Problems and Prospects of Secularism: A Philosophical Study

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of
Master of Philosophy

Anil Kumar

Centre for Philosophy
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067
India
2008

Centre for Philosophy
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi – 110067

Dated: 24.07.2008

Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "**Problems and Prospects of Secularism: A Philosophical Study**" submitted by Anil Kumar, Centre for Philosophy, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, in fulfillment of 8 credits out of the total 24 credits for the award of degree of Master of Philosophy, is a bonafide work and has not been submitted so far, in part or full, for any other degree or diploma of any university.

This may be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of Master of Philosophy.

Prof. Satya Pal Gautam
(Supervisor)
SUPERVISOR
Centre for Philosophy
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067

Prof. R.P. Singh
(Chairperson)
Chairperson
Centre for Philosophy
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-67

Declaration

I do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled "**Problems and Prospects of Secularism: A Philosophical Study**" submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy is an authentic work and has not been submitted for any other degree or diploma in any other Institution or University.

I take full responsibility for any error in this work.

Anil Kumar.

(ANIL KUMAR)
Centre for Philosophy
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi – 110067
India
2008

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to a number of people in the writing of my dissertation: First of all to my supervisor Prof. Satya Pal Gautam for his critical assessment and encouraging thought that the writing is always meant for the reader, "you don't have to write for yourself only." His guidance always makes me think deeply on my work and my thoughts. I am really very much thankful to him for giving me very good instructions and suggestions for specific readings while working on such a huge topic and for going through the drafts that were submitted terribly late. He always makes me realize the essentiality of understanding the concept and to show me the ways to get familiar with philosophical concepts.

I am also thankful to Prof. R.P. Singh for his constant encouragement and moral support. I am thankful to Dr. Bhagat Oinam for being friendly and for guiding me not to leave my social concerns while doing philosophy and Dr. Manidipa Sen for everything I learnt from her in the class room as well as outside.

I must extend my heartful gratitude to my dear Prof. J.R. Panda, Prof. Avijit Pathak, Dr. Abha Chauhan, Dr. Ashish Saxena, Dr. Vishav Raksha, and Mr. Suresh Babu for everything I have gained from them.

I also want to express my thanks to my classmates and friends Pawan, Priyanka, Patitpaban, Sameema, Ananya, Rajesh, Ravish, Prachi, Purbayan, Brahm Prakash, Neeraj and senior friends Afzal, Alka, Shilpi, Shikha, Zynora, Nazgul and Aroop, whose good wishes made the completion of this work possible.

Heartful thanks to Chiru, Rabbi, Sanchita, Mannu, Vrush, Baabji, Amar, Sharid, J.D., Ritu, Ching, Aruni and my roommate Maheep for being there.

Finally, I am thankful to the staff of Jawaharlal Nehru University Library and non teaching staff of our Centre for cooperating and providing their help. The University Grants Commission deserves special thanks for financial assistance in terms of Junior Research Fellowship.

ANIL KUMAR
24.07.2008

Dedicated

To

My Family

&

Friends

Preface

Indian secularism is a peculiar thing. In India, people confuse secular, secularization and secularism with one another. At the time of partition, Mr. Jinnah said that Pakistan would be a religious country. Contrary to that view Jawaharlal Nehru said that India would be a secular state. There was no other word available at that time that would give a meaning similar to a non-religious state. Therefore Nehru chose the word 'secular state'. That was a period of big crisis in which he had to take the decision very quickly and Nehru took over this word from his liberal education. But the Indian model of secularism moves away from the western model and makes certain basic principles. One of them is that India as a state is secular but as a nation it is communal. The other principles are – state is not religious and that all religions are equal before the state and so on.

In the background of above analysis, the following study can only claim to be an introduction to a very vast subject. The present study attempts to examine and evaluate the doctrine of secularism. In an enquiry concerning secularism, there is a need to understand the concept of secular and the process of secularization. Academicians and analysts have variant and divergent views regarding this concept and related processes. The concept of secular as an adjective when used with other concepts like individual, society or state, conveys different meanings. These different meanings together with the problems and challenges faced by the theory and practice of secularism in India, in other secular countries will be dealt in the study but the main focus will remain on the Secularism in India only.

The study shall be based on philosophical and conceptual analysis as a method to examine the concept of secular and to evaluate the doctrine of secularism. The problem is primarily located at two levels; the level of concept and the level of practice. On the first level, there occurs the

problem of variant meanings along with their variant understandings and the problem faced at the second level is in itself created due to the problem at the first level. And both these problems together form new problems at the third level; the level of theory.

In spite of due care taken while understanding and expressing views to the best of my understandings, certain discrepancies must have crept in. As I belong to the sociological tradition, a philosophical kind of study took much of time; even that was not sufficient. As a result, most of the ideas and analysis in this dissertation writing have come from sociological perspectives. However, one should not confuse it with sociological work and I declare it a philosophical study because this can be a starting point of inquiry or to know more about new things.

Table of Contents

Contents	Page Number
Certificate	ii
Declaration	iii
Acknowledgement	iv
Dedication	v
Preface	vi-vii
Table of Contents	viii
Abbreviations	ix
Introduction	1-7
Chapter 1 Understanding Secularism	8-28
Chapter 2 Secularism in India: Some Conceptual Issues	29-58
Chapter 3 Secularism in India: Some Socio-Political Issues	59-82
Conclusion	83-90
Bibliography	91-98

Abbreviations

ABVP	Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad
BJP	Bhartiya Janta Party
BJS	Bhartiya Jan Sangh
DCS	Deendar Channabasaveshwara Siddique
L-e-T	Lashkar-e-Tayyeba
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
SGPC	Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee
SIMI	Students Islamic Movement of India
VHP	Vishwa Hindu Parishad

Introduction

> *Secularism is a specific kind of humanitarian philosophy of life that prohibits religion and spirituality and considers ethics, education, politics, administration, law, etc. completely independent of both of them and provides for human's individual and social welfare by encouraging them to become completely self-sufficient instead of being dependent on otherworldly or divine forces.*[1]

What is secularism? This question is not easy to answer because secularism is an essentially contested doctrine. Various thinkers have presented different views regarding the meaning of secularism as a world view.[2] Secularism is often understood simply as the antithesis of religion; Secularism, as the Oxford English dictionary puts it, is "based on the premise that religion and religious considerations, as of God and a future life should be ignored or excluded." It is in this sense that

---

[1] Ved Prakash Verma, *Dharm Darshan Ki Mool Samasayaen,*(My Translation) Hindi Madhayam Karayanvaya Nideshalaya, Delhi Vishwavidyala, Delhi, reprinted 1999, orig. 1991, p.492.

[2] "The word 'secularism' connotes many meanings in the West where it was coined, because issues of the connection between religion and politics are a matter of current debate and discussion," (Stanley J Tambiah, "The Crisis of Secularism in India," in *Secularism and its Critics,* edited by Rejeev Bhargava, 6th edition, 2007, orig. 1998, pp.418-19.);"Secularism, in a particular sense, is a humanitarian philosophy of life which negates religion and spiritualism and treats morality, education, politics, administration and law, etc. completely free from religion and spirituality and motivates humans to be completely self dependent rather than depending on other-worldly or divine power and thus paves the way to individual and social welfare." (My Translation of V.P. Verma, op. cit., pp.489-490.); "Secularism presents a view of the nature of human institutions and ultimately of the structure of the universe different from that found in some or most religious traditions. It proceeds from a competing system of ultimate convictions." (Marc Galanter, "Secularism East and West," in Rajeev Bhargava, op. cit., p.259.) "It is widely accepted that secularism advocates the separation of politics from religion." (Rajeev Bhargava, "What is Secularism For?" in Rajeev Bhargava, op. cit., p.488.) "Secularism signifies religious non-discrimination and equal liberty for all citizens, believers and non-believers. A secular polity is one in which the state does not discriminate between citizens on the basis of their religious convictions. It grants equal civil rights to all citizens, respects the religious liberty of each, and protects even the liberty of those who do not believe in religion. Only when the state is constrained by citizenship rights and acts to protect or enhance the civil liberty of all its citizens, does it aver its commitment to secularism." (Gurpreet Mahajan, "Secularism," in *The Oxford India Companion to Sociology and Social Anthropology.)*

Harvey Cox uses the word: "Secularism is the name for an ideology, a new closed world view which functions very much like a new religion."[3] Herberg notes that when secularism is used in this way, it becomes "something very like a religion."[4] It is not truly, then, the antithesis of religion; it is a new form of religion which rejects the belief in a supernatural order or some mysterious divine creator. Secularism is also used to refer to a process in which belief and practice related to a specific religious tradition decline in strength. "Secularism," Milton Yinger says, "is simply a sign of religious change."[5] He advises to use secularism to refer simply to beliefs and practices related to the 'non-ultimate' aspects of human life. It is not anti-religion, it is not a substitute religion; it is simply another segment of life.[6] Thus, secularism is very much related to our worldly life. It is a doctrine that can be defined as the attempt to establish a body of principles concerning human behavior based on rational knowledge and experience rather than Theology or the supernatural. It essentially seeks to improve the human condition by material means alone.

The above mentioned definitions of secularism tend to focus exclusively on the opposition between the religious and the secular outlooks towards the human condition. These definitions ignore the historical context in which the process of secularization started in the West European societies. The conflict between the emerging democratic liberal states and religious institutions on the one hand, and the growing opposition to the control or interference by the Church in the cultural sphere, pursuit of scientific knowledge and other everyday life activities, on the other, are peculiar to the process of secularization in western society. But the results of this process are more relevant for

---

[3] Harvey Cox, *The Secular City*, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1965, pp.20-21.

[4] Will Herberg, "Religion in a Secularized Society," in *Review of Religious Research*, Religious Research Association, spring 1962, p.148.

[5] J. Milton Yinger, "Pluralism, Religion and Secularism," in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 6, No. 1, Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, spring 1967, pp.17-28.

[6] Ibid.

a proper understanding of the ideals of secularism. A careful look at the ideals of secularism as enshrined in the public policies adopted in the liberal democratic societies clearly indicates that following features are central to the practice of secular vision:

1. The state will not make any discrimination in treating the citizens on the basis of their religious beliefs and practices.
2. The state will not be controlled or influenced by religious institutions/authorities in its activities. The policies and activities of the state will be based on rule of law and equality of citizens irrespective of their religious affiliations.
3. The pursuits of knowledge, culture and arts will not be allowed to be obstructed by any control or interference from religious authorities or institutions.
4. Individuals will have the freedom to follow any religion without affecting public affairs.

Though the ideology of secularism emerged in the West as a product of the process of secularization, it has gradually spread as a guiding principle for democratic politics all over the world. The process of secularization needs to be distinguished from secularism. "Secularization relates essentially to a process of decline in religious activities, beliefs, ways of thinking, and institutions that occurs primarily in association with, or as an unconscious or unintended consequence of, other processes of social structural change."[7] On the other hand secularism is an ideology; its proponents consciously denounce all forms of supernaturalism and the agencies devoted to it, advocating non-religious or anti-religious principles as the basis for personal morality and social organization.[8] Secularization indicates that religion becomes marginal to the operation of the social system,

[7] *The Encyclopedia of Religion,* Vol. 13, Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, 1987, p.159.
[8] Ibid.

and that the essential functions for the operation of society become rationalized, passing out of the control of agencies devoted to the supernatural.[9]

Being called 'secular' has become a symbol of modernity and progressiveness.[10] Because of this approach towards secularism, most of the political and religious leaders propagate themselves and their organizations as secular. This approach has contributed greatly in corrupting the actual meaning of secularism, because everyone has defined it according to their own expediency and ease. In fact, like the terms 'democracy' and 'socialism' even 'secularism' is often used without understanding its actual meaning.[11] Before entering into the discussion on secularism one needs to attend the three important issues. The first one is to understand the meaning(s) of the term secular; the second one is to understand the historical process of secularization in the West and in India and the third one is to understand secularism as an ideology or a doctrine. These three issues are interrelated but distinct and are discussed in this study with an attempt to clarify the complexity in understanding the term and to look at some related concepts through various perspectives. On the one hand there is a western perspective of understanding secularism and there is an Indian perspective on the other.

The ideals which were articulated and pursued in the process of secularization in the west came to be known as an ideology called 'secularism' in the West. Rajeev Bhargava talks about 'three complex and variegated initial motivations of Western secularism'. These were;

1. Absolutism: To check a political system in which a ruler or government has total power at all times; and also to check the belief in a political, religious or moral

[9] Ibid., p.160.
[10] My translation from Ved Prakash Verma, 1999, p.488.
[11] Ibid.

principle which is thought to be true in any circumstances.

2. Religious Bigotry: To check the state of feeling, or the act of expressing strong, unreasonable beliefs or opinions.
3. Fanaticism: To check the extreme beliefs or behavior, especially in connection with religion or politics.

These missions of secularism were identified to ensure that the values enshrined in particular religions did not trump other values, to manage religious conflicts reasonably.[12]

"Western secularism too, is essentially contested, with no agreement on what it entails, the values it seeks to promote, or how best to pursue it."[13] The general functions of western secularism, as suggested by Rajeev Bhargava, are functions apart from Indian Secularism. "Secularism was intended to play a significant role in attaining objectives that needed particular emphasis in India. In a society where numerical supremacy of one religious group may predispose it to disfavor smaller religious groups, secularism was to deter the persecution of religious minorities."[14] "Secularism in India, as elsewhere, is indispensable, and therefore that the critical need of the hour is to work out an alternative conception of secularism, not to seek an alternative. The question for them is: Given a commitment to a minimal set of political and moral values, and given the desirability of one or another version, what form must secularism take to improve its performance in India today?"[15] It means, particularly in India, secularism meant for the discouragement of harassment of minorities by the supremacy of one religious group.

---

[12] Rajeev Bhargava, "Introduction," in *Secularism and its Critics*, edited by Rajeev Bhargava, op. cit., p.1.
[13] Ibid., p.3.
[14] Ibid., p.1.
[15] Ibid., p.2.

The ideals of secularism have failed to take practical shape in the Indian society and control over communal intolerance has become an immense problem. In such circumstances it has become important to identify the originator conditions and favorable elements of this serious problem. First of all, one should not hesitate in accepting that like the ideals of equality and liberty, the ideal of secularism too was sowed on the Indian soil in the colonial era. Though it is claimed that the tradition of religious tolerance is a unique and non-separable part of Indian culture, it is not so.[16] Wars between the devotees of Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu in South India and clashes among the followers of *Sanatan Dharma* and *Budhhists* and *Jainies* are also part of the history of Indian culture.[17] Besides this, it is also important to understand that though religious tolerance is important for secularism, it is not sufficient. The kind of alienation from religion which is expected from a secular person or community while determining about public policies and programmes is lacking in the Indian society. Faith in supernatural powers and religious superstitions are rooted so deeply in the Indian psyche that an Indian from his birth to his death hardly remains free anytime from religious rituals and customs. Before taking any important decision it has become unavoidable in India to consult priests, pastors and astrologers and to take the blessings of clerics. This tendency is found equally in the masses as well as highly educated learned people, scientists, administrators, leaders, industrialists, traders, and officers. This behavior can not be acquitted from contradictions just by accepting them as the affairs of one's personal religious faith and belief. It will not be an overestimation to say that such psyche and behavior is fundamentally against secularism.[18]

Secularism in India has also emerged as a reflection of the Western secularism in the colonial context but can we say they are similar or

---

[16] My translation from Satya P. Gautam, *Samaj Darshan*, Haryana Sahitya Academy, Panchkula, reprinted 2004, orig. 1991, p.62.
[17] Ibid., pp.62-63.
[18] Ibid., p.63.

different? Can we say Indian secularism is largely shaped by Indian conditions and Western by Western? What is the meaning of secularism? Is secularism a western implant on Indian soil? Is it suitable for societies where religion continues to exercise a strong influence on individual lives? Does secularism show partiality? Does it 'pamper' minorities? Is secularism anti-religious? To find answers, emergence of both Indian and Western secularisms have to be understood through historical perspective and conceptual analysis. At the end of this study we shall be able to understand and appreciate the importance of secularism in a democratic society like India, and learn something about the distinctiveness of Indian secularism.

Chapter 1

Understanding Secularism

A careful look at the evolution of human societies in the different parts of the world shows that during the earliest stage of social formation, our ancestors tried to understand the mysteries of the world by seeing nature in the human image. As human beings act and make things, it seemed that the world of human experience was also a creation of some powerful being. The world of human experience could not have come into existence on its own. This world must be the creation of some supernatural being (or beings). Mountains, oceans, forests, winds and even fire were seen as either creations of some great being or were regarded as very powerful beings themselves. It was believed that the universe was the creation of God. Nothing could have happened in the world without God's permission. Viewing themselves as the creatures of God, human beings in ancient societies believed that leading a life in accordance with the divine will was the ultimate goal of life. Religion constituted the core of beliefs, rituals, and everyday life practices. Religious stories were used for providing guiding principles of human conduct and social relations. The whole of life had religious significance and every new generation was taught to be careful not to offend the divine spirits. Life itself was considered both a testing and a preparation for liberation from the dissonance of human condition, marked by existential, cognitive and volitional finitude.[1]

The process of transformation from religious societies (in which everyday life was dominated by religion), to secular societies (in which religion has been confined to the domain of the personal), is a long journey in the history of Western societies. In this chapter, an attempt will be made to understand the historical process of secularization in

[1] Stanley Rothman, *European Society and Politics*, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, New York, 1970, pp.195-196.

the West. For this purpose, it will be helpful to understand the meaning of the term secular and other related terms.

