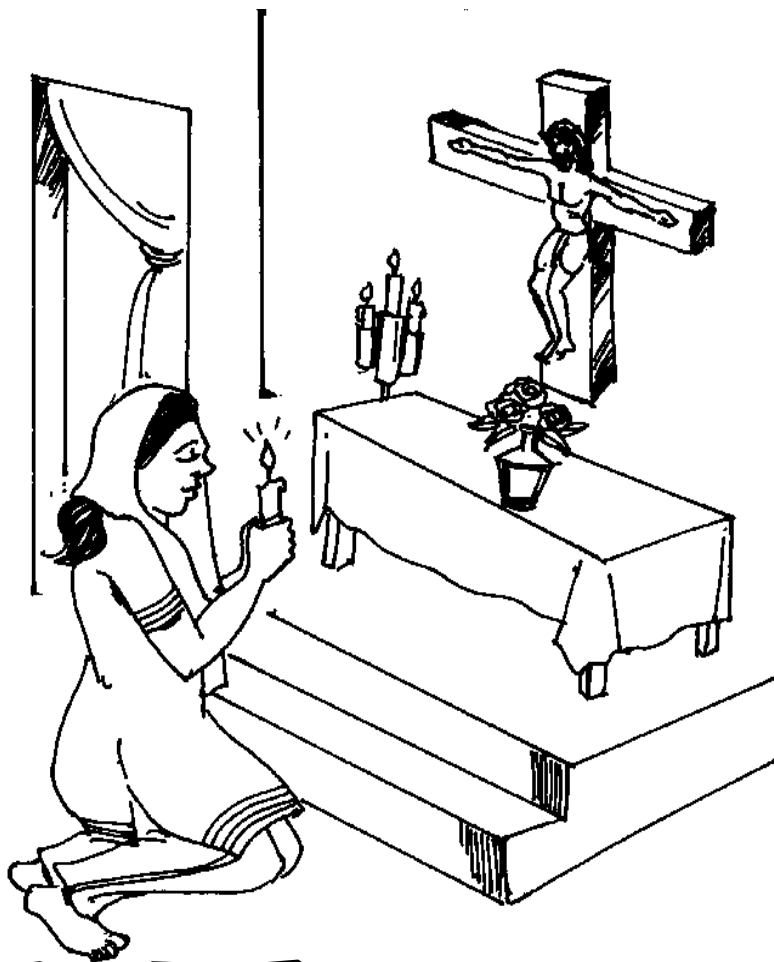
Article 4

1. States shall take measures where required to ensure that persons belonging to minorities may exercise fully and effectively all their human rights and fundamental freedoms without any discrimination and in full equality before the law.

- Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities

- It means all these religions have their own tenets.
- It means all religions have their own history.
- It means all the religions have their own identification marks.
- Are there differences between religions? Yes, a lot of differences.
- We must accept this fact first.
- We must respect the differences.
- We must not refuse the right to be different.
- Is it possible to unite in spite of all these differences?
Should we be united or not?

Respecting the differences is called tolerance.



Do we tolerate other religions? Or, discriminate against?

Read the following episodes.

Episode -1



I am a teacher. Hindu as well as as Muslem students study in our school and there is cordial relationship between them.

On the day of Gujarat bandh at about ten o'clock, around 10000 people attacked a place of worship with spears and petrol bombs and destroyed it completely. Three families were burnt

alive.

They poured petrol into the mouth of a six-year-old boy and lit it. He exploded, and I was witness to this.

Around 120 people were massacred in my presence. I was helpless and hid myself in a lavatory. Hiding here and there, many witnessed such cruel acts.

-Gujarat Massacre 2002

*Brahmins worship the Fire;
Christians adore the Cross.*

*Turning towards Mecca,
Muslems offer their prayer.*

*They all worship one and the same God
Who pervades the whole universe.*

*God is one, over the wide world
No need for conflict on this score.*



-Bharathi

Episode-2

Discrimination in Providing Relief and Rehabilitation

Gujarat massacre left 1,74,000 homeless and they took refuge in camps. But not all those rendered homeless went to these refugee camps. Many of them took shelter in the houses of their relations or friends in various parts of the state. A private survey estimates the number of refugees as 2,50,000. The very next year, Gujarat was rocked by a devastating earth quake. Relief work- Gujarath earth quake relief work- was undertaken. According to a study, the government was hesitant to extend the help to the victims of religious massacre. Was it because these victims belonged to the minortiy religion? If it is, is it not against Indian constitution.



- *Crime Against Humanity, P.50*



Episode-3

Today, my father one of my sisters and I alone are alive. My mother and my other sister were burnt alive and I witnessed all these atrocities. My sister and father are shell shocked. My father is not able to speak and my sister is yet to stop crying.

Let's foster religious tolerance

India does not belong to Hindus alone. Christianity that does not accept other religions is not true Christianity. True religions do not oppose other religions. The world should not toe the line of intolerant religions. Religious intolerance should not ruin India and Pakistan. We must take the pledge to give even our life to save India from being destroyed by religious intolerance.

