

The Times of India June 12, 1993

Secular Disdain

Sir,

In his article, "Ombudsman's Report: TOI And Hindutva". (May 14), Mr PN Bhagwati has very rightly pointed out that editors and staff writers of newspapers are free to air their opinions and take a clear stand on important issues and none should have any grouse on that account. What can, however, be objected to is their tendency to treat the opinion of others with disdain, ridicule and disrespect. The general tenor of the write-ups in *The Times of India* does give an impression of doing something akin to that. It must be appreciated that the opinion that is being projected as that of the BJP is also that of a large section of the people who may have nothing to do with the BJP as such. This opinion has been formed by the people as a result of misinterpretation of secularism by the Congress for party interests and the wrong policies pursued by it over the years. Any ridicule heaped on such an opinion is likely to hurt even more people than just the members of the second largest political party of India.

The grudge against The Times of India is not that it stands for liberal, progressive and secular values but against what it considers to be liberal, progressive and secular. It is ironical that even at the height of the offensive that has been launched by the "secular forces" against communalism, no attempt has been made to define secularism. The omission is, perhaps, deliberate to allow flexibility of action to the "secularists". One can hardly take pride in upholding what is today passing off as secular values.

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