Meaning of 'Secular'

The origin of the term 'secular' can be traced to the Latin words 'saecularis' and 'saeculum'. In pre-Christian Latin culture 'saecularis' meant 'a long period of time' and 'saeculum' was used as an adjective to signify 'a new period or generation'.[2] During the rise and spread of Christendom, the word 'secular' gradually acquired a different meaning. The term 'secular' is now understood to mean 'worldly'; 'not relating to religion' and 'not bound by monastic restrictions'.[3] It is an antonym to the word 'sacred' and the Oxford English Dictionary describes 'sacred' as 'connected with religion'; 'dedicated or appropriate to God'; 'safeguard or required by religion, tradition'; 'idea or institution unreasonably held to be immune from questioning or criticism'. "In another context, ordinary parish clergy, ministering to people who were very much embedded in the world and history, were called 'secular' to distinguish them from the religious orders or 'regular clergy'."[4] Religion, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, is a 'system of faith and worship'; 'human recognition of personal God or gods entitled to obedience'. Religion may be defined as "a set of symbolic forms and acts which relate man to the ultimate conditions of his existence."[5] Religion is a social institution involving beliefs and practices based upon a conception of the sacred. In some religions, these beliefs and practices are linked to a monastery community under a given set of rules where emphasis is given to the

---

[2] Paulos Mar Gregorios, "On Humanism, Secularism and Socialism," in *Journal of Indian council of Philosophical Research*, vol. XIV, No. 3, May-August 1997, p.79.
[3] R.P. Singh, "Secularism: A Conceptual And Cross cultural Analysis," in *Problems and Perspectives of Social Philosophy*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2000, pp.123-131.
[4] Charles Taylor, "Modes of Secularism," in *Secularism and its Critics*, edited by Rajeev Bhargava, Oxford University press, New Delhi, reprinted 2007, orig. 1998, p.32.
[5] Robert N. Bellah, "Religious Evolution," in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. XXIV, June 1964, p.359.

other worldly life on the religious lines. In this manner, secular pertains to the sphere of activities and practices which are not connected with religion or divinity. Contrary to the realm of the sacred which demands absolute faith, the sphere of the secular is based on reason and is open to questioning or criticism. "It means that the secular spheres and religious are distinct, independent, exclusive and separate without penumbral zones."[6]

Religion and the Pre-Secular Western Society

In the earlier European society, religion was very significant in the life of people. Religion was a core of beliefs, rituals and everyday life practices. Religious stories, rituals, and rules prescribed every activity and provided legitimation for the social order. Leading a life in accordance with the doctrines of one's religion was considered as the central concern of a human being. The society was living under one principle of life. The principle was spiritual in nature; it was the revealed will of God. The goal of life was spiritual salvation; all earthly activities must be subordinated to this central and ruling purpose of life. The church was the final authority to interpret this divine principle; it made a brave attempt "to unify all life, in all its reaches – political, social, economic, intellectual – under the control of Christian principle."[7] In political sphere it sought to control the kings by rebuking them for their misdeeds and insisting upon right behavior; in the social sphere it tried to control life through its laws of marriage and penance; in the economic sphere it insisted on just and fair prices, the prohibition of usury, and asked people to regard their property as a trust. It tried to regulate intellectual life by banning as heretical all though incompatible with the teachings of the Church and persecuting the heretics. The Church's role was that of a teacher. Its goal was to control the education in the widest sense, including the prohibition of

---

[6] S.N. Dhyani, *Secularism: Socio-legal Issues*, Rawat Publications, Jaipur and New Delhi, 1996, p.22.

[7] Stanley Rothman, op. cit., p. 196.

books and other materials that might be harmful to faith. The result of this unique attempt at the unification of all life in the light of one principle was that politics, economic and ethic were subordinated to theology, if all of them were not blended in one whole.[8]

Religion had also a significant role in overpowering the legal system in Europe. Both Church and the King provided support to each other. Ministers occupied an office which had divine sanction. King had divine rights because of the virtue of his relationship with religious institutions. Since the Bible was the fundamental constitution for everyone in society, the ministers of the Church were often asked to give their opinions on important political issues.[9]

Religion also "helped in the control of armies, in encouraging the plebs, in producing good men, and in shaming the bad."[10] The King used religion as a means to justify his authority as well as to make men more civilized. "Numa Pompilius[11] (Romulus's successor), finding the people ferocious and desiring to reduce them to civic obedience conjoined with the arts of peace, turned to religion as the instrument necessary above all others for the maintenance of a civilized state, and so constituted it that there was never for so many centuries so great a fear of God as there was in this republic…its citizens were more afraid of breaking an oath than of breaking the law, since they held in higher esteem the power of God than the power of man."[12] According to Machiavelli, it was 'the prince' to whom Rome was more indebted because through religion he could bring order in the society. Machiavelli writes: "…where there is religion, it is easy to teach men to use arms, but where there are arms, but no religion, it is with

---

[8] Ibid., p.197.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Machiavelli in *The Discourses of NiccoloMachiavelli,* Vol. 1, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London and Boston, 1975, p.240.
[11] The then King of Rome.
[12] Machiavelli, op. cit., p.240.

difficulty that it can be introduced."[13] The monarchy rested upon a religious justification (the theory of the divine right of kings); registration of births, deaths and marriages, medical and social welfare, and education were in the hands of clerics, or closely controlled by them.[14]

The Church was considered as the 'Kingdom of God', "there ought to be some one Man, or Assembly, by whose mouth our Saviour (now in heaven) speaketh, giveth law, and which representeth his Person to all Christians, or divers Men, or divers Assemblies that doe the same to divers parts of Christendome."[15] It was necessary for a Christian King to receive his Crown by a Bishop; as if it were from that Ceremony, that he derived the clause of *Dei gratia* in his title; and that then only he is made King by the favour of God, when he was crowned by the authority of God's universal Vicegerent on earth; and "that every Bishop whosoever be his Soveraign, taketh at his Consecration an oath of absolute Obedience to the Pope."[16] It means the Church was the only authority to regulate the canon in society, "it meant that every social action over a very wide field of human activity and organization including work, decision-making, social and interpersonal relationships, juridical procedures, socialization, play, healing, and life-cycle transitions were regulated in accordance with super-naturalist preconceptions."[17]

Monarchs declared themselves as the supreme authority in their kingdom, the source of all law; they continued to use religious modes of legitimation. Defiance of the Pope did not diminish the influence of religion in everyday life. The rulers recognized this and they sought the

---

[13] Ibid.

[14] Jean Bauberot, "Two Thresholds of Laicization," in *Secularism and its Critics*, edited by Rajeev Bhargava, op. cit., p.94.

[15] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, Great Britain, reprinted 1967, p.474.

[16] Ibid., p.475.

[17] Stanley Rothman, op. cit., p.196.

support of their established national church; however, in the absence of a unified Church the economic strength and prestige of the Church had declined. National churches were now dependent upon the assistance of the rulers to maintain their position vis-à-vis other dissenting churches. This formed the basis of a mutually supportive relationship between the monarch – the head of the state – and the established national church – that is, the Church to which the monarch belonged and the official religion of the state.

Rise of Protestantism

The religious authority of the Catholic Church started weakening as a result of the consolidation of the Protestant Reformation. European people with new spirit of inquiry and thought became aware of the evils and corruptions of the Catholic Church. The name 'Protestant' was first applied exclusively to the separatists under the leadership of Martin Luther, who in 1529 protested against an attempt of the Diet of the Holy Roman Empire to prevent the introduction of religious novelties. But subsequently the name became common to describe all Christians, who rejected Papal supremacy.[18] Of this Protestant Christianity, several forms appeared in the sixteenth century. The major ones were Lutheranism, Calvinism and Anglicanism.

Martin Luther may ultimately have been a source of inspirations for millions, but at first he was a terrible disappointment to his father. Martin Luther was born in 1485 in a peasant family of Germany. His ambitious father sent him to the University of Erfurt, to study law after attaining his master's degree in arts, but he never even began the study of law. He entered the order of the Hermits of St. Augustine and became a monk in the monastery of Wittenberg and from there earned his doctorate in theology. A visit to Rome revealed to him the

[18] Article: "The rise of Protestantism in France (1520-1562)," taken from, http://www.museeprotestant.org/Pages/Notices.php?scatid=&noticeid=156&tourid=1&order=3&Lget=EN, retrieved on 16 June 2008.

corruption of the Church, and his own religious experience led him to believe that the way to salvation lay, not in the sacraments and the 'good work' that the Church prescribed, but in purity and simplicity and by the faith in and through the grace of God. This doctrine of Luther struck at the very heart of the Catholic system of priesthood. He denounced the idea of the sale of 'indulgence'. An 'indulgence' was a document that purported to remit a portion of the punishment, which a soul must suffer after death for sins committed on earth. Thus, by the payment of money to the Church one could buy repentance from the sins. These grants of 'indulgence' had become a major source of income for the Church.[19]

Martin Luther propagated the idea that a mere piece of paper could not gain men's salvation, which could only be had by a genuine repentance for one's sins and a firm faith in God. He set forth these ideas in the form of 'ninety-five theses' or statements. He was prepared to defend these in a public debate, and on 31 October 1517, actually mailed a paper to the Church at Wittenberg writing down his theses. He also got these printed and distributed in other cities. The response to Luther's theses was surprising as it gained the support not only of common people but also of wealth merchants and princes. The Elector of Saxony gave protection to Martin Luther against the charges of heresy. Soon with the support of many German political leaders as well as humanists, Luther went further to attack other doubtful principles and practices of the Roman Church.[20]

He appealed to the German national sentiment against the imposition of the alien authority of the Pope and argued that the civil government is superior to the Church in political matters. Priesthood, in his argument, was an unnecessary evil since every Christian was his own priest, and that all Christians should interpret the Gospel for

---

[19] James A Wylie, *The History of Protestantism,* Volume Second, Book Thirteenth, Cassell and Company, Limited, London, Paris and New York, 2002, p.76.
[20] Article: "The Rise of Protestantism in France (1520-1562)," op. cit.

themselves instead of allowing it to be a priestly monopoly. Luther also translated the Bible in German language.[21]

After breaking up from the Catholic Church, Luther began to organize his followers into a new Church and thus, laid the foundations of the Protestant sect. Luther's severance of ties with Roman Catholicism was not an isolated phenomenon but one of several protestant movements that occurred at about the same time in different places. Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin became the leaders of the Protestant movement in Switzerland. Under the leadership of Calvin the Swiss cities became a refuge for Protestants fleeing to other countries in Western Europe due to religious persecution. Calvin established an academy for the training of Protestant missionaries, who in return would spread the true word of God in other lands. As part of the work of propagating his version of Protestantism, Calvin composed a treatise entitled, The Institutes of the Christian Religion, wherein he gave a more concise and logical definition of the Protestant doctrines than what had been given by any other leader of this movement.[22]

Evolution of Secular Culture

The decline of religious authorities, according to Alexander Saxton, constitutes the 'Age of Secularism'.[23] The age of secularism is a long period that constitutes the process of Secularization. The term secularization came into use in European languages at the peace of Westphalia in 1648 at the end of the Thirty Years' War in Europe, to refer to the transfer of church properties to the exclusive control of the princes.[24] According to the Encyclopedia of Religion, the term secularization was used to describe "the transfer of territories

[21] Ibid.

[22] James A. Wylie, op. cit., p.93.

[23] Alexander Saxton, *Religion and the Human Prospect,* Aakar Books, New Delhi, 2007, p.30.

[24] T.N. Madan, "Secularism in its Place," in *Religion in India,* edited by T.N. Madan, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 7th impression, 2002, p.394.

previously under ecclesiastical control to the dominion of lay political authorities."[25] Secularization meant taking away the property that belonged to the Catholic Church and giving it to public. Subsequently, not only property but socio-political institutions and ideas were also taken away from the control of the church and were placed in the public sphere for analysis and scrutiny.

The term secularization is applied to indicate: "a variety of processes in which control of social space, time, facilities, resources, and personnel was lost by religious authorities, and in which empirical procedures and worldly goals and purposes displaced ritual and symbolic patterns of action directed toward otherworldly, or supernatural, ends."[26] "The process of secularization, in general terms, was the result of the antagonistic feelings towards the rigidities in religion."[27] When religion could not provide a system with security, there was an attempt in the west for a change in the existing system. The western philosophers succeeded in separating the religion from their social life and from the affairs of the state. They preferred the social institutions totally based on ethics without religious interference.[28] In a new culture, "religion could not stand the test of reason and the seeming clarity and success of science in explaining the workings of the external world gave the impression that science, and not religion, would provide the answer to all the mysteries of the world."[29] This new culture involved the modern revolution which was characterized by a 'rejection of the division between the spiritual and temporal powers'. Its principle, Comte says, "...is the principle which proclaims that no spiritual power should exist in society or, what

---

[25] Bryan R. Wilson, "Secularization," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion,* Vol. 13, Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, 1987, p.159.
[26] Ibid.
[27] V. Indira Devi, *Secularisation of Indian Mind,* Rawat Publications, Jaipur and New Delhi, 2002, p.47.
[28] Ibid., p.263.
[29] Ibid., pp.271-73.

comes to the same thing, that this power should be entirely subordinated to the temporal power."[30]

It was to the movement of the human intellect, determined by the 'precepts of Bacon', 'the conceptions of Descartes', and the 'discoveries of Galileo' that a revolution of scientific attitude could evolve. The scientific culture that brought modern revolution in society began to weaken the hold of many traditional religious beliefs by demonstrating their incorrectness such as the incorrectness related to the conceptions of the motion of the sun, the shape of the earth, etc. and by promoting a more rational and a worldlier outlook.[31]

As industrialization advanced with the advent of science and technology, the general tendency for societies to become increasingly secular also increased. In this sense, the religious actions or actions directed toward the super-natural were regarded as less effective in relation to worldly experience and it started diminishing in scope and scale. Secularization in such days was generally employed to refer to, in the words of Peter Berger, "the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols:"[32] In such a 'secularization trend', a large area of social and cultural life – beliefs and practices, basic values, patterns of behavior, and institutional functions become increasingly separated from religious or spriritual influences. Thus secularization came around to signify an unemotional and complex process that involved the changing relationship of religion and society. It was a process associated with the industrial revolution and the consequent urbanization which had in turn led to life becoming mechanical; it was

---

[30] Auguste Comte in *The Crisis of Industrial Civilization: The Early Essays of Auguste Comte,* introduced by Ronald Fletcher, Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., London, 1974, p.189.

[31] Stanley Rothman, op. cit., p.196.

[32] Peter Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion,* Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1973, quoted in T.N. Madan, "Secularism in its Place," in *Religion in India,* edited by T.N. Madan, op. cit., p.394.

a process aided and abetted by the tremendous growth of new knowledge in various areas.[33]

The emergence of the ideology of secularism, can also be seen in the light of the historical process of secularization or '*laicization*'[34] in the West by considering 'Nationalism' as an important factor that helped in reducing the hegemony of the church. It arose out of a growth of commerce. "The direct exchange of goods and services during the medieval times was replaced by an economy based on money. New trade routes were discovered – America and the rich treasures of Mexico and Peru flooded Europe. Enterprises which involved great risk but in proportion huge profits in far flung areas were financed by great commercial companies which used both cash and credit. As commerce expanded, new developments took place. Towns were realized to be too small to handle the growing commerce and as trade expanded need was felt for a national level exchange to satisfy the new capitalism."[35]

After a long process of secularization, which was built into the ideology of progress, George Jacob Holyoake coined the term 'secularism' in 1851 and led a rationalist movement of protest in England. George Jacob Holyoake published his book called 'Principles of Secularism' in 1859. The principles enunciated by Holyoake received the approval of the famous liberal political philosopher J.S. Mill. The principles presumably flowed from the theories of the Utilitarians and from Bentham's 'Principles of Legislation', formulated in the eighteenth century. The Utilitarians believed that politics and law had a moral base and they sought to serve the welfare of the human race through democratic liberal channels, the ideal being to attain the "greatest happiness of the greatest number." Holyoake used the term secularism to refer to the practice of the ethics of 'free

[33] Indira Devi, op. cit., p.44.
[34] Synonyms with 'secularization' in French.
[35] V. Indira Devi, op. cit., p.30.

thought'. For him free thinking is as important as living. Thinking should be free; it does not matter in any case even if it is different from others' thoughts. He says, "...I differed from the world, until it occurred to me that the world differed from me; then I had no more anxiety. Those who believe because others believe the same, are without claim to authority; while those who hold opinions because they have thought them out for themselves, have used the same liberty I had taken, and I was guilty neither of presumption nor singularity. If the world differed from me, it was doubtless in self-defence, and if I differed from the world, it was in self-protection."[36]

Free thinking means the capacity to think for oneself. When we learn to think for ourselves we also learn to make our own choices and take our own decisions on the basis of our judgements. We can give opinions regarding something which we don't like and no one arranges answer for others' opinions. Everyone is responsible for one's decision and choice, no one else takes any responsibility. Holyoake pointed out that "the world does not make any arrangement to answer for one's opinions rather one should select the principles for which one is to be responsible."[37] One should use one's reason to make choices. The points which emerge from Holyoake's emphasis on freedom can be briefly stated as follows:

1. It is important to realize one's freedom.
2. Recognizing one's freedom, one should form one's opinions accordingly, and take responsibility for the same.
3. Opinions come to us from many sources but we can exercise our freedom and examine them before accepting and making them our own opinions.

---

[36] George Jacob Holyoake, *Sixty Years of An Agitator's Life*, T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1906, Part-II, p.290.
[37] Ibid.

Holyoake does not object miracles but he opines that we all possess reason to regret that no one performs miracles in the present world. It is the misfortune of the present world that the power delegated with so much show of assures to the saints cannot come to these days. He says, "If any preacher or deacon could, in this day, feed five thousand men on a few loaves and a few small fishes, and leave as many baskets of fragments as would run a workhouse for a week, the Poor Law Commissioners would make a king of that saint."[38] The analysis made by Holyoake while enunciating the principles of secularism may suggest that there may conceivably be a conflict between religion and secularism.

One can use one's reason or one's critical mind to prove the moral test and the common sense and the best sense of all sorts and conditions of men. In the words of Holyoake, "A man goes to Heaven upon his own judgment: whereas, if his belief is based on the learning of others, he goes to Heaven second hand."[39] One should think for one's own reasons, nobody has got any extra thing to set one at the upper hand and the other at the lower. "On the platform of discussion the miner, the weaver, or farm labourer, are on the same level as the priest."[40] Everyone is free to give opinions.