-Gandhi

I was witnessing the whole thing, standing on a wall. They stabbed my sister and mother, doused them with kerosene and set them on fire.

I fell down, shell- shocked. When I tried to escape, one of the fellows held me back and hit me on my chest and stomach. The crowd yelled to chop my head off. But a kind old man in the crowd prevented them and said “Son, run away” and I ran away. I remember his face to this day.

-Gujarat Massacre 2002

Episode-4

Refugees in their own land

You might have heard about the violence in Kashmir. On one side, we find the violent armed insurgency, the trans-border terrorism. On the other are the religious fanatics. These two forces join hand and render the natives of Kashmir, the Pundits, homeless. The driving force is religious intolerance. Pundits



are attacked and killed overnight. Houses are destroyed. In 1990, around 1,60,000 Pundits have left their places. More than 2,17,000 Pundits are in the refugee camps where they do not even get the basic amenities. Due to lack of proper medical facilities, many have died. In Delhi alone, 1,43,565 Kashmiri Pundits live as refugees, unable to return to their native state. The Pundits are killed owing to their religious faith. What is going to be their fate in the future? In a multi-religious country like ours, can they be treated like this just because they profess a particular religion?

- Outlook, Feb 10, 2003

Religious clashes and the casualties

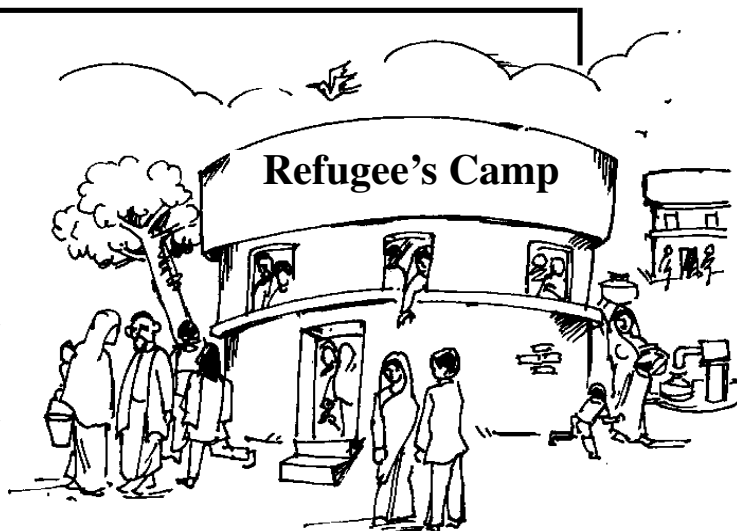
Year	Number	People killed	Year	Number	People Killed
1950	56	50	1980	421	372
1959	42	41	1981	319	196
1964	1070	1919	1983	500	1143
1967	198	301	1984	476	2000
1968	346	133	1992	37	1324
1969	519	673	1993	33	700
1970	528	298	1998	600	207
1979	304	261	2002	16	7081

20,332 people have been killed in religious clashes between 1950 and 2002

Source: Indian Journal of Secularism, April - June 2002

Episode-5

The minority Muslims affected in the Gujarat violence live as refugees in their own nation. After the violence had abated, they returned to their native places and went on with their original business. But people do not buy anything from them. This kind of social boycott is also a kind of untouchability, says



Discrimination based on Religion

- ☞ *Enmity between religions disturbs peace.*
- ☞ *Denies Freedom of Religion.*
- ☞ *Denies Freedom of Speech and Expression.*
- ☞ *Denies Freedom to Profess one's own Religion.*
- ☞ *Denies Freedom to Propagate one's own Religion.*
- ☞ *Divides the people and the nation.*
- ☞ *If a Government promoting the majority religion comes to power, all the rights of the minorities will be crushed. The minorities would be forced to depend upon the majority in everything.*



one of the affected persons.

“We may be called the new untouchables. There is nobody to help us”, says Sheik of Bavakat.

-India Today, Sep. 1, 2002

Why do we refuse to accept other religions?

- Prejudiced against other religions
(eg. saying repeatedly that people professing a particular religion are extremists and fanatics and making others believe it)
- Believing that our religion is the best.
- Since my religion is the majority religion in the country, I start thinking that other religions should not be allowed.
- Using religion for personnel gain and political leverage.
- Cultivating religious animosity from the child hood.
(eg) Our God and their God are different. Our God is good and theirs, bad.

Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.

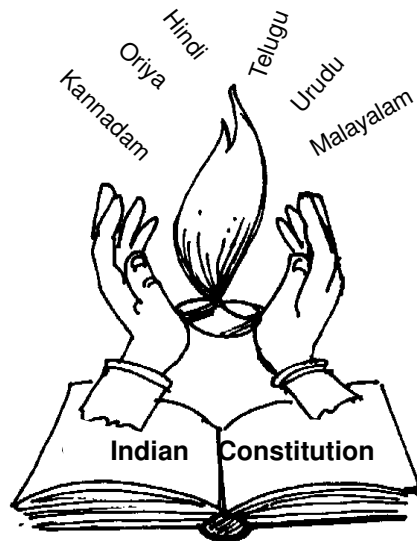
-The Constitution of India, Article-29 (1)

No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them.

