

## Rethinking Secularism



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**Bio:** Neera Chandhoke, former professor of political science, University of Delhi. Author of: *Rethinking* 2019, *Pluralism, Secularism, Tolerance: Anxieties of Living Together*, Delhi, Sage, 2015 *Democracy and Revolutionary Politics*, London, Bloomsbury Academic,; 2012, *Contested Secessions: Democracy, Rights, Self-Determination and Kashmir*, Delhi, Oxford University Press; 2003, *The Conceits of Civil Society*, Delhi, Oxford University Press; 1999; *Beyond Secularism: The Rights of Religious Minorities*, Delhi Oxford University Press; 1995, *State And Civil Society: Explorations in Political Theory*, Delhi, Sage

**Abstract:** This is not the best of times to recover the import of secularism, but it is also not the worst of times. Today we, across the globe, live in frighteningly blinkered worlds. Time-tested projects of living together have simply broken down. We see this in country after country, including our own. We seem unable to manage religious pluralism within our own societies. We have to rethink this project.

How can people who speak different languages, worship different gods, and subscribe to different conceptions of the good live together in a degree of civility, with dignity and with mutual respect? This question has bothered political thinkers in India since the early twentieth century, and we have still not found an answer. And it is not easy to find one. The proposition that a society is plural insofar as its members hold distinctive conceptions of the good and/or speak different languages is an empirical proposition. There is absolutely nothing in this statement that allows us to transit to the normative proposition that each of these conceptions of the good are of worth; deserve respect, or indeed that plurality is of value. We have to conceptualise secularism as central to the issue of pluralism. This is what this proposed talk attempts to do.

Date: 14 March 2019, Thursday

Time: 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm

Venue: A 106, R & D Block