Secularism in this way, according to Holyoake, becomes a code of duty that follows the ethical as well as the rational principle pertaining to this life founded on consideration purely human and intended mainly for those who find theology indefinite or inadequate, unreliable or unbelievable. There is freedom of thinking, freedom of expressing and freedom of suggesting. Its essential principles are three:

1. Improvement of this life by material means.
2. That science is the available providence of man.

---

[38] Ibid., p.291.
[39] Ibid., p.292.
[40] Ibid.

3. That it is good to do good, whether there be other good or not, the good of the present life is good and it is good to seek that good.[41]

It is important to note here that Holyoake coins the term secularism keeping in mind the time where the 'material needs' of the people are very important and these 'material needs' are in contrast with 'spiritual needs' and thus also include things like education, personal development along with adequate housing, food, and clothing, etc. He says, "...so it is with this world. It is our dwelling place. We know the laws of sanitation, economy, and equity, upon which health, wealth, and security depend. All these things are quite independent of any knowledge of the origin of the universe or the *owner* of it."[42]

Holyoake emphasizes the rational and scientific aspect in society. It is required to attain a stage of secularism; it means people realize their liberty and authority to choose and to make opinions for themselves. In this regard, he writes: "...I first knew the party of independent opinion, it had no policy. Its sole occupation was the confutation of error, or what it took to be expected. The confutation of theologic error was a forbidden right, and they who exercised it did it at their peril, and they did much who maintained that right. But the time came when those who had succeeded in proving certain received principles to be wrong, were called upon to show what independent and self dependent principles, in accordance with reason and conscience, could take their places and guarantee the continuance of public and private morality, and not only continue them but improve their quality. It was to this new theory of secular life, the sequel and complement of free criticism, that the name of Secularism was given. Some societies, simply anti-theological, have taken the secular name, which leads many unobservant persons to consider the term Secularism as synonymous

TH-15422.

[41] Ibid., pp.292-293.
[42] Ibid., p.294.

Jawaharlal Nehru University Library

with atheism and general church-fighting; whereas Secularism is a new name implying a new principle and a new policy. It would be an impostor term were it merely a new name intended to disguise an old thing."[43]

Religion and Marxism

Religion has no role to play in 'communistic secularism'. Karl Marx offers a stinging criticism of religion as, "...the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiments of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the masses."[44] It means that religion is like a drug that helps us forgetting our miseries. And it greatly reduces the possibility of revolt against oppressions. Marx repudiates the idea, which Machiavelli also rejects that the state is a part of a Divine order and can be understood only in the light of the Divine plan for man and the universe. Their emphasis is that the politics should be free from bondage of religion and should be made secular.

Lenin clarified the Marxist understanding of the social roots of religion in his words: "Why does religion retain its hold on the backward section of the town proletariat, on broad sections of the semiproletariat, and on the mass of the peasantry? Because of the ignorance of the people, replies the bourgeois progressivist...The Marxist says this is not true. It does not explain the roots of religion profoundly enough...In modern capitalist countries, these roots are mainly social. The deepest root of religion today is the socially downtrodden condition of the working masses and their complete helplessness in the face of blind forces of capitalism... 'Fear made the gods'. Fear of the blind force of capital is the root of modern religion...No educational book can eradicate religion from the minds of the masses who are

[43] Ibid.

[44] Marx quoted in *Karl Marx: Early Writings,* edited by T.B. Bottomore, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1964, p.27.

crushed by capitalist, hard labour until these masses themselves learn to fight this root of religion."[45]

Lenin's insight into the social roots of religion, into the link between inhuman capitalism and the growth of heightened religiosity, is fully confirmed by the historian, Eric J. Hobsbawm, who shows how in England and France during the age of transition to capitalism there was a return to 'militant, literal, old-fashioned religion'. Explaining this 'religious revival', Hobsbawm observes: "For the masses it was in the main a method of coping with the increasingly bleak and inhuman oppressive society of middle class liberalism. In Marx's phrase (but he was not the only one to use these words) it was 'the heart of a heartless world, as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions...the opium of the people'. More than this: it attempted to create social and sometimes educational and political institutions in an environment which provided none and among politically undeveloped people, it gave primitive expression to their discontents and aspiration. Its literalism, emotionalism and superstition protested both against the entire society in which rational calculation dominated and against the upper classes who deformed religion in their own image."[46]

Max Weber: Religion and Rationalism

The central concerns of Weber's sociology of religion included the diverse themes as the social basis of varieties of theism, the role of prophets in society, different roads to salvation, and the sociological preconditions of the emergence of universal love. His questions were related to the future of religion and the nature of human existence in modern society. He saw no future for religion but only its replacement by progressive rationalization and the decline of mystery, magic and ritual.

---

[45] V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works,* Vol. 15, Progress Publishers Moscow, 1977, pp.405-406.

[46] E.J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution 1789-1884,* ABACUS, 1979, pp.279-280.

Weber considered the perception of the divine through emotion and intellect centrally important for an ascetic. It means that the godly things can be sensitized through feelings as well as through mind (intelligence). Both are important for an abstemious. Weber writes that "...the ascetic's assurance of grace is achieved when he is conscious that he has succeeded in becoming a tool of his god, through rationalized ethical action completely oriented to god. But for the contemplative mystic, who neither desires to be nor can be the god's 'instrument,' but desires only to become the god's 'vessel', the ascetic's ethical struggle, whether of a positive or a negative type, appears to be a perpetual externalization of the divine in the direction of some peripheral function. For this reason, ancient Buddhism recommended inaction as the precondition for the maintenance of the state of grace, and in any case Buddhism enjoined the avoidance of every type of rational, purposive activity, which it regarded as the most dangerous form of secularization."[47]

He has tried to make us understand that "an inner-worldly religion of salvation is determined by contemplative features, the usual result is the acceptance of the secular social structure which happens to be at hand, an acceptance that is relatively indifferent to the world but at least humble before it."[48] And giving the example of Islam as a warrior religion, he characterized it as hardly developing in the specifically rational elements of a world order and the specific determination of individual fates in the world beyond. Weber has written: "The ruling conception was that predestination determined, not the fate of the individual in the world beyond, but rather the uncommon events of this world, and above all such questions as whether or not the warrior for the faith would fall in battle. The religious fate of the individual in the next world was held, at least according to the older view, to be

---

[47] Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion,* translated by Ephraim Fischoff with introduction by Talcott Parsons, Social Science Paperbacks in association with Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1965, p.171.
[48] Ibid., pp.175-176.

adequately secured by the individual's belief in Allah and the prophets, so that no demonstration of salvation in the conduct of life is needed."[49]

It means any rational system of ascetic control of everyday life is alien to the warrior religion. The doctrine of pre-destination that was manifested in Islam especially during the 'wars of faith' and the 'wars of Mahdi', tended to lose its importance as Islamic societies started becoming more urbanized. But the authorities considered such change in ideology everywhere as "dangerous to the state and as hostile to authority, because it made Puritans skeptical of the legitimacy of all secular power."[50] It was a change from traditional ideology to the modern one. Urban societies turned more secular and in Weberian sense, more rational. Rationalism in Weber's words "...is an historical concept which covers a whole world of different things. It will be our task to find out whose intellectual child the particular concrete form of rational thought was, from which the idea of a calling and the devotion to labour in the calling has grown, which is, as we have seen, so irrational from the standpoint of purely eudaemonistic self-interest, but which has been and still is one of the most characteristic elements of our capitalistic culture."[51]

In Weberian understanding, the process of secularization is also a process of rationalization. It is the "rationalization of society."[52] The process of rationalization, according to Weber, affects economic life, law, administration, and religion. The essence of the rationalization process is the increasing tendency by social actors to the use of knowledge, in the context of impersonal relationships, with the aim of achieving greater control over the world around them.

---

[49] Ibid., p.204.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, translated by Talcott Parsons, Charles Scribner's sons, New York, 1958, p.78.
[52] Ibid., p.77.

The more radical Protestant groups emphasize the personal relationship between the individual and God, which considerably curtailed clerical mediation; personal asceticism; and the dichotomy between faith and reason. Weber said, "It might thus seem that the development of the spirit of capitalism is best understood as part of the development of rationalism as a whole, and could be deduced from the fundamental position of rationalism on the basic problems of life. In the process Protestantism would only have to be considered in so far as it had formed a stage prior to the development of a purely rationalistic philosophy."[53]

Rationality takes people towards modern societies. In modern societies, people have different views of the world embracing rationality, deliberate, matter-of-fact calculation of the most efficient means to accomplish a specific goal or set of goals. It denotes a shift from traditions to modernity. This change is a mode of human thinking. Modern society develops scientific thinking and rationality to explain reasons for every action whether natural or social, but a society which is based on traditions and particularly religious traditions gives importance to sentiments. Their sentiments pass from generation to generation. Therefore, all traditional societies are guided by the past. Their members evaluate particular actions as right and proper precisely because they have been accepting them for long.

Religion, if it is socially constructed as suggested by Peter Berger, is meant for the betterment of society. Then, there is no need to change or to leave one's religion rather one can improve certain features of belief system and one's understanding in terms of living a good and rational life. Lewis Gordon in his article 'Thoughts on Philosophy and Scriptures in an Age of Secularism' says, "...one cannot change the religion of a people and expect the people to continue. But one could change their theology the result of which is the appearance of the new

[53] Ibid., p.76.

atop the continuation of the old."[54] Process of secularization was also meant for the betterment and a construction of society. "The aim was to establish a certain ethic of peaceful coexistence and political order, a set of grounds for obedience, which while still theistic, even Christian, was based on those doctrines which were common to all Christian sects, or even to all theists. This could be grounded on a version of Natural Law, which like Aquinas' was indeed conceived as being independent of revelation, but still connected to theism, because the same reasoning which brings us to the law brings us to God."[55]

There are changes taking place in each and every sphere of human life. Human life is always talked about along with the nature in which it exists. Knowledge is increasing; intellectuals are questioning and trying to find out more significant roots of the very changes which are taking place in our society and in nature as well. Social facts as well as the natural facts are being understood in a way that there should be reason behind each and every change. In the modern times and during the world war phases, there was no overcrowding of churches or any observable anxiety about salvation especially in the most heavily bombarded cities. One could find after world wars, even in Europe where religion might be expected to have a firmer hold, there was no sign of spiritual revival. There was strengthening of military and anger rather than churches. During modern times, people admit that churches are of no use but still they don't like being called irreligious. For them, 'religion' and 'going to church' are two different things. This is a kind of stage where secular process does start. Hector Hawton in his book 'Men without Gods' has rightly pointed out that:

> The modern mechanic is not willing to queue up for martyrdom in his anxiety to gain paradise, or to start a street riot on the meaning of Trinity. He simply cannot understand what it is all about. One trouble is

[54] Lewis R. Gordon, "Some Thoughts on Philosophy and Scriptures in an Age of Secularism," in *Journal of Philosophy and Scripture*, Vol. 1, Issue 1, Fall 2003, p.18.
[55] Charles Taylor, "Modes of Secularism," op. cit., p.33.

that he cannot easily link up his daily routine with the ritual of the church. He deals with machines, and he is prepared to believe that the universe, like a machine, must have a designer. But once the wheels have been set in motion he does not believe that the designer interferes. A peasant can more easily pray for fine weather and a harvest than the mechanic can pray for better production. If he wants higher wages, he does not pray: he joins a union, and possibly goes on strike. The blind, unconscious forces that seem to affect his life are the law of supply and demand the trade cycle, slump and boom; but there is no tradition that these can be moved by prayer, like the weather on which a good harvest depends. This is one of the more subtle instances of what I have called the 'secular process.[56]

[56] Hector Hawton, *Men without Gods*, Watts and Co., London, 1948, pp.32-34.

Chapter 2

Secularism in India: Some Conceptual Issues

In the previous chapter, we have found that secularism is not only a doctrine or ideology but it is a pursuit of the project of Enlightenment and Progress through the replacement of the mythical and religious view of the world with the scientific and technological – industrial approach, Europe brought about a differentiation or separation of the political sphere from the religious sphere. Secularism in India is accompanied by a significant variation. "In fact, because of the variant or *Sui generis* nature of Indian secularism, the Preamble of the Indian Constitution did not contain the word secular as a signification of the state until it was done so by a 1976 amendment."[1]

Secularism in Indian Constitution

The idea of creating a 'secular state' and promoting secularism were enshrined in the constitution of India. By picking up the best features of the constitutions of advanced countries, the constituent Assembly of India prepared a secular constitution for the country. However, the word secular state did not appear in the constitution until its inclusion in the preamble through the 42nd Amendment of the Constitution in 1976, nor was secularism defined by it. To evaluate Indian State (whether secular state or not?), one needs to go through the various articles of the Constitution.

The Constitution has guaranteed equal protection before the law without any discrimination that is based on religion, caste, race, sex or place of birth in article 15. Article 16 lays down that the state cannot discriminate among citizens for purposes of public employment on any

[1] Thomas Pantham, "Secularism and Its Critics: Some Reflections," in *The Review of Politics,* Vol. 59, No. 3, Non-Western Political Thought, Summer, 1997, pp.523-540.

of the aforementioned grounds. Articles 25 and 26 provide freedom of conscience and the right to profess, practice and propagate religion and freedom to manage religious affairs, including religious institutions. The state, however, reserves to itself the right to regulate and restrict economic, financial, political, or other secular practices associated with religion and to provide for social welfare. Moreover, religious liberties are subject to public order, morality and healthy society.

Taking an optimistic position towards secularism in India, D.E. Smith says that India intends to be a secular state. "The ideal is clearly embodied in the Constitution, and it is being implemented in substantial measure."[2] While reminding us that a "completely secular state does not exist,"[3] Smith says, "India is as secular as it is democratic."[4] And despite the ever present threat of communalism, Smith's vehement argument is that "the secular state has far more than an even chance of survival in India."[5] This assessment is based on the definition that "the secular state is a state which guarantees individual and corporate freedom of religion, deals with the individual as a citizen irrespective of his religion, is not constitutionally connected to a particular religion, nor does it seek either to promote or interfere with religion."[6]

All the characteristics of Smith's secular state are incorporated in the Constitution of India. But V.P. Luthera, stressing on one aspect of Smith's definition, that is, separation of religion and state, holds that a secular state is "one which is separated from, unconnected with and not devoted to religion, or, to use a terminology which is generally employed to indicate such a relationship between the state and religion,

---

[2] D.E. Smith, *India as a Secular State,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1967, p.500.
[3] Ibid., p.499.
[4] Ibid., p.14.
[5] Ibid., p.501.
[6] Ibid., p.4.

it is a state where there is a separation of the state and the Church."[7] On the basis of this definition and historical data available to him, Luthera remarks that India "is not and cannot be a secular state."[8] While characterizing Indian Secularism, T.N. Madan skeptically writes: "At best, Indian secularism has been an inadequately defined 'attitude' (it cannot be called a philosophy of life except when one is discussing the thought of someone like Mahatma Gandhi or Maulana Azad) of 'goodwill towards all religions,' *Sarvadharma Sadbhava*; in a narrower formulation it has been a negative or defensive policy of religious neutrality (*dharmanirpekshta*) on the part of the state. In either formulation, Indian secularism achieves the opposite of its stated intentions; it trivializes religious difference as well as the notion of the unity of religions. And really fails to provide guidance for viable political action, for it is not a rooted, full blooded, and well thought out *weltanschauung*[9], it is only a stratagem."[10]

Although there is some element of truth in what Madan argues, however, in the Indian context, the idea of a secular state partly draws its significance from the fact that historically Indian society has been a multi-religious society. It must be remembered that this character antedates the advent of Muslim and Christian communities in India. One may remark in passing that it is the primary responsibility of the majority community to safeguard the secular character of the Indian state. Unless members of the minority communities experience, in their day to day living, that they are at par with members of the majority community in all situations which fall within the jurisdiction of the state, the idea of a secular state embracing all Indians will lack all substance and reality. And it is the responsibility of all religious

---

[7] Ved Prakash Luthera, *The Concept of the Secular State and India,* Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1964, p.15.

[8] Ibid., p.viii.

[9] German word *'weltanschauung'* means a particular view of life; a world view.

[10] T.N. Madan, "Secularism in Its Place," in *Religion in India,* edited by T.N. Madan, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 7th edition, 2002, orig. 1991, p.397.

communities to reformulate their traditional values and norms and reform traditional practices so as to bring them in harmony with the values and principles which govern the secular jurisdiction of the state. As Marc Galanter points out, "The Indian Constitution and legal system embody a different relation of law to religion. Indian law permits application of different bodies of family law on religious lines, permits public laws, like those of religious trusts, to be differentiated according to religion, and permits protective or compensatory discrimination in favour of disadvantaged groups, which may sometimes be determined in part by religion."[11]

Problem of *Sarvadharmasambhava*

The peculiar Indian element in the concept of secularism is the value of *sarvadharmasambhava,* that is, the attitude of equal respect for all religions. M.P. Rege points out in this regard: "This value has nothing to do with the functioning of the state. It is commended as a social and also religious value. A society in which this attitude is widespread and deeply rooted will be a secular society in this sense of secularism... the basic character of Indian society is that it is a group or federation of many religious communities and that these diverse religious traditions are living forces which determine the moral and spiritual values of their adherents, the goals they pursue in life, their whole way of life. Only a widespread attitude of 'respect' for the autonomy of other religious communities provides a viable basis for a secular state in which individuals drawn from diverse communities treat and respect each other as equals."[12]

Certain broad features of the Indian conception of the secular state have been clarified by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. The first point he makes

---

[11] Marc Galanter, "Hinduism, Secularism and the Indian Judiciary," in *Secularism and its Critics,* edited by Rajeev Bhargava, op. cit., p.270.