-The Constitution of India, Article-29 (2)

All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

-The Constitution of India, Article 30



Class Work

1) What are the religions found in our nation?

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d. etc.

2) Do you think that there can be many religions in a nation? Yes / No

If your answer is 'yes', state your reasons.

- a.
- b.
- c.

If your answer in 'no' state your reasons.

- a.
- b.
- c.

- List any three good principles found in your religion.

- a.
- b.
- c.

- List any two good principles found in two other religions.

a.

b.

c.

3. Does freedom to profess the religion of our choice come under human rights? If your answer is 'yes', state why.

4. Do you mingle with your classmates professing other religions, on equal terms?

Yes

No

5. If you don't, why?

6. What are the rights lost by the people professing the religion that is discriminated against?

a.

d.

c.

e.

7. a. We must treat the people professing the majority religion and the minority religions equally.

Correct

Wrong

- b. Special privileges must be given to the religious minorities to protect their religious, cultural and economic development.

Correct

Wrong

- c. Though we demand that the majority religion and the minority religions should be treated equally, giving special privileges to minority religions is not an act against equality.

Correct

Wrong

- d. The minority religions are not justified in demanding special rights.

Correct

Wrong

- e. The minority religions must be at the mercy of the majority religion.

Correct

Wrong

What can we do to put an end to discrimination based on religion?

8. Celebrate Religious Harmony Day in your School. Invite the elders of all religions, and make them speak about the tenets of their religion. Cultural programmes highlighting religious harmony may be conducted.

Minority Rights and Equality

Unless we take all the necessary steps to make the people of minority religions live on equal terms with those of the majority religion, the word 'equality' has no meaning at all. It is wrong to demand that the culture of the minority religions should be similar to that of the majority religion. The minority people have every right to nurture their own culture. We can never approve of the suppression of minority rights, in any context.

-Nehru, 1930

There can be no development in a society that does not protect the welfare, personality and power of the minority. Nor can there be peace.

-G.P.Pandh

9. Sing songs and stage dramas and cultural programmes to highlight the awareness among people that religious clashes are an insult to the society.

Home Work

1. Let us assume the majority people of a town profess a particular religion and only a handful practise some other religion. Do you think the people of the minority religion do not need a place of worship for themselves? Would you say that it is better these people go to the place of worship of the majority people? Or, do you think the minority people have the right to have their own place of worship and their own ways of worship? Discuss the matter with your parents and friends and share their views with your classmates.
2. Talk to your friends professing other religions and know the tenets and faiths of other religions also. Share your views with your classmates.
3. Write an essay highlighting the view that only when there is religious harmony can there be peace in a society.

 Bless us Appa 

Dear Appa,

I love you. We all love you. We all miss you. We thank you for your devotion, your faith, your courage, your values, your sacrifice.

My dear Appa,

It is hard for me even to believe that you have been burnt alive. For five years I have swung wildly between the extremes of faith and hopelessness, brotherhood and utter disbelief in humanity. But, thanks to the power of your teaching and the support of our family, I have regained my balance.

Dear Appa,

Amma is never tired of recounting the incident when the curtain in the bed room

caught fire. You first woke Amma up and asked her to get to safety. She sees that 40 year- old incident, yet again!

Dear Appa

You loved every thing!. The sparrows in your office are no more there. You would keep one window open all the time so that the sparrows could get in and out freely. Several times a day you would happily clean the mess the sparrows made in your office.

When the sparrows had little chicks, your would put a tape on the fan switch, not allowing it to be turned on even by mistake. You would prefer to swelter to risk injuring the chicks. We also miss the sparrows!.

You could have earned a lot, but you chose to lead a simple life.

Why did they kill you? Who killed you? A few misguided members of a religion. It was not the religion, but a few fanatics.

Dear Appa,

I remember you telling me there is animosity in the world, but there is also peace, harmony and love. There is also fighting and brutality in the world, but there is also brotherhood, peace and tranquillity.

Dear Appa,

Bless us and guide us so that we can clearly see and treat the path you showed us.



Thank you. We love you. We will always love you. We also miss you.

(Nishrin Hussain's letter to her father, Ehsan Jaffri, former M.P. killed in the Gujarat violence.)

-Courtesy : Communalism Combat, Sep 2002

Dear Students

- ✦ Do you notice the stand taken by a lady who has lost her father in religious violence?
- ✦ She doesn't hate the religion professed by the the murderers.
- ✦ She simply says that they were misguided by religious fanatics. She does not hate anybody.
- ✦ Note her interest in the nation, her love of peace, in spite of losing her father.

Let's protect freedom of religion; reject religious fanaticism