[12] M.P. Rege, "A Fresh Look at Secularism," in *The Secularist,* May-June 1989, pp.53-55.

is that the state is not hostile to religion or against it. In his own words: "...the religious impartiality of the Indian state is not to be confused with secularism or atheism. Secularism as here defined is in accordance with the ancient religious tradition in India. It tries to build up a fellowship of believers, not by subordinating individual qualities to the group mind but bringing them into harmony with each other. The fellowship is based on the principle of diversity in unity which alone has the quality of creativeness."[13]

Thus, secularism in the Indian context means an equal status for all religions. The argument that is put forward in support of this proposition is that it is merely an extension of the democratic principle to religion. "We hold that no one religion should be given preferential status, or unique distinction, that no one religion should be accorded special privileges in national life, or international relations, for that would be a violation of the basic principle of democracy and contrary to the best interest of religion and government."[14]

Secularization in India

In one sense, secularism in India is not easy to define but its meaning can be traced from the process of secularization. The process of secularization in India began with British rule, and became increasingly wider and deeper with the passage of years. In M.N. Srinivas' words: "British rule brought with it a process of secularization of Indian social life and culture, a tendency that gradually became stronger with the development of communications, growth of towns and cities, increased spatial mobility, and the spread of education."[15] The entire social, political and economic scenario

---

[13] S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith,* Allen and Unwin, London, 1956, p.202.
[14] Ibid.
[15] M.N. Srinivas, "Sanskritization, Westernization and Secularization," in *Essays in social and Political Philosophy,* edited by D.P. Chattopadhaya and others, ICPR, New Delhi, 1989, p.615.

changed after the advent of British rule in India. No doubt they brought technology, science and education, but communal tension also. British rulers adopted the policy of divide and rule. The economic and political competition developed between Hindu and Muslim elite leading to communal tensions. Earlier there was no need of any such word like secular but all communal tensions among the population of India pressurized her to divide into parts.[16]

M.N. Srinivas claims that secularization is the more general process, affecting all Indians but it would be true to say that secularization is more marked among the urban and educated groups. He emphasizes on the changes in religious practices among Hindus and He says, "The term 'secularization' implies that what was previously regarded as religious is now ceasing to be such, and it also implies a process of differentiation which results in the various aspects of society, economic, political, legal and moral, becoming increasingly discrete in relation to each other. The distinction between Church and State, and the Indian concept of a secular state, both assume the existence of such differentiation."[17]

Another essential element in secularization, for Srinivas, is 'rationalism', a "comprehensive expression applied to various theoretical and practical tendencies which aim to interpret the universe purely in terms of thought, or which aim to regulate individual and social life in accordance with the principles of reason and to eliminate as far as possible or to relegate to the background everything

---

[16] Asghar Ali Engineer, "Secularism in India," in *The Milli Gazette Online,* 23 June 2006, taken from http://www.milligazette.com/dailyupdate/2006/20060623_secular_india.htm, retrieved on 12.03.2008.

[17] M.N. Srinivas, op. cit., p.615.

irrational."[18] In this process, the traditional beliefs and ideas get replaced by modern knowledge.

The Indian cultural element was also responsible for welcoming the process of secularization. It was very different from the social set up of the West but there were stratifications in society that led it towards mobility. And considering the stratification among Hindus, they were more affected by the secularization process than any other religious group in India as; first, "the concepts of pollution and purity which are central as well as pervasive in Hinduism were greatly weakened as a result of the operation of a variety of factors."[19] The process has brought changes in life styles, altered the earlier *Brahminik* rules of pollution. Srinivas observes that "the strengthening of the forces of secularization has resulted in greater concern with cleanliness and hygiene than with purity. For instance, the more educated customers show concern about cleanliness in coffee shops and not about caste. Many of them prefer Western-style 'coffee houses' as they appear to be cleaner, quieter, and serve novel items. Often these 'coffee houses' serve both vegetarian and non-vegetarian food, and Brahmin youths are found experimenting with omelettes and other forbidden food."[20]

As a result of increased secularization and mobility, and the spread of an equalitarian ideology, the caste system is no longer perpetuating values traditionally considered to be an essential part of Hinduism. The process was not essentially anti-religious, but only against revelation and unreason.

---

[18] Quoted from *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences,* Vol. XIII, p.113 in M.N. Srinivas, op. cit., p.616.
[19] M.N. Srinivas, op. cit., p.616.
[20] Ibid., p.617.

Secularism and Democracy

How does democracy strengthen the process of secularization? The secular principle of the Indian state, which is also embedded in the democratic political system, has been under serious assault since the fifth decade of Independence. This challenge mounted by the Hindutva forces still exists given the penetration of these forces in the institutions of the state during their stint in power. As a consequence of this erosion of secularism, large sections of the minorities have never felt fully secure and have been subjected to periodic violence. The political system has survived such anti-secular assaults but creeping communalism continues to weaken its secular basis.

Democratic institutions give people the opportunity to participate in deliberations and dialectics, to press for justice and equity, and to reject socially unacceptable policies. These are matters of public action. Institutions make room for such action and allow its free use. But institutions alone cannot yield public action in any mechanical way. Democratic institutions cannot substitute for public action and participatory politics.

There are a number of ways one can try to reduce the gap between democratic institutions and practice. For instance, achieving greater democracy at the local levels, especially by way of initiatives to promote panchayati administration and decisional power can go a long way in transforming the practice and quality of Indian democracy. Similarly, democratic institutions cannot function adequately if political leaders, judges, civil servants and others could be induced to act on private and special interests.

In contemporary philosophical discussions of democracy, one can broadly identify three influential conceptions of democracy: liberal, participatory and deliberative democracy. Liberal democracy, especially the one articulated by Rawls, recognizes a set of basic

liberties and tries to address the demands of equality and efficiency in the economic sphere. Participatory democracy emphasizes the idea that citizens should actively participate in politics. And deliberative democracy stresses the idea that individuals as free and autonomous persons engage with one another in open and public deliberation on issue of common concerns. As it is not required for anyone to limit one's views on democracy to any one particular conception, these cannot really be the isolated conceptions of democracy, since democratic politics requires the protection of political freedom as well as public participation and social deliberation. Broadly speaking, democracy is integrally linked with "public reasoning,"[21] and the three above mentioned features all fit into this broad understanding of democracy.

Three essential features of public reasoning especially receive continuous attention, according to Dr. Sen are:

1. Public reasoning involves respect for pluralism and an attitude of tolerance for different points of view and lifestyles.
2. Public reasoning demands an open public discussion of issues of common concern.
3. Public reasoning encourages political commitment and participation of people in public action for the transformation of society.

He says the seeds of democracy and the practice of public reasoning are deeply embedded in Indian history and tradition for a very long time; however, the achievements at present in India are still far short of

[21]Prof. Amartya Sen, in an interview speaks to John M. Alexander about the role and importance of public reasoning in approaching the issues of democracy, secularism and social justice in contemporary India. "Democracy," says Sen "is integrally linked with public reasoning." Edited by Parth Sanyal in "Indian Democracy and Public Reasoning," *Frontline*, India's National Magazine from the publishers of The Hindu, Vol. 22, Issue 04, Feb. 12-25, 2005.

these ideals. In order to advance different kinds of freedoms, solidarity can play an instrumental role. A sense of solidarity, for instance, can play a positive role in making people accept that there needs to be a reduction of inequality in society.[22] Therefore, solidarity is important for the success of democracy.

By associating secularism primarily with the separation of religion from politics, these writings make secularism a contingent attribute of democracy. Indeed they make secularism a redundant, if not a superfluous, concept because complete separation of religion from politics and Church from state is almost impossible to achieve, and even the secular democracies of the West rarely adhere to this principle. Against the belief that secularism entails the separation of religion from politics, what needs to be underlined is that European states are deemed to be secular not because they dissociate religion from politics, but because they accord overall primacy to the principle of 'equal rights of all individuals as citizens of the polity'.

The commitment to secularism is a necessary aspect of every democracy because it represents religious non-discrimination and equal citizenship rights. This needs to be reiterated because in countries like India, both the advocates and the critics of secularism ignore this dimension. Instead of compelling the state to protect equally the civil rights of all groups and communities, they debate the necessity of separation, or alternately, the viability of segregating the religious and the political domain.

[22] Ibid.

> "Justice represents an ideal form of order, which we seek to create through the whole complex of social and legal institutions in order to ensure that we can live our lives without being exploited, dominated, oppressed, marginalized and made powerless."[23]

Social justice is an important issue and a philosophical problem to deal with in politics, religion and civil society. People wish to live in a just society, but different political ideologies have different conceptions of what a 'just society' actually is. The term 'social justice' is often employed by the political left to describe a society with a greater degree of economic egalitarianism, which may be achieved through progressive taxation, income redistribution, or property redistribution. The right wing also uses the term social justice, but generally believes that a just society is best achieved through the operation of a free market, which they believe provides equality of opportunity and promotes philanthropy and charity. But both the right and the left tend to agree on the importance of rule of law, human right, and some form of a welfare society.[24]

It is an established fact that if a society fails in assuring the protection from external invasions, internal exploitation, scolding, unlawful burdens, use of force, and violence then the members of such society cannot live a normal life free from the tensions of uncertainty, speculation, fear and insecurity. Such disordered society cannot be called a just society. Thus it is the duty of the makers of a society to make arrangements for the security of the members.[25] "Our social being is reflected in received practices, institutions, rules and roles

---

[23] Satya P. Gautam, "Interrogating Injustice: Institutional and Personal Contexts," in *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences,* Vol. VII, No. 1, 2000, p.90.

[24] Carroll Quigley, *The Evolution of Civilizations: an Introduction to Historical Analysis*, 2nd edition, Liberty Fund, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1979, p.83.

[25] Satya P. Gautam, *Samaj Darshan,*(my translation from Hindi), Haryana Sahitya Academy, Panchkula, reprinted 2004, orig. 1991, p.133.

through which we find meaning in our lives. While learning to participate in the practices of the community in which we are born and live, we also learn to evaluate, transform and reconstitute the pre-given structures of practices, institutions, meanings and actions. This critical reconstituting capacity is the very source of our freedom and human dignity."[26] In a just society one can exercise one's freedom as Holyoake also suggests, and this freedom enables one to think over preconceived notions and to restructure them by using one's freedom. "The sources of injustice may be traced in such social structures of power, domination, oppression and exploitation that either obstruct the realization of our human potentials or enable some individuals or communities to treat other individuals and/or communities as less than being human."[27] Is secularism required for attaining social justice? Can we consider secular society a just society? Does secular society have enough measure to counter the fundamental and communal forces in democratic society? Secularism is an ideology within the democratic space which provides measures to counter the discrimination on the ground of various ethnic and cultural differences. It provides the right solution to above mentioned problems if state adopts it properly.

Problem of Failure

Whether secularism in India has been a success or a failure? This is, in fact, a relative issue; secularism has succeeded in some fields while in some others, it has not. In the wake of growing communalism, it is often alleged that secularism in India has failed to serve its purpose. The decade of 1980s has witnessed an intensification of communalism and a consolidation of sentiments around symbol of religious identities and perception of threat to these identities.[28] Communal ideologies

---

[26] Satya P. Gautam, op. cit., pp.84-85.

[27] Ibid., p.85.

[28] Harbans Mukhia, "Communalism and Indian Polity," in *Secularism and Indian Polity*, edited by Bidyut Chakrabarty, Segment Book Distributors, New Delhi, 1990, pp.82-92.

have gained much wider social acceptance forcing a retreat from even the "liberal rhetoric" of secularism. Madan remarks that "...secularism as an alien cultural ideology, which lacks the support of the state, has failed to make the desired headway in India. What have done so are, apparently and by general agreement, Hindu revivalism and Muslim and Sikh fundamentalism."[29] For the failure of secularism in India the role of state in communalizing the political process in overt or covert ways is responsible. The state's indifference and neglect of communalism have given the opportunity for the reassertion of communalism which has been promoted by communal forces. Communal politics has also become a form of cultural nationalism. Several cultural organizations have emerged with the aim of creating among Hindus a sense of belonging to a homogenous and centralized entity.

Comparing India and the West

The Indian variety of secularism is different from the Western secularism. The specific Indian-ness of the notion of secularism is not only recognized but deliberately emphasized in contrast to the European notion of secularism. In Europe the vision of secularism evolved as the negation of all things religious particularly in political functioning, in India, it means the opposite, namely, equal respect for all religions. The Sanskrit phrase "*sarvadharmasambhava*" is the most often quoted ideal of the Indian vision of secular state and society.

It is needed to draw a distinction between secularism as a general frame for the overall living by individuals and societies, and secularism as a politically encapsulated and institutionalized concept. In the west, our reference model, which we have not rejected in principle but have rejected in practice, secularism as an overall frame has been evolving since the collapse of the medieval Christian culture

[29] T.N. Madan, op. cit., p.407-408.

and civilization. This process was signaled by the Renaissance and the reformation, and culminated in the dreams and hopes of the Enlightenment of the 19th century. The basic points of difference between India and West are their respective specificities of historical development. The nature and the structure of the religious traditions of the two societies against which this secular vision was invoked are completely different.

The Indian situation is qualitatively different from the West. Hinduism is an unstructured religion, though its potentialities to be structured are not negligible. "It is an extraordinary combination of openness at the level of belief and theology and at the level of practice, but quite rigid at the level of institutional structuration."[30]

There is even a case for arguing that Hinduism is not a religion at all, and as, Gandhiji saw, a system of ethics and right conduct. The secularistic project is alien to a society in which religion permits at several key points a wide range of options for both individuals and communities. "Hinduism has not been institutionalized in terms of a Church or a textually enshrined creed."[31] The absence of religious orthodoxy in Hinduism and furthermore its philosophical notion of tolerance did not give rise to struggle for establishing a secular ordering of life. K. Raghvendra Rao points out that "the very absence of over-religiousness of the kind Christianity developed in the West makes the secular problematic irrelevant to us."[32]

As it is noticed that in the Western countries, there is complete demarcation between the sacred and the secular life of people, the two are governed by two different institutional set ups, namely, the church

---

[30] K. Raghavendra Rao, "Secularism, Communalism and Democracy in India: Some Theoretical Issues," in *Secularism and Indian Polity*, edited by Bidyut Chakrabarty, op. cit., p.42.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.

and the state respectively. But here in India secularism is not an outcome of a struggle against religious authorities, rather it was conceptualized in the course of freedom struggle. Apart from this Indian social life has been encompassed by religion. There has been no sphere in one's life which is not guided by some religio-cultural notions.

Thus, secularism in the west was revolt against the power of the Catholic Church over the state. The creation of Protestants was against the only way of the church, conformity to its interpretation of beliefs and denial of the right to question the basics. Secularism in the West is usually taken to be emphasizing the separation of state and religion, whereas Indian secularism stresses the equal tolerance of all religions, that is, *sarvadharmasambhava.* In the West, as noted above, secularism usually refers to the state's separation from, or indifference toward, religion. Hence the Western antonym of "secular" is "religious". In India, by contrast, it is "communal."

Marxian Perspective

M.N. Roy, the great social thinker and revolutionary, concluded his masterly survey of western thought with the categorical statement that only a restated materialism could provide the metaphysical foundation for the view of life which needed – "a secular humanist ethics and a revolutionary social philosophy."[33] Man could be made spiritually free only by abolishing the super-natural. "The desire for freedom in social and political life, being an expression of the basic human urge for spiritual freedom, can be satisfied only by…a world view which does away with the necessity of assuming a supernatural power or metaphysical sanction."[34]

---

[33] P.B. Gajendragadkar, *Secularism and the Constitution of India,* Bombay University Press, Bombay, 1971, pp.10-11.

[34] M.N. Roy, *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution,* Renaissance Publishers, Calcutta, 1955, Vol. 2, p.298, quoted in P.B. Gajendragadkar, op. cit., p.11.

According to Roy, true spiritual freedom means not freedom to choose from among various religious doctrines, but freedom of the human spirit from the tyranny of all of them. Marxist thinkers and scholars tend to reject religion as "false consciousness" and the source of communalism. In Bipan Chandra's words: "...communalism was an expression of and deeply rooted in the interests, aspirations, outlook and attitudes and psychology and 'point of view' of the middle classes in a social situation characterized by economic stagnation and the absence of a vigorous struggle to transform society – the communal question was a petty bourgeois question par excellence. At the same time, while communalism was able to draw supporters from all classes of people, its main social base was to be found in the middle class or the petty bourgeoisie."[35]

Considering communalism as "a dangerously disruptive phenomenon and a potent threat to Indian peoples' struggle for a better life," Randhir Singh points out certain weaknesses. Instead of attributing communalism to the drive for worldly gain, he insists on explaining "communalism's interconnections in the realm of ideology and culture and other important domains of contemporary Indian society."[36] He attributes the phenomenon of communalism to the "corrupt and corrupting capitalist socio-economic development."[37] He further argues that what is crucial in understanding communalism in its complexity is to grasp the significance of the economic base and its structural logic. He points out that "the heightening of communalism today is simultaneously the product of social, moral and political crisis and the reactions of the ruling classes to this crisis."[38] Showing his dissatisfaction towards secularism in India to counter the forces of

---

[35] Bipan Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India,* Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1984, pp.40-41.

[36] Randhir Singh, "communalism and the Struggle against Communalism: A Marxist View," in *Social Scientist,* Vol. 18, No. 8-9, August-September 1990, pp.4-21.

[37] Randhir Singh, "Theorizing communalism: A fragmentary note in the Marxist mode," in *Economic and Political Weekly,* Vol. XXIII, No. 3, pp.15-47.

[38] Ibid.

communalism, Randhir Singh writes: "...secularism as propagated in India is not an adequate answer even to the problem of religion insofar as religion, in its diverse manifestation, is indeed an important issue in understanding and fighting communalism. *Sarvadharmasambhava* is hardly secularism – it is far more a celebration of all kinds of religion and religiosity. The conventional liberal view, which would treat religion as 'a private affair', is a permissible tactical position, but only that – it evades all the real or difficult issues involved."[39]

S. Khan in his article, 'Toward Marxist Understanding of Secularism', defines secularism in this way: "...secularism should be defined in a broader, more encompassing sense as not simply a state of affairs, e.g., separation of church and state, or merely as an ideology (the equivalent mistake to defining communalism as solely an ideology), but a many sided (at both material and ideological level) process involving the progressive decline of religious influence in the economic, political and social life of human beings and even more their private habits and motivations."[40]

Such a dynamic, as opposed to static definition, which invokes a number of levels of human existence does not draw too strict or rigid a boundary between the public and private domain. Thus, in Marxist terminology, it is the man who makes religion, religion does not make man.[41] "Religion is the self-consciousness and self-feeling of man who has either not yet found himself or has already lost himself again. It is the fantastic realization of the human essence because the human essence has no true reality. The struggle against religion is therefore medially the fight against the other world of which religion is the spiritual aroma."[42]

---

[39] Randhir Singh, "communalism and the Struggle against Communalism: A Marxist View," in *Social Scientist,* op. cit., pp.4-21.

[40] S. Khan, "Towards a Marxist Understanding of Secularism," in *Economic and Political Weekly,* Vol. XXII, No. 10, March 7th, 1987, pp.405-409.

[41] Sunil Kumar, *Communalism and Secularism in Indian Politics: Study of BJP,* Rawat Publications, Jaipur and New Delhi, 2001, p.298.

[42] Namboodiripad, "Opium of the people: Marxist Theory and Religion," quoted in Sunil Kumar, op. cit., p.298.

Gandhian Perspective

Though Gandhi never called himself secular, his view of religion is pretty broad. He considered religion as a value system and not this or that religion, or any particular religion. He emphasized the inseparability of religion and politics and the superiority of the former over the latter. "For me," he said, "every, the tiniest, activity is governed by what I consider to be my religion."[43] Further, "those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means."[44] The Gandhian idea has been put in the following way by Madan: "For Gandhi religion was the source of absolute value and hence constitutive of social life; politics were the arena of public interest; without the former the latter would be debased. While it was the obligation of the state to ensure that every religion was free to develop according to its own genius, no religion which depended upon state support deserved to survive. In other words, the inseparability of religion and politics in the Indian context, and generally, was for Gandhi fundamentally a distinct issue from the separation of the state from the church in Christendom. When he did advocate that 'religion and state should be separate', he clarified that this was to limit the role of the state to 'secular welfare' and to allow no admittance into the religious life of the people."[45]

As far as Mahatma Gandhi and secularism is concerned, he restated the traditional point of view in the changed context of the twentieth century, emphasizing the inseparability of religion and politics and the superiority of the former over the latter. For Gandhi, religion was of absolute value and hence constitutive of social life; politics was the arena of public interest; and without the former later would become

---

[43] M.K. Gandhi quoted in T.N. Madan, "Secularism in its Place," in *Religion in India*, edited by T.N. Madan, op. cit., pp.400-401.

[44] Ibid., p.401.

[45] T.N. Madan, "Whither Indian Secularism?" in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3, July 1993, pp.667-697.

debased, rootless. His secularism rested on the notion that all religion are true, that they give meaning to the moral life, and that Indian society can be built on a community of religious communities. He also asserted that while it was the obligation of the state to ensure that every religion was free to develop according to its own genius, no religion which depended upon state support deserved to survive.

Mahatma Gandhi is often referred to as the spiritual father of Indian secularism. But for Prof. T.N. Madan, Gandhi has always been inaccurately and unjustly called a secularist. He says, "...if the essence of all varieties of secularism is the demarcation of boundaries between the sacred and secular domains per se, then Gandhi would have had no use for any such ideology."[46]

It means Gandhi does not emphasize on secularism in the sense that his vision was holistic with religion as its constitutive principle. He emphasized that religion is the source of value for judging the worth of all worldly goals and actions. Gandhi was very sensitive to the conditions and demands of particular times and places. He was very careful with his use of words. He extended the principle of religion of the citizen to the state.

For Gandhi, "it was the citizen's sense of moral responsibility for his actions that ultimately determined the character of the state."[47] He emphasized that state should undoubtedly be secular. Everyone in it should be entitled to profess his religion but he was totally against the state religion or state support for any religion. But at the personal level, it is not possible to stay apart from religion.

---

[46] Ibid.

[47] Bhikhu Parekh, *Gandhi's political Philosophy,* Macmillan, London, 1989, p.124.

"Every Age," Gandhi wrote, "is known to have its predominant mode of spiritual effort best suited for the attainment of *moksha*[48]...in this age only political *sanyasis*[49] can fulfill and adorn the ideal of *sannyasa*[50]." Consequently, "no Indian who aspires to follow the way of true religion can afford to remain aloof from politics."[51] Talking with a Christian Missionary in 1946, Gandhi said: "If I were a dictator, religion and state would be separate. I swear by my religion. I will die for it. But it is my personal affair. The state has nothing to do with it. The state would look after you secular welfare, health, communications, foreign relations, currency and so on, but not your or my religion. That is everybody's personal concern."[52]

Following the Gandhian perspective, it can be said that every person who believes in one religion and understand its meaning will definitely understand the other. In Indian context, the word '*dharma*' is used to refer to the word 'religion'. That is why secular is translated as *dharmanirpeksha* and secularism as *dharmanirpekshta.* In Gandhi's sense, this is '*Sarvadharmasambhava*'. The word *dharma* has further relations with valuable aspects of social concern, like duty, nature, etc. "The problems which concern the questions regarding the nature of reality or the relation between man and the universe are classified as under *Dharma.*" [53]

The word *Dharma* was used in ancient India in a number of ways. For example, it was used to signify (i) a characteristic (e.g. Color or

---

[48] Sanskrit word '*moksha*' means 'Salvation'.
[49] Sanskrit word '*sanyasis*' means 'Saints'.
[50] Sanskrit word '*sannyasa*' means 'Renunciation'.
[51] Bhikhu Parekh, op. cit., p.100.
[52] Ibid., p.204.
[53] S.S. Barlingay, *A Modern Introduction to Indian Ethics*, Penman Publishers, Delhi, p.50.

fragrance is a characteristic of flower), or to point out the concepts of (ii) justice, (iii) law, (iv) duty or indicate (v) human end.[54]

The word *Dharma* which is obviously derived from the root '*dhr*' means to support or to sustain. S.N. Dhyani writes, "*Dharma* is that which prevents us from going down, ruining ourselves in any manner or respect whatsoever and makes for our welfare, progress and uplift all-round."[55] It certainly covers 'religious ordinances of the Veda', 'fixed principles', 'rules of conduct', 'the privileges', duties and obligations of man in different contexts and in different stages of his life.[56] It is comprehensive of all moral laws.

The *Mimansakas*[57], especially *Kumarila*[58], stretches the meaning of *dharma* to include all those means which are used to attain the highest merit.[59] The *Purvamimansa sutra* defines *Dharma* as '*Codana laksano rthah*'. It comes to mean that a thing which has authority of Vedic order is Dharma. He also says that dharma is *sreyas*, which is supreme satisfaction or bliss.[60] The authorities for their being, for attaining satisfaction are the orders of the Vedic sentences which motivate man to do any action. Therefore, the things, their specialties and acts constitute dharma.

The word *dharma* in *Sanatana Dharma* is believed as Hindu Religion has vast meanings. Dharma means the nature of every entity in the creation from which it can never be alienated and which plays its role

---

[54] K.S. Mathur, "Hindu Values of Life: Karma and Dharma," in *Religion in India,* edited by T.N. Madan, Oxford University Press, 7th edition, 2002, pp.71-77.
[55] S.N. Dhyani, *Secularism: socio-legal issues,* Rawat Publications, Jaipur and New Delhi, 1996, p.29.
[56] S.S. Barlingay, op. cit., p.81.
[57] Followers of *Mimansa* School of Indian philosophy.
[58] A Philosopher of Mimamsa School of Indian Philosophy: '*Kumarila Bhatt*' (c.700 A.D.).
[59] S.S. Barlingay, op. cit., p.82.
[60] Ibid., p.83.

in accordance with it. The *dharma* of water is to flow downwards and to make everyone wet. It can be good as well as bad.

If one considers the reality of God as the only reality for creation, then one's dharma is one's divinity because man's reality is divinity. *Dharma* also means our role of living in this innate nature. This living manifests itself in our conduct of truth, righteousness, justice and compassion to secure our happiness by our faith in the reality of God as our security against want, disease and fear of all kinds. We all show some time or the other from our birth all these signs of divinity. Whether anyone is aware of or believes in it or not, one's *dharma* is one's divinity.[61]

Another meaning of *dharma* is duty. We all have our duties towards others and ourselves. We have no rights to lay a claim for them upon others, society, state or even upon God. The duty of each in society brings results for others to receive. Social problems arise when we claim what we receive as our right. With love as the underlying force for human existence, duties motivated by love become a pleasure. It is mother's duty to nourish her children. The children have no rights to be nourished by the mother. It is grown-up children's duty to nourish and care for their spouses, children, old parents and society.

A society resting on duties provides for all that its members need because its motivating force, love which translated into selflessness, spots what needs to be attended to for all around.[62] A society emphasizing any right heads for disaster because all rights arise from selfish desires. Desires are endless for fulfillment. No society can, however, exist without its members accepting a minimum of duties for the sustenance of society itself. No state lays down these duties in its

---

[61] Prakash Narain, *A Practical Indian Philosophy*, Jayyed Press, Delhi, 2001, pp.98-99.
[62] Ibid., p.98.

constitution because they are universal or *dharma*. No religion can exist to sustain its followers without these minimum duties or *dharma*.

So, in practice every follower of every religion lives in these minimum livable parts of his religion. This livable religion cannot hurt any follower of any other religion because it is common in all. This makes *dharma* or livable part of every religion, cement for unity, harmonious society and amity. This is what India experimented by living in it for millenniums. All beliefs other than this minimum *dharma* are a super-imposition that is changeable, avoidable or irrelevant to the survival of human beings. If these superimposed beliefs disturb this divine existence of human beings they last temporarily as an aberration in a society. They disappear soon for human society to continue to thrive on its dharma. This minimum dharma is innate to man regardless of his region or his religion.[63]

Religion is recognized through its basic and observable signs. *Dharma* has no such signs. *Dharma* has self-control for selflessness that is the highest form of love for which we are responsible. "We live in dharma because it answers daily the question – why should I think, speak or act in a particular way? None of the practices that distinguish a religion can answer any or all questions that we face daily. *Dharma* is not Hindu or Muslim or Christian. It is everyone's innate inalienable nature. Politics is a part of our life and cannot be separated from our *dharma*. Yet politics should never be mixed up with any religion because some beliefs and practices of religions divide and separate its followers from others."[64]

In a speech on *Swadeshi* delivered in Madras on 14 February, 1916, Gandhi said:

---

[63] K.S. Mathur, op. cit., pp.71-77.
[64] Prakash Narain, op. cit., pp.98-99.

"Main yeh nahin manata ki Dharam ka Rajniti se koi vasta nahin hai. Dharamrahit Rajniti shav ke saman hai, jise dafna dena hi uchit hai."[65]

Thus, it is not important that religion should be separated from politics. *Dharma* neither confines man to his personal God nor denies the role of God in worldly affairs. It unites mankind without distinction being a Hindu or Muslim or Christian with unassailable conviction that the same God pervades in all beings. Such a cosmic religion with cosmic outlook has been the foundation of politics, law, morality, culture, philosophy and everything. And *dharmanirpekshta* which is commonly considered, and is even today generally used as, the correct translation of secular is actually not the right word to express neutrality between different faiths and religions. *Dharma* stands for morality and ethical conduct. If ever a question of ethics arises, one should never be neutral. If one has different faiths in one's mind distinguished by their rituals, mythologies and beliefs. If one wants to be neutral between them, then the correct expression is *panthanirpeksha*. Rituals, mythology, superstitions, modes of worship – whatever distinguishes one religion from another – belong to the domain of *pantha*. The term inserted in the Hindi version of the amendment to India's Constitution and officially we are now a *panthanirpeksha*, and not a *dharmanirpeksha* nation.[66]

In other words, Gandhi's basic approach to secularism in India was derived not only from abstract principles and ideals; his insight into the process of secularization was derived from his empirical view and his insight into the complexity of the Indian social structure. Gandhi had a dynamic and not a static view of the Indian social structure. He

---

[65]My Translation: "I don,t agree that *Dharma* is indifferent to politics. Politics without religion is like a dead soul which should be disposed off." Gandhi quoted in Sunil Kumar, op. cit., p.301.

[66] Lalit Mohan, "What Secular Means," in *The Times of India*, New Delhi, Tuesday, March 18, 2008.

recognized, from the point of view of reconstruction of the Indian polity, the importance of multi-religious, regional economies, societies and cultures in a country of sub continental dimensions like India. Again in Gandhi's view "the division between classes and masses" is not less basic and important than the division between Hindus and Muslims. Gandhi's *Ramrajya*[67] is an idealized expression of a society free from "the division between the classes and the masses"; it was a peasants' Utopia and not a Hindu Raj. Clarifying his concept of *Ramrajya*, Gandhi stated that it was not Hindu raj. It was according to Gandhi, "the sovereignty of the people based on pure moral rationality."[68] Gandhi explained that "whom we consider as illiterate and ignorant have a better understanding of *Ramrajya* than the educated classes." [69] He said, "A little study of the present-day mentality of the people (both Hindus and Muslims) will show that according to the popular concept *Swaraj* is synonyms with *Ramrajya* – the establishment of the Kingdom of Righteousness on earth."[70]

Gandhi thus interpreted secularism in terms of respect of all religions and found no inconsistency between his espousal of the idea of a secular state and true religiosity; his approach, therefore, ruled out the prospect of confrontation between the sacred and the secular which characterized the secularization process of Western societies.

Nehruvian Perspective

At the conceptual level, the indissoluble link between Indian nationalism and secularism finds further affirmation, clarification and sophistication in Jawaharlal Nehru's thought. Reaffirming Gandhi's

---

[67] Divine Kingdom of Lord Rama: It is described in Hindu Mythology '*Ramayana*' where peace, prosperity and serenity prevail in society.

[68] M.K. Gandhi, *Political and National Life and Affairs*, Vol. II, compiled by V.B. Kher, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1967, p.42.

[69] Ibid., p.307.

[70] Ibid.

idea, Nehru stated: "In a country like India, which has many faiths and religions, no real nationalism can be built except on the basis of secularity. Any narrower approach must exclude a section of the population and then nationalism itself will have a restricted meaning than it should possess... We have not only to live upto the ideals proclaimed in our Constitution, but make them a part of our thinking and living and thus build up a really integrated nation. That does not mean absence of religion, but putting religion on a different plane from that of normal political and social life. Any other approach in India would mean the breaking up of India."[71]

While Gandhi put his faith in the reformed, ethically refined individual in creating a better if not ideal society; Jawaharlal Nehru considered the shaping of suitable institutions as the best means to achieve the same goal. And of all the modern institutions it was the state which he believed would be the principle agency of social change. However, Nehru admitted: "Our Constitution lays down that we are a secular state, but it must be admitted that this is not wholly reflected in our mass living and thinking. In a country like England, the state is...allied to one particular religion...Nevertheless, the state and the people there function in a largely secular way. Society, therefore, in England is more advanced in this respect than in India; even through our Constitution may be, in this matter more advanced."[72]

Thus Nehru considered religion to be a hindrance to social change and progress a tendency which is inherent in human society. He felt that the belief in a supernatural agency which ordains everything has led to certain irresponsibility on the social plane, and emotion and sentimentality have taken the place of reasoned thought and "scientific temper." He asserted while writing on secular state in India: "I am

---

[71] Jawaharlal Nehru in, *Jawaharlal Nehru: An Anthology*, edited by Sarvapalli Gopal, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1983, pp.330-331.
[72] Ibid.

convinced that the future government of free India must be secular in the sense that the government will not associate itself directly with any religious functions...any government of India which infringes this rule of religious freedom takes upon itself a grave responsibility."[73]

Thus, Nehru's understanding of religion runs completely in the opposite direction than that of Gandhi. He argues with G.K. Chesterton's comparison of religion with that of a fossil, "which is the form of an animal or organism from which all its own organic substance has entirely disappeared, but which has kept its shape, because it has been filled up by some totally different substance."[74] He further adds, "The word 'religion' has lost all precise significance (if it ever had) and only causes confusion and gives rise to interminable debate and argument, when often enough entirely different meanings are attached to it. It would be far better if it was dropped from use altogether and other words with more limited meanings were used instead...."[75]

Thus he prefers words like theology, philosophy, morals, ethics, spirituality, metaphysics, duty, ceremonials etc. because these words, though vague enough, are more limited in range than religion. What is more important is that these words have not yet attached themselves, to the same extent, the passions and emotion that surround and envelop the word religion.

To Nehru, the political and economic aspect of the Hindu-Muslim question was like this: "the rising and economically better equipped middle-class (Hindu) was resisted and checked to some extent by part of the feudal landlord class (Muslim). The Hindu landlords were often closely connected with their bourgeoisie, and thus remained neutral or

[73] Ibid., p.102.
[74] Nehru, *Selected Readings: Years of Struggle,* Compiled by Arjun Dev, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1989, p.175.
[75] Ibid., p.177.

even sympathetic to the middle-class demands which were often influenced by them."[76] The masses and the lower middle classes on either side were not in the picture at all. His understanding of communalism, then, was that "...groups of upper class people try to cover up their own class interests by making it appear that they stand for the communal demands of religious minorities or majorities. A critical examination of the various communal demands put forward on behalf of Hindus, Muslims or others reveal that they have nothing to do with the masses. At the most they deal with some jobs for a few of the unemployed intellectuals."[77]

Nehru was highly critical of the communal organizations, especially the Hindu *Mahasabha*. He did not find any difference between the two types of communalism. "The Hindu Mahasabha is always laying stress on its own irreproachable nationalism when it criticizes Muslim communalism. That the Muslim organizations have shown themselves to be quite extraordinarily communal has been patent to everybody. The Mahasabha's communalism has not been so obvious, as it masquerades under a nationalist cloak."[78]

To him both types of communalism are not opposed to each other, "...for however much Hindu and Muslim communalists attack each other in public, they cooperate in the Assembly and elsewhere in helping the Government to pass reactionary measures."[79]

But he was convinced "that the real remedy lies in a diversion of interest from the myths that have been fostered and have grown up round the communal question to the realities of today."[80] The talks

---

[76] Nehru's speech on Communalism, edited by N.C. Gupta, Sampradayikta Virodhi Committee, New Delhi, 1965, p.37.
[77] Ibid., p.25.
[78] Ibid., p.41.
[79] Ibid., p.43.
[80] Ibid., p.25.

about Muslim and Hindu cultures were, he believed, figments of a few imaginations only. The time would come, he felt, when not only this division of Hindu and Muslim cultures would be obliterated but the whole concept of national cultures would have no meaning. "The day of even national cultures is rapidly passing and the world is becoming one cultural unit. Nations may retain, and will retain for a long time much that is peculiar to them – language, habits, ways of thinking, etc. – but the machine age and science, with swift travel, constant supply of world news, radio, cinema etc., will make them more and more uniform. No one can fight against this inevitable tendency, and only a world catastrophe which shatters modern civilization can really check it. There are certainly many differences between the traditional Hindu and Muslim philosophies of life. But these differences are hardly noticeable when both of them are compared to the modern scientific and industrial outlook of life, for between this latter and the former two there is a wide gulf. The real struggle in India is not between Hindu culture and Muslim culture, but between these two and the conquering scientific culture of modern civilization."[81]

Nehru had a very clear insight into the dual character of religion derived from his understanding of history. Religion, specially organized religion, was "blind belief and reaction, dogma and bigotry, superstition and exploitation and the preservation of vested interests." But religion was also a moral force "which supplied a deep, inner craving of human beings" and "which has brought peace and comfort to innumerable tortured souls." Nehru's approach to secularism is, therefore, based on an uncompromising critique of religion in the first sense and a deep appreciation and respect for religion in the second sense. Nehru quotes approvingly a modern definition of religion. According to this definition; "Religion is whatever introduces genuine perspective into piecemeal and shifting episodes of existence" or again "any activity pursued on behalf of an ideal end against obstacles, and

[81] Ibid., p.45.

inspite of threats of personal loss, because of a conviction of its general and enduring value." Nehru is prepared to be "a humble camp-follower of this kind of religion."[82]

The concept of secularism is rooted in the concept of equality. Nehru's exposition of secularism is rooted in the affirmation of social and political equality. To quote Nehru again: "We call our state a secular one. The word 'secular' is not a very happy one. And yet for want of a better word, we have used it. What exactly does it mean? It does not obviously mean a state where religion is discouraged. It means freedom of religion and conscience including freedom for those who have no religion, subject only to their not interfering with each other or with the basic conceptions of our state...The word secular, however, conveys something much more to me, although that might not be its dictionary meaning. It conveys the idea of social and political equality. Thus, a caste-ridden society is not properly secular. I have no desire to interfere with any person's belief but when those beliefs become petrified in caste divisions, undoubtedly they affect the social structure of the state. They prevent us from realizing the idea of equality which we claim to place before ourselves."[83]

---

[82] Jawaharlal Nehru quoted in P.C. Joshi, *Secularism and Development: The Indian Experiment,* Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1995, p.6.
[83] Ibid., p.8.

Chapter 3

Secularism in India: Some Socio-Political Issues

India is a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society. Secularism is a dire necessity for society's survival in a diverse society like India. If a plurality of groups is to function as a minimally interrelated society functioning on the basis of minimal trust, the political system has to generate a frame of reasonable parity between the groups. In India "where religion is an everyday mode, not a sociological dramatization, secularism cannot mean a structural separation between the religious and the secular, but an arrangement in which all group identities contingently 'religious', enjoy a fair."[1] This is Gandhian secularism, if one wants to persist in using the term secularism, which is based not on the exclusion of the "religious" but a re-location of the religious as the secular. The wisdom of Gandhiji can be seen when we realize that this is what Indian secularism has turned out to be in practice, not an abolition of the religious category in politics but a religious parity within the political framework.[2]

We need to distinguish between "process" of secularization and "ideology" of secularism. One may say that the process of secularization is something that happens almost independent of the will of the individual actors, deriving as it does from technologies and modes on socio-economic organization. The ideology of secularism, on the other hand, is a way of interpreting and intersecting with these processes. "...in India today, secularism, in its official version, comes as part of a larger package consisting of a set of standardized

---

[1] K. Raghavendra Rao, "Secularism, Communalism and Democracy in India: Some Theoretical Issues," in *Secularism and Indian Polity,* edited by Bidyut Chakrabarty, Segment Book Distributors, New Delhi, 1990, pp.40-47.

[2] V.P. Luthera, *The Concept of the Secular State and India,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1964, p.76.

ideological products and social processes-development, mega science and national security being the most prominent among them."[3]

There are two possible models of secularism. In the first one, there is a complete separation of religion and the state to the extent that there is an 'impassable wall' between the religious and the secular spheres. In such a model, there is no state intervention of religious matters, and vice-versa. Each is supreme in its own sphere. This has been referred to as the 'non-interventionist' model, and is akin to religious neutrality. In the other model all religions are to be treated equally by the state. In other words, the state is equidistant from all religions. This model is referred to as 'non-discriminatory' and is particularly relevant for multi-religious societies. In contrast to the former model, the latter allows for state intervention on ground of public order and social justice.

Theoretically, India could have preferred the Western model of secularism, involving the total separation of political and civil authorities from the religious. However, existential conditions prevailing in Indian society were not conducive for the adoption of the non-interventionist approach. So, even if the founding fathers had visualized Indian secularism to be characterized by complete separation of politics from religion, they found themselves on the horns of dilemma due to the 'totalizing' character of all Indian religions, and the simultaneous absence of any ecclesia. While, strict principles of secularism required the state to remain aloof from playing any interventionist role, yet, the modern concept of social justice forced the makers of the Indian Constitution to make provision for a wide variety of social reforms.[4]

---

[3] Alok Rai, "Addled Only in Parts: The Strange case of Indian Secularism," in *Secularism and Indian Polity,* edited by Bidyut Chakrabarty, op. cit., pp.132-141.
[4] Ibid., p.147.

As it is obvious from the above, Indian secularism could not follow the Western tradition of keeping the state and religion apart. The alternative was to adopt the "non-discriminatory" model of being equidistant from all religions. But this attempt has not been quite successful. The Indian state has been drifting between intervention and non-intervention, and neutrality and involvement. The failure to introduce a uniform civil code, as stipulated in the constitution, is one of the most telling examples of the failure of non-discriminatory secularism in India. Further, the state has followed policies which have been perceived to favour one community or the other.[5]

In India, the ideologues of separation lament the growing reliance on religious symbols and ideology in political life. In their view, the intrusion of religion in the political domain would divide the country further. Since the use of religion by political leaders had previously resulted in the Partition of India and the creation of a separate state of Pakistan, these analysts fear that a similar strategy is being followed by some parties to communalize the polity for the purpose of electoral gains. To curb the increasing communal violence and fragmentation of the polity, the advocates of secularism emphasize the need to separate religion from politics (Panikkar 1991, Hasan 1991). Since separation of the two domains is regarded as a means of checking communalism, the adherents of this perspective suggest that religion must be restricted to the private domain. In their view, a commitment to secularism means that religion has, or should have, no place in public life (Kumar 1989: 189-90). It must, in other words, be separated from the state and delinked from politics (Smith 1963: 156-60; Chatterji 1984; Singh 1985; D'Souza 1995; Kashyap 1993).

A common civil code for its citizens, irrespective of race and religion is postulated by a secular society. The makers of the Indian

[5] Amir Hasan, "Secularism versus State Communalism in India," in *Secularism and Indian Polity,* edited by Bidyut Chakrabarty, op. cit., pp.115-124.

Constitution included the ideal of a common civil code in the Directive Principles of State Policy, but successive governments failed to implement it for fear of Muslim opposition. Like Hindu orthodoxy, which based itself on *Dharmashastras* backed by the *Vedas,* Muslim orthodoxy took its stand on the *Shariat* which had the sanction of long usage, and was supposed to be based on the revealed word of God, the Quran. Satish Chandra observes that "Earlier Muslim rulers, the Turks and the Mughals, had not accepted these formulations of the ulema. They claimed and were accorded the right of making secular laws (*zawabit*) which sometimes circumscribed the sharia."[6] But the disintegration of Muslim empire and weakening of secular authority led to a reassertion of Muslim orthodoxy. He further states: "In consequence, the efforts of some Muslim thinkers such as Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Chirag Ali, Amir Ali, etc., to pave the way for social reform among the Muslims by opening the way for *Ijtihad* or a critical appreciation of the *sunna* was largely frustrated."[7]

Satish Chandra further also explains the failure of the Indian National Congress in this regard as: "Face to face with this dilemma, in fact, eager to win over the *ulema* to their side in the nationalist struggle against the British, the nationalist leaders adopted from the beginning an ambivalent attitude towards social reform among the Muslims. In course of time, this attitude hardened into a definite policy, giving an edge to the orthodox elements over the moderates, and making the question of social reforms a religious or communal issue, rather than a secular, national issue."[8] The concept of equidistance or non-discriminatory secular policy implies that those at the helm of state affairs would rise above their religious identities and ensure neutral treatment and equal importance towards all the religions of the country, through their actions and deeds.

---

[6] Satish Chandra, "The Indian National Movement and Concept of Secularism," in *Secularism and Indian Polity,* edited by Bidyut Chakrabarty, op. cit., pp.69-81.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.

Further, equidistance also implies that in their public life state functionaries would maintain separation between their secular rights and duties, of public men on the one hand, and their private religious beliefs and practices, on the other. Alok Rai states: "While this dichotomy was never fully evident even during Nehru's life-time, in the post-Nehru period it has been completely discarded."[9] Practically all public leaders and functionaries tend to mix up their own religious beliefs and practices with their public roles. This unfortunate mixture is result of equating of "Hindu" religious belief and practices with Indian culture. Alok Rai points out in this regard: "An equally important feature which is tending to destroy the creditability of the secular state is the identification of the religio-cultural symbols of the majority community as state symbols."[10]

Due to this blurring, symbols, rituals and ceremonies which are taken for granted as "Indian" by most Hindus appear to be "Hindu" to the minority communities. This raises doubts in their minds regarding the genuineness of religious neutrality and equidistance of the Indian state. The failure of the Indian state to integrate the various communities in the bond of a secular culture, the continuation of strong sub cultural differences have provided a heightened salience to religious identities. In this regard Alok Rai mentioned: "The confusion between 'Hindu' and 'India' has largely arisen because in the last forty years, the cultural dimension of secularism has been totally neglected and we have, therefore, neither attempted to develop a composite Indian culture based on a true amalgam of all religious sub cultures, nor have we developed a new culture based on secular values, with emphasis on secular symbols. Of course, this was not an easy task but efforts too have been lacking."[11] In a pluralistic society like India such processes have distantiated various communities from one another. The

[9] Alok Rai, op. cit., p.149.
[10] Ibid., p.148.
[11] Ibid., pp.149-150.

processes like social distantiation and concomitant lack of structural assimilation and cultural integration are leading to a sharp development of communal consciousness and a communal world-view.

An important consequence of social distantiation is communal conflict. Today there is ample evidence to show that the administrative machinery of the state does not operate impartially at the time of communal riots. Those responsible for ensuring law and order, act in a totally prejudiced and non-secular manner. The reason for such partial behavior is that members of the police force, in the course of routine life and duties, do not visualize themselves or operate as secularized individuals. The thrust of our argument is that the constitutional ideal of secularism cannot become a social reality if policies and practices oriented towards strengthening of communal identities, if not actual communalism, are continued to be followed and practiced. Unfortunately the sociological reality is such that while the majority can recognize the communalism of the minority, it cannot see its own communal image in the same mirror. The communal character of Hinduism tends to be interpreted by the Hindus themselves as nationalism.

Recognizing the "anti-secular" and "asecular" forces, tending to thwart the secularization process, T.N. Madan has sketched a depressing scenario by asserting that: "...in the prevailing circumstances secularism in South Asia as a generally shared creed of life is impossible, as a basis for state action impractical, and as blue print for foreseeable future, impotent."[12] The reasons for Madan's pessimism are that, impossibility arises because of the active adherence of masses to religion; impracticality because religious neutrality or equidistance is difficult to be maintained by the state. And the impotence of secularism lies in the fact that it is incapable of counteracting religious fundamentalism and fanaticism.

---

[12] T.N. Madan, "Secularism in its Place," in *Religion in India,* edited by T.N. Madan, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002, p.394-412.

The weight of evidence provided by the empirical reality in India perhaps justifies Madan's contention. Nonetheless, considering that secularism is the common thread that binds together the trinity of modernization, democracy and social justice in India, it is essential that we should not become helpless victim of despair. Nehru once pointed out that his greatest problem was the secularization of a religion dominated society.[13]

Mixing religion with politics for electoral gains has had dysfunctional for the secularism in India. The various political parties in power have been forced to show benign indulgence towards various communal parties and organizations who demand the fulfillment of their interests before and after the elections. Such indulgence, while granting legitimacy and approval to communalism, has led to the erosion of secularism. In course of time these very organizations and parties have assumed diabolical proportions, and have posed serious challenge to secularism in India.

Communal Movements and Threats to Secularism

> "It is further important to note that while incorporating in its agenda certain instrumental ingredients of secularization relating to the modern technological apparatus and the efficient pursuit of power, anti-secularism rejects the primary values inherent in secularism – spirit of inquiry, rationalism and humanism. While incorporating in its agenda the instrumental use and exploitation of religiosity and while upholding the divisive and obscurantist part of religion, it rejects and repudiates the more basic values of compassion and tolerance underlying true religiosity."[14]

---

[13] Alok Rai, op. cit., p.151.

[14] P.C. Joshi, *Secularism and Development: The Indian Experiment,* Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1995, p.xi.

The anti-secular forces have clarity of objectives and a will to pursue them relentlessly which are only matched by the confusion of the secularists both about their ends and their instruments and also by their weakness of will in pursuing their ends. The anti-secularists aim at altering the secular character and destroying the secular credentials of the Indian nation state and at repudiating the secular heritage of India's national liberation struggle and her modern renaissance. They aim at re-interpreting the history of India and at remoulding the consciousness and outlook of her people in a reverse direction. They deny and repudiate the historical legacy of Buddha, Kabir and Guru Nanak, the Sufi Saints and of the countless religious and social reformers of all the communities who shaped India's synthetic, integrative and pluralist ethos.[15]

P.C. Joshi considers that the anti-secularists always criticize the Indian scholars for lending the aura of expert knowledge of secularism. The most provocative proposition advanced by the anti-secularists is that secularism as propounded by founding fathers of Indian nationalism is alien to the Indian soil. This proposition is yet to be effectively refuted by the Indian secularists. "What happened on 6th December 1992 at Ayodhya was not just a sudden outburst of fanaticism; it was the culmination of a long process of reconditioning of the mind and reorienting of categories of understanding. It is also a precursor of the shape of things come in terms of a drastic break from 'India of Our Dreams' which was the finest fruit of India's renaissance."[16]

Secularism under threat does not only imply the anti-secularists' movements but "the greatest weakness of the secular project under all varieties of secularism is that the pursuit of material interests (tapping the lower-side of human nature) is central to it and the pursuit of spiritual well-being (the tapping of the higher side of human nature) is

[15] Ibid., p.x.
[16] Ibid., p.xi.

only peripheral."[17] Jawaharlal Nehru, architect of India's secular project, admitted this during his last years in the following words: "In our efforts to ensure the material prosperity of the country, we have not paid any attention to the spiritual element in human nature. Therefore, in order to give the individual and the nation a sense of purpose and something to live for and, if necessary to die for, we have to devise some philosophy of life and give, in the wider sense of the word, a spiritual background to our thinking."[18]

It can be felt by an ardent believer in the secular idea that the secular project runs into deeper and deeper crisis and one can also discover that what is left of secularism is its outward shell or label only and not its inner essence. One can also see that the drift from the secular principle has caused untold suffering and distress to the common people, which is much deeper on the spiritual and moral plane. As Joshi puts it, "The cost of moral betrayal of ideals, of allowing the gap between ideal and practice to widen beyond a point, is incalculable. Any drift from the secular ideal in a multi-religious country results in total loss of moorings; left without any anchorage and any orienting principle, people are trapped in the unending vicious circle of increasing mutual suspicion and bitterness, conflict and strife."[19]

P.B. Gajendragadkar believes that Indian secularism does not mean atheism. Indeed, it "recognizes both the relevance and validity of religion in human life etc... In the context of the Indian Constitution secularism means that all religion practiced in India are entitled to equal freedom and protection."[20]

---

[17] Ibid., p.xxx.

[18] Jawaharlal Nehru quoted in P.C. Joshi, op. cit., pp.xxx-xxxi.

[19] P.C. Joshi, op. cit., pp.xxii-xxiii.

[20] P.B. Gajendragadkar, "The Concept of Secularism," in *Secular Democracy,* Annual Number, 1970, p.71.

Hindu communalism

Kumud L Das's statement that, "Hinduism-based secularism has no concept of negation, elimination, or rejection of other religions,"[21] may not stand in Indian context because we have examples of Hindu revivalists' movements during the 19th century which prepared the ground for right wing politics along with religious issues that took the shape of Hindu communalism. The issues of conversion, ban on cow slaughter, implementation of Hindi, Hinduisation of education and asserting the claim of Hindu homeland remained vibrant even after independence. Adding further to the communal frenzy, the issues like Uniform Civil Code, removal of Article 370 (related to Kashmir), demolition of Babri Masjid (a historical mosque) and construction of Ram Temple on the same place and subsequent attacks on Christian missionaries on account of their policy of proselytisation, remained the bone of contention on which Hindu right wing social movements thrived and tried to enchant the masses.

The issues based on identities of religion, caste and ethnicity have overshadowed the social and political processes after independence. The diversity on ascriptive denominations, on which the religious communal movements were based, attempted social transformation whereby a homogenous polity could be established or at least, the dominance of the majority community is asserted and other religious groups are reduced to just the status of foreigners.

The Hindu Mahasabha, which was the major political force before independence and which spoke for the cause of Hindus, diminished because of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination and umbrella like domination of Indian National Congress. After independence the other Hindu outfits were also put to the test of time and got little recognition

[21] Kumud L Das, "Death of Secularism at Sixteen," in *The Pioneer*, New Delhi, September 12, 2003.

in independent Indian because of the ugly face of communal violence which killed millions and displaced around 15 million people across the border. The assassination of Mahatma was the single event at the time of Independence which made people indifferent towards religious sentiments of the public life.

However, the RSS (*Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh*) continued to penetrate the masses through its social service projects and resuscitated the Hindu national spirit through a large network of tens and thousands of *shakhas*, engaged in its multifarious *Seva* projects undertaken by its various sub-organizations in the field of labour, farming, and education and in especially *Vanavasi*[22] areas.

Hinduisation of Education

The socio-economic and cultural reforms, which the RSS undertook after independence, were extensive and got a wide ranging recognition amongst the Indian masses. The RSS, in order to achieve its objectives, stroked at the roots of mass inertia. It sought to alter the social formation through pedagogic programmes, voluntary social work during natural calamities and repeated assertion for the Hindu-*Rashtra* for Hindus.

In line with other social reformist movements like the Arya Samaj or the Ramakrishna Mission, the RSS started its agenda of penetration through wide ranging educational institutions which inculcated pedagogic programmes on traditional Hindu lines. To this effect, the RSS started the first *Saraswati Shishu Mandir* in 1952 in Gorakhpur (Uttar Pradesh).[23] As the number of schools grew in different states, an all-India coordinating body called *Vidya Bharti* was set up with its

---

[22] Tribal areas.

[23] Walter K. Anderson et al., *The Brotherhood in Saffron:The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism,* Westview press, Colorado, 1987, p.58.

headquarters in Delhi. The *Vidya Bharti* educational mission was found with the objective of training children to see themselves as protectors of a Hindu nation.

The RSS practices may be seen as a reaction to the widespread Christian missionary educational practices. In their efforts to revive past culture, Sanskrit terms are used to address teachers; *Acharya*, the practice of touching their feet as a mark of respect and the naming of class rooms after Hindu sages; *Vashisht Kaksh, Vishwamitra Kaksh,* and so on also mark out the school as a space where Hindu *Dharma* and Hindu *Samskars* are asserted with pride, where tradition is saved and transmitted as against the 'enculturation' or 'influence of Christianity' through convent missionaries.

To further propagate its identity of Hindu culture, the *Vidya Bharati* schools celebrate their own roster of special days, such as the birthdays of *Shivaji* and *Jijabai*, *Vivekananda*, *Deendayal Upadhyaya* and *Savarkar*. Significantly, Gandhi *Jayanti* is not celebrated. *Shikshak diwas* or Teachers' day (celebrated by the rest of India on September 5th on the birth anniversary of the former president and educationist *Sarvapalli* Radhakrishnan) is celebrated on the supposed birth anniversary of the Sage *Vyasa*, while *Krishna Janmashtami* stands for children's day, normally celebrated in India on Nehru's birthday, that is, November 14th. Myth and history, the birth and death anniversaries of actual historical figures and those of mythical characters are, thus, glorified in the child's consciousness through the aura of annual holidays, celebrations, morning prayers as well as through the content of history and cultural knowledge of text-books. The functioning of the school is primarily to keep a religious identity alive in the minds of children at the outset.[24]

[24] K.N. Panikkar, "Secularism under Siege," in *Hindu,* Madras, March 31, 2004.

The RSS/BJP (*Bhartiya Janta Party*) has attempted to affect a radical departure in the existing educational ethos through the use of both state power by packing state educational institutions with its own ideologies and the instruments of 'civil society', where it created its own network of schools in order to feed the well-developed cadre structure of its organizations.

Inevitably, the RSS's educational and political agenda included both: absorbing subaltern groups into the Hindu fold to fight against 'minorities' and using violence against these same groups in order to perpetuate Hindu dominance in the existing social order. In order to justify and make their inculcations logical, the *Sangh Parivar* took recourse to re-write historical developments which shaped the destiny of India.[25]

Rise of the VHP and the Issue of Conversion

The process of religious conversion has evoked grave concerns amongst the members of the *Sangh Parivar* down the century which were intensified and made to appear much more legitimate by giving the loss a 'patriotic' and 'national colour'. This phenomenon has been a key to the functioning of Hindu majoritarianism particularly after 1947. The *Sangh Parivar*'s justifications of recent outrages against Christians are in consonance with the instances of such an equation.[26]

From the late 19th century onwards, the expansion directed towards marginal groups and tribal became more organized, 'reclamation', *Shuddhi* (purification), *Parivartan* (reconversion or turning back – the term preferred by the VHP today) became more rampant. These terms have been coined to bring people back to their 'natural' state,

---

[25] Ibid.

[26] Mohan Sahay, "VHP show may turn out to be a damp squib," in *The Statesman*, December 6, 1998.

presuming that all the targeted groups are Hindu in a more or less Sanskritised manner.[27]

If we analyze the functioning of the Jan Sangh in early days, along with the promotion of highly Sanskritised Hindi and cow-protection, the fight against Christian missionaries was made an important plank of its activities. The Jan Sangh organized an Anti-Foriengn Missionary Week in Madhya Pradesh in November 1954.[28]

Till the recent anti-Christian campaign, the VHP, which has been associated primarily with *Ramjanmabhumi* and the onslaught on Muslims at the time of its foundation in 1964 and in the subsequent decade, its main focus had been directed primarily against Christian proselytisation in tribal areas (the North-East, Madhya Pradesh, and South Bihar).[29] The *Achaar Samhita* (code of conduct) drawn up by the VHP in 1968 included *Parivartan* among the basic *Smskaras* of the Hinduism. Here it is worth pointing out that this kind of *Parivartan* was different from its historically referred movement of *Shuddhi*, which was more reformative and social in context but this kind of efforts were more communal in their approach and had essentially conservative motives. The *Meenakshipuram* (South India) mass conversions of thousands of *Dalits* to Islam in February, 1981 inaugurated an era in which Muslims were targeted for more than a decade. In the recent times Christians have been on their agenda especially after the formation of the BJP-led coalition in centre.[30] The BJP-dominated coalition at centre may be remembered for the concerted campaign against Christians. The widespread revulsion

---

[27] Gautam Pingle, "A Peculiar Secularism," in *Deccan Chronicle,* September 24, 2005.

[28] C.P. Bhambri, "Hindutva and Multiculturalism," in *Hindu*, Madras, December 6, 1998.

[29] Vir Sanghvi, "Voices on the Temple," in *The Hindustan Times,* June 12, 1998.

[30] John T. Doolittle in the House of Representatives, Tuesday, March 2, 1999, taken from http://www.holocaustinkashmir.50megs.com/ka04005.html, retrieved on 23March 2008.

evoked by the sheer horror of the Staines' killings on 23 January 1999 seemed to have produced before a lull but then the attacks started again and came to be more and more widely distributed.[31]

***Babri Masjid-Ramjanmbhumi* issue**

The resurgent spirit of Hindu communal assertion finally found a historic expression in the Ayodhya movement which Shri Girilal Jain described as the most significant event after independence. The RSS holds the view that *Ayodhya*, *Mathura* and *Kashi* are not a political but a national question.[32]

This issue further aggravated the situation. The events during 1986-92 have an interesting account to present. Though the controversy of *Ramjanmbhumi* has more than a century old history, yet it remained within the four walls of *Ayodhya*. Even on 28 December 1949 when riots broke out due to the sudden installation of Ram Lalla's idol over-night, the incidence could not gain much heat as the doors of the Mosque were swiftly closed for both the communities and place was kept under guard in status quo till 1985 when Rajeev Gandhi ordered the opening the gate of controversial *Babri Masjid* for *Pooja* by the Hindus. Adding to this, the *Doordarshan* serial – *Ramayana* further acted as a catalyst to this controversy. The *Sangh Parivar* used the actors of the serial for gaining support in the elections of 1989. The campaign was launched from the district of Faizabad in which the town of *Ayodhya* was located, symbolizing the strong urge for a Hindu assertion.[33]

---

[31] Smita Narula, "Anti-Christian Violence behind extremist Hindu attacks," *Human Rights News,* taken from http://hrw.org/english/docs/1999/09/30/india1626.htm, retrieved on 12 April 2008.

[32] Siddhartha Reddy, "Ayodhya Status quo must continue," in *Deccan Chronicle,* December 6, 2005.

[33] Sunita Aron, "Ayodhya Evidence Before The Court," in *The Hindustan Times,* March 31, 2002.

Even Rajeev Gandhi wanted to capitalize on this issue, though in a subtle manner. He tacitly allowed the foundation stone for the proposed Ram Temple to be laid adjacent to the Mosque. Rajeev Gandhi did not hesitate to refer to this incident being similar to Mahatma Gandhi's dream for *Ram Rajya*. However, those involved directly with the movement were the real beneficiaries. The VHP was confident that the Babri Mosque controversy would split every party vertically. These gestures of the VHP came true to a greater extent as the BJP's electrol gains were considerable. In the 1989 it won 85 seats with 11.5 per cent of votes. Gains of the BJP were significant and unprecedented in its history since the days of the BJS (*Bhartiya Jana Sangh*). This success was attributed to its ability to project its separate identity from other parties. From this point onwards, the BJP became more vocal about its Hindu identity. The Ayodhya movement led to the demolition of Babri Mosque on 6 December 1992.[34]

Despite its repeated threats after 1992, the VHP and other Hindu outfits have largely refrained from taking direct confrontation with the State. Now they have moderated their agenda, that is, settling the issue through court, though there have been oscillations of their anger in repeated threats to the state time and again.[35]

In March 2003, the VHP announced it would launch a nationwide campaign to 'reclaim' 30,000 Hindu temples that had been converted into mosques. Some Muslims fear that under this campaign, Hindus will try to claim the *Gyan Vapi* mosque in Varanasi, the *Idgah* mosque in Mathura, and the Ram temple grounds at the former Babri Mosque in *Ayodhya*.[36]

---

[34] Parvez Iqbal Siddqui, "59% say there is no solution to Ayodhya," in *Times of India,* New Delhi, July 10, 2005.

[35] Amulya Ganguli, "Crisis can be averted before Dec. 6: BJP," in *Times of India,* New Delhi, December 4, 1992.

[36] P.D. Chandra Shobi, "Keeping Gods in Captivity," in *Times of India,* July 11, 2005.

The VHP continued its trident of '*trishul*' distribution programme during the reporting period despite the prohibition under the Penal Code against the distribution of sharp weapons to the public. *Trishuls* (three-pronged tridents) are Hindu religious symbols, but they have also been used as weapons, including in the 2002 Gujarat riots.[37]

Muslim Communalism

Islam is one of the largest minority faiths in India and is perceived by Sangh Parivar as actively engaging in a pan-Islamic ideology in order to recover the past glory, and constantly is the cause of the Hindu sense of insecurity. Along with Hindu religious and social movements in the 19th century, the rising tide of Muslim politics was quite visible in the first quarter of 20th century particularly after the formation of All India Muslim League in 1906. The Muslim communalism, like other right wing organizations started acquiring colour on religio-political lines and inhibited the integration and assimilation of Muslim community in Indian society.[38] Aligarh Muslim University fuelled the fire by giving communal colour to issues like Urdu language and separate electorates for Muslims and steadily accelerated the movement for communal politics in the name of religious brotherhood. Events like *Khilafat* Movement, *Mopla* riot in Kerala, propaganda of 'two-nation theory', demand for Pakistan and finally the partition of the country were the outcome of such politics fanned on religious lines.[39]

Even after the formation of secular India, the demands for maintaining exclusive identity remained consistent. The concept of religious brotherhood was put to use for this purpose. The cry for 'Islam in danger' caught the imaginary concept of Muslim brotherhood or the

[37] Gautam Pingle, "Ayodhya on Agenda," in *Deccan Herald,* April 10, 2004.
[38] Romila Thapar, "Communalism and the Historical Legacy: Some Facets," in *Social Scientist,* Vol. 18, No. 6/7, Jun.-Jul., 1990, pp.4-20.
[39] Ibid.

religious solidarity of the Muslims, which formed the main ingredient of Muslim politics in India. Some of the Muslim scholars have rightly pointed out this divisive communal design of the feudal section in the community. "It would seem that, in the sub-continent, Muhammad's concept of '*Umma Muslima*' (Muslim Community as a homogenous unit) is only successful in politics and as a defensive posture."[40]

The slogan of religious brotherhood remained the main weapon for the political fight of Muslims even in post-partition India. The social elite of Muslim society also exploited the spiritual concept of Islamic brotherhood only to expand the autonomous space for Muslim politics in the country. Elitist character of Muslim politics failed to comprehend and work on the economic and social problems of Indian Muslims. Repeated slogans for a separate religious identity were basically for a separate political identity of the Muslims, which is contrary to the spirit of joint electorate system enforced in India after partition.

A.Q. Ansari, a prominent Congress leader, established a Muslim Front inside the Congress, demanding that Congress party should give election tickets to Muslims on the basis of their population.[41] Keeping the Muslim masses ignorant of the realities of modern age, their leaders continue to arouse the sentiments of internal religious unity for maintaining a distinct communal identity. What exactly was the concept of Muslim brotherhood meant in a larger space of democracy, always remained an unanswered question. Against whom they want communal solidarity is a big question mark for even the Muslim thinkers. S. Abid Hussain criticizes such Muslims as he understands

---

[40] Syed Shahabuddin, "Secularism as a Facet of Social Justice," in *The Pioneer,* New Delhi, June 24, 1998.

[41] R. Upadhyay, "Muslim Brotherhood – A key to Communal Politics in India," Paper No. 1072, 30.07.2004, taken from http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/%5Cpapers11%5Cpaper1072.html, retrieved on 11 June 2008.

secularism in this sense. To quote him, "About the meaning of the secular outlook or secularism there is a serious misunderstanding among the people of our country and specially among the Muslims. They take it to mean an attitude of mind which completely rejects religion as one of the highest values in life. But as a matter of fact secularism is not necessarily opposed to or indifferent to religion."[42]

Religio-lingual Issues

Along with the demand for separate electorate, the Urdu language has also acquired religious colour. Muslims, irrespective of their region and Mother tongue, have constantly raised the issue of Urdu as a part of their religio-cultural heritage. It is a general perception of the Muslims in India that Urdu can and will survive in India as a functional language only through its inclusion in the educational curriculum as a Modern Indian Language, which is the mother-tongue of more than 60 million Indians. However, due to the negligent attitude of the so called secularists and Hindu right wing ideologies, Urdu is losing its glory. Here, they generally forget that even rich language like Sanskrit could not survive despite having achieved State protection.[43]

No one denies the glare of Urdu as one of the fabulous languages of India but here, people belonging to Islamic faith should not claim for its monopoly over this lingua franca which is even spoken by those who do not subscribe to this faith. The kind of communal colour which associates with this language, Urdu has become largely confined to Muslim minority educational institutions and religious seminaries called *Madrasas*.[44] Though it has survived, yet the learners now belong

---

[42] S. Abid Hussain, *The Destiny of Indian Muslim*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1965, p.170.

[43] Balraj Puri, "Urdu and Muslim Identity," in *Mainstream*, Vol. XLV, No. 26, June 16, 2007.

[44] William Dalrymple, "Inside the Madrasas," in *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. 52, No. 19, December 1, 2005.

to the lower strata of the Muslim community which is not only economically backward but socially fragmented too, which consequently renders it as one of the educationally backward and deprived communities in the country. Thus, the religious aspect has come to define the horizons of Urdu due to the denial of state support or rather the denial of the constitutional rights of the Urdu-speaking community. It is this situation which has misdirected the post-independence discourse on Urdu. To some extent, the preservation of Urdu is linked to the economic survival of the backward sections of the Muslim community since the Muslim elite of North India has altogether abandoned the language. No doubt Urdu is the repository of the religious heritage of Muslim Indians yet, as a spoken language, it is still lingua franca of common man of India.[45]

Communal and Terrorist Activities and Use of Islam

Apart from these issues which have largely dominated the mind set of Muslim population of India to a larger extent, the Islamisation of communal violence, separatism and terrorism have to come up as the special feature of religious communalism of Muslims in India, especially in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Government officially banned the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) in September 2001 under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) for 'fomenting communal tension' and actions 'prejudicial to India's security'. The Government alleged that the SIMI had links with terrorist groups such as the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (L-e-T) and the Hizbul Mujahedeen. The Police in three different states arrested eight of its members, including former president of the SIMI Bhopal district unit, Khalid Naeem.[46]

---

[45] Balraj Puri, op. cit.

[46] "LeT, SIMI hand in Mumbai blasts," in The *Times of India,* June 12, 2006.

On May 3, 2001, likewise government banned the Muslim group Deendar Anjuman for 'fomenting communal tension' and actions 'prejudicial to India's security'. State prosecutors alleged that some members of the tiny Muslim group called Deendar Channabasaveshwara Siddique (DCS) and its parent organization, Deendar Anjuman, were responsible for the Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh Church bombings in 2000.[47]

Christian Communalism

Today Christianity is generally perceived to be associated with a legacy of Western rule which forced its religion upon Indians during the colonial period. However, the fact should be noted that Indian Christians are as old as Christianity itself. St. Thomas, the direct disciple of Jesus Christ, came to India and preached Christianity here soon after the death of Christ, that is, in 52 A.D. After that many missionaries from different parts of the world preached Christian faith in India. The English missionaries came to India very late. In general, it is believed that 'A missionary is a person of others, one who stands for justice, spreads the message of equality and love, and cares for the down trodden'. But some authors describe Christianity in India as an offshoot of British rule and relate it with the religion of the oppressive and immoral whites and the missionaries being their representatives. However, Christianity, with its charitable, educational and medical institutions, has been able to woo the masses to a greater extent. The issues of discord between Christians and Hindus or Christians and Muslims have been the issues related to conversion.[48]

---

[47] Iqbal Mohammed, "Follow-up: Deendar Anjuman," in *The Milli Gazette,* taken from http://www.milligazette.com/Archives/15012001/Art16.htm, retrieved on 16.04.2008.

[48] Antony Copley, *Religions in Conflict,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, p.xiii.

Christians have been target of attacks by Hindutva forces especially the RSS, VHP and Bajrang Dal. The Hindutva forces argue that the Christians have to "Indianise" themselves. In March 2001, K.S. Sudarshan, the head of the RSS stated that Muslims and Christians 'should sever their links with the Mecca and the Pope and instead become 'Swadeshi'. He also stated that Christians should 'reinterpret their scriptures' in a manner more in keeping with Hindu cultural norms. Catholics strongly reacted to these kind of statements, the Archbishop of Delhi pointed out that the Indian Christian Church is two thousand years old (traditionally dating from the Apostle Thomas), and that although the spiritual head was the Pope, the day-to-day administration of the church was entirely in Indian hands.[49]

Along with the issues of discord, there have been some attempts to resolve the differences between the Hindutva forces and Christians. On September 1, 2003, the Times of India reported about the talk which took place between the RSS and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India. The two met in Nagpur on August 22, 2003, and further talks were scheduled. But the attempts to lessen tensions between Christians and the RSS took a turn for the worse when RSS chief K.S. Sudarshan called on Muslims and Christians to reinterpret their scriptures and change their leadership. The Catholic bishops' conference expressed 'shock and surprise' at the statement made by Sudarshan in Nagpur, according to the October 31, 2003 online edition of The Hindu. The Church was also offended by Sudarshan's observation that the leadership of the Christian and Muslim communities has remained in the hands of 'conflict-mongers'. In the opinion of the bishops' conference Secretary-general, Archbishop Oswald Gracias, these observations only strengthen the hands of forces opposed to dialogue.[50]

---

[49] Peggy Froerer, *Religious Division and Social Conflict,* Social Science Press, New Delhi, 2007, p.14.
[50] Ibid., p.92.

Sikh Communalism

Founded on the traditions of Bhakti movement of the 15th and 16th centuries, the Sikh religion became a powerful source of the mobilization of the Sikh community in the 20th century. The *Shiromani Akali Dal* and *Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee* (SGPC) were two principal organizations which mobilized Sikhs on the religious lines during the first of the 20th century. The *Shiromani Akali Dal* launched socio-religious movement in the 1920s to liberate the *Gurudwaras* from the control of *Mahants* and landed aristocracy. As a result, the British government gave the SGPC a statutory status.[51]

Even after the independence, the Akali Dal continued to mix religion with politics. In order to maintain separate Sikh identity and to make the community powerful in the political arena, Master Tara Singh, the most prominent leader of the Akali Dal up to 1962, viewed it exclusively in terms of political interest of the community. He described the then existing situation as a serious threat to the existence of Sikh community. In a statement he maintained, "Now the circumstances have so altered that we have been saved from Muslim domination. But we have been absolutely trapped under Hindu domination...we cannot survive under Hindu domination."[52]

In 1967, the Congress was defeated in the elections and the Akali Dal formed the government in coalition with the BJS and the Communist parties.[53] But during 1967-1971, the Akali Dal ministry fell thrice and there was constant instability due to the intra-factionalism in the Akali Dal.

---

[51] J.S. Grewal, *The Sikhs of the Punjab*, Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, Reprinted 2005, P.251.
[52] Ibid., P.254.
[53] Ibid., P.255.

Intense factional feuds in the Dal manifested in the increasing pressure for reversion to politics of religion and culture during this period, but the ruling leadership, however, managed to maintain ascendancy of secular material consensus and considerations of power in the secular political domain of the state. Even in that process it had to reconciliate with Tara Singh faction. The Batala Resolution of 1968, and the *Anandpur Sahib* Resolution[54] of 1973, which meant in substance the adoption of Master Tara Singh's groups 'Sikh Homeland' thesis as the goal of Akali Dal, proves this point. From 1977-80, the Akali Dal enjoyed effective power in the secular political domain of the state along with control over the SGPC.[55]

In the 1970s the Akali Dal challenged the dominance of Congress in Punjab politics. In order to meet this challenge the Congress used the services of Sikh religious leaders, including Sant Jarnail singh Bhinderanwale in 1980 assembly elections. Realizing their political significance the Sikh religious leaders asserted their autonomy and demanded their share in arena of political power. This gave rise to the competitive politics among political parties; Congress, Akali and religious and militant leaders to use religion on the one hand, and movement for *Khalistan*, a Sikh homeland, on the other. The changing religious, cultural and economic situation and involvement of the people settled in other countries provided fillip to this movement. The large scale violence which included terrorism operation, Blue Star, assassination of political leaders and activists, anti-Sikh riots in Delhi in 1984 were some of the repercussions of use of Sikh religion in politics.[56]

---

[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., P.256.

Conclusion

Secular, secularization and secularism are three distinct terms but they are interrelated. There is a need to understand the proper distinction between the three. The concept of secular, the process of secularization and the doctrine of secularism construct an ideal for human conditions. Secularism as an ideology articulates that there should be a clear cut distinction between the personal and the public: 'Religious realm' should be considered as the 'personal realm' and 'secular realm' should be considered as the 'public realm'. There is a need to understand the transformation from a religious community (where religion dominates in all spheres) to a secular society (where religion is restricted to the personal realm without having any space in the public realm).

Secularism has evolved in a very distinct way in India than the west. We cannot consider Western secularism as the final reality. India has developed her own secular values. Sometimes it is said that Indian secularism is an imitation of Western secularism. But a careful reading of our Constitution shows that this is not the case. Indian secularism is fundamentally different from Western secularism. Indian secularism does not focus only on church-state separation and the idea of inter-religious equality is crucial to the Indian conception.

Confusion of the above mentioned ideals is a source of troubles in human society and particularly in India where religion has played a very significant role in shaping the livelihood of common people; positive as well as negative. There are examples of religious unity, harmony, social order and goodness derived from religious traditions, and communal violence also derived from religious disparities. It should be clear by now why the complexity of Indian secularism cannot be captured by the phrase "equal respect of all religions." If by this phrase is meant peaceful coexistence of all religions or inter-

religious toleration, then this will not be enough because secularism is much more than mere peaceful coexistence or toleration. If this phrase means equal feeling of respect towards all established religions and their practices then there is an ambiguity that needs clearing. Indian secularism allows for principled state intervention in all religions. Such intervention betrays disrespect to some aspects of every religion. For example, religiously sanctioned caste-hierarchies are not acceptable within Indian secularism. The secular state does not have to treat every aspect of every religion with equal respect. It allows equal disrespect for some aspects of organized religions.

Religion is also not understood the way it should be. One, who understands the meaning of religion, understands secularism too. Religion is *dharma* and *dharma* is *sadhana*; *dharma* is *kartavya*; *dharma* is *karma*; *dharma* is *ekta*; *dharma* is *sadbhavna* and *manavta*. All these values constitute religion. Communal violence is not *dharma*. Secularism is *dharma* which is the religion of humanity; it embraces the affairs of this world; it is interested in everything that touches the welfare of a sentient being; it advocates attention to the particular planet on which we happen to live; it means that each individual counts for something; it is a declaration of intellectual independence; it is a protest against religious tyranny, against being a serf, subject or slave. It is a protest against wasting this life for the sake of one we know not of. It proposes to let the gods take care of themselves. It means living for ourselves and each other; for the present instead of the past, for this world instead of another. It is striving to do away with social evils.

To be truly secular, a state must not only refuse to be theocratic but also have no formal, legal alliance with any religion. The separation of religion-state is however a necessary but not a sufficient ingredient of a secular state. A secular state must be committed to principles and goals which are at least partly derived from non-religious sources. These ends should include peace, religious freedom, freedom from religiously

grounded oppressions, discrimination and exclusions, as also inter-religious and intra-religious equality. To promote these ends the state must be separated from organized religion and its institutions for the sake of some of these values. However, there is no reason to suggest that this separation should take a particular form. In fact the nature and extent of separation may take different forms, depending upon the specific values it is meant to promote and the way in which these values are spelt out.

Broadly speaking there are two senses in which the word secularism is used. In one sense, secularism connotes a philosophy and a mental orientation which holds that no supernatural power interferes with the affairs of the world, that there is nothing which can be regarded as other worldly. This postulate leads to the view that, there being no predestination, the human individual has the capacity to make his future by recourse to his own reason. Secularism in this sense is indistinguishable from atheistic humanism. It "is an ideology which provides a 'theory of life and conduct' as against the one provided by religion."[1] This type of secularism is materialistic in tone and holds that human improvement can be sought through material means alone. It is completely unconcerned with the 'unknown world.'

The other sense of secularism is perhaps more popular and has a long historical development. It was a movement against the domination of the Christian Church and the priestly class. It was essentially a humanist movement which progressively secularized European society. By encouraging a this-worldly view of life, it opened the way for the growth of science. By blasting the theory of the divine right of kings, it laid the foundation of modern liberal democracy. It paved the way for the Reformation and the long struggle between the secular power of the state and the spiritual power of the Church. There were

[1] Eric. S. Waterhouse, "Secularism," in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. XI, p.348.

eventually an uneasy truce between the secular power of the state and the spiritual power of the Church. There was eventually an uneasy truce between the state and the Church leading to the concept of the 'secular state.' Secularism in the second sense implies a dichotomy in human life between the sacred aspects of human life while the secular aspect is taken care of by other institutions, principally the state.

In Indian context, the members of the Constituent Assembly tried to get the endorsement of all the classes of the society for acceptance and support to the ideals of secularism.[2] Instead of a common civil code for all the citizens of the country, followers of various religions were given different codes of laws. No secular code was provided for even those who willingly want to get free from their traditional religious codes. If the inappropriate elements were added to the ideals of secularism on the grounds of the importance of the religious faith of the citizens then the state was also given the power to make laws to regulate continuing religious faiths and institutions. In this manner, the theory of non-interference of state and religion into one another's territory was almost evaded.[3]

The above mentioned argument is contradicted by the constitution of India as it is based on the belief that secularism does not mean that one should dispose off his religious faith and sentiments, rather it means that equal respect should be given to other religions too. The belief that 'secularism' means 'equal respect to all religions' has actually corrupted the original meaning of secularism.[4] If the sense of secularism has not developed in Indian lifestyle, the above mentioned belief has been one of the most prominent reasons behind it. As a result of this, even secular people hesitate in raising their voices against the continuing religious

---

[2] My translation from Satya P. Gautam, *Samaj Darshan,* Haryana Sahitya Academy, Panchkula, reprinted 2004, orig. 1991, p.76.
[3] Ibid., p.77.
[4] Ibid., p.78.

stigmas and superstitions. The reality of Indian secularism can be estimated by the fact that Only Hindus can criticise Hindu communalism, Muslims are required for criticising Muslim communalism and Sikhs are required for criticising Sikh communalism, because if a person or group belonging to some other religion criticises some ugly trends in any particular religion, then there are chances that the criticiser himself will be criticised as communal.

It is important that a secular person should take care of the sentiments of other religions, but it does not mean that all the stigmas, restrictions, injustice, inequalities and domination should get silent approval in the name of the fulfillment of this duty. Rational criticism should not be considered as disrespect to religion. If the explanations and criticisms are restricted in the name of the above mentioned theory of respect to religions, then it will not only disrupt the secularism, but also it will weaken the democracy, because democracy is based upon everyone's equal right to stand upon the collective grounds of synthesis. The absence of this synthesis has strengthened the communal feelings in Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and other minorities. The ideal of '*Sarvadharma Sambhava*' (equal respect to religions) has actually made the communal identity central in the civil life instead of making it irrelevant and unimportant. There is no doubt about it that the secularism embraced by some of the Indian leaders and educated middle class is formal and verbal only. There is an absence of the relation between this so called secularism and the need to measure the social life through rational measures. In such situation, the leaders of the political parties pretend to be the saviors of the interests of different communities and castes by attending their religious rituals, festivals and ceremonies which they attend indeed for their own vested interests and political gains, but they claim to be secular. By doing so, they also strengthen the communalism. Secularism, for Indian political parties means nothing different than a comfortable, attractive political slogan. Though most of the political parties try to compete with each other in

showing off themselves as secular and in exposing other parties' fake secularism, they do not hesitate to shake hands with communal organisations and do communal propagation during elections. In such complex situation, it can be said that until this pseudo secularism is not exposed and following conditions of secular social life are not achieved, it is almost impossible for the Indian politics to get rid of the problems rising from the narrow vision of communalism.

1. To make the principle of rule of law a directive principle of the political life, it is essential that there should be a common civil code for every citizen under the same law and special treatment by law to different communities must come to an end. The law and governance should not be based on communal appeasement; rather it should be dedicated to the principles of social justice by giving equal respect to the equality and liberty of all the citizens.
2. To make the educational institutions free from the impact of communal effects, they should be brought under the public sector and should not be left in the hands of any such management whose basic character is communal. Here, it is important to understand the meaning of bringing under public sector does not mean only governmentisation, rather it means the collective democratic control of the whole society.
3. The right to propagation of religion must come to an end. Right to keep faith in religious believes and following them at individual as well as community level is sufficient to protect the freedom of faith of the members of any religious community. No person or community can be allowed to make obstacles of any kind for other citizens while taking advantage of this right.
4. There should be provision of strict restrictions for those who colour the secular problems of the social life in communal colour.

5. Public holidays on the occasions of communal festivals should be abolished. Members of various communities should be allowed to take five contingency holidays annually to take part in their traditional festivals, if they wish so. Here it is understandable that there can be only two national holidays of Republic Day and Independence Day.
6. Propagation on the grounds of communal and cast basis in the elections should be strictly prohibited and provisions of strict punishment should be made for those who violate this norm. Such political parties, organisations, and persons should not be allowed to contest in the elections.

The above mentioned suggestions can be criticised as impractical, against long established traditions, unfit for the practical situations of the country, against the public opinion, too normative, etc. But it can be said that if the creative side of it will be projected before the people by awakening them democratically, then it will become possible to give them a practical shape. The fundamental question is that are we in favour of keeping the status-quo or to present ourselves to perform our duty to bring the change. Like other mentalities, secularism too is expressed not in words but in behaviour in the end.[5] Some measures which should be considered are:

1. Amend the Directive Principles of the Constitution to rid it of all clauses which compromise with communal elements, such as state support to denominational institutions and banning cow slaughter.
2. Safeguard rights of minorities not merely at the all India level but also at regional and local levels.
3. Create once again the anti-imperialist consciousness of the people and the spirit of Swadeshi as part of a movement for self-reliance.

[5] Ibid., pp.79-80.

4. Special attention has to be given to rid the teaching of history of communal overtones. State support to denominational education must stop.
5. Strict separation must be ensured between state and religion, particularly at public functions and in the relations between religion and politics. State-owned media must not be used to project religious rituals which only help strengthen separatist religious identity.
6. Popular pamphlets have to be written to promote secular consciousness.
7. Cultural workers must play a catalytic role in creating a scientific and secular temper among the people. This needs the creation of popular terms of expression.
8. The issue of the uniform civil code must be defined in secular democratic terms of equal rights for men and women without any religious overtones, while welcoming efforts to change the personal law as a contribution to the secular issue of common democratic rights for every citizen.
9. No city should be declared a holy city. Any such declaration already made should be revoked.
10. The battle against communalism, both at the ideological level and at the level of day-to-day action must be combined with the common struggle of the toiling people for a better life.

'Ab to mazhab koi aisa bhi chalaya jaaye jisme insaan ko insaan banaya jaaye'
-Neeraj-

'Ram kaho yaan raheem kaho, dono ki garaz Allah se hai, deen kaho yaan dharm kaho matlab to usi ki raah se hai. Phir kyon ladta moorkh banda, yeh teri khaam khyali hai, hai ped ki jad to ek wahi har mazhab daali daali hai.'
-Anonymous-

Bibliography

Books

Anderson, Walter K., and others, *The Brotherhood in Saffron:The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism,* Westview press, Colorado, 1987.

Barlingay, S.S., *A Modern Introduction to Indian Ethics*, Penman Publishers, Delhi.

Berger, Peter, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion,* Doubleday, New York, 1967.

----------, *The Social Reality of Religion,* Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1973.

Chandra, Bipan, *Communalism in Modern India,* Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1984

Chandra, Satish, *Congress and the Concept of Secularism, Congress Centenary Celebrations committee*, AICC, New Delhi, 1985.

Comte, Auguste, *The Crisis of Industrial Civilization: The Early Essays of Auguste Comte,* introduced by Ronald Fletcher, Heinemann Educational Books, Ltd., London, 1974.

Copley, Antony, *Religions in Conflict,* Oxford India Paperbacks, New Delhi, 1999, orig. 1997.

Cox, Harvey, *The Secular City*, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1965.

Devi, V. Indira, *Secularisation of Indian Mind,* Rawat Publications, Jaipur and New Delhi, 2002.

Dhyani, S.N., *Secularism: Socio-legal Issues*, Rawat Publications, Jaipur and New Delhi, 1996.

Durkheim, Emile, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life,* Free Press, New York, 1965, orig. 1915.

Froerer, Peggy, *Religious Division and Social Conflict,* Social Science Press, New Delhi, 2007.

Gahrana, Kanan, *Right to freedom of Religion: a study in Indian Secularism*, South Asian Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1992.

Gajendragadkar, P.B., *Secularism and the Constitution of India,* Bombay University Press, Bombay, 1971.

Gandhi, M.K., *Political and National Life and Affairs,* Vol. II, compiled by V.B. Kher, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1967.

Gautam, Satya P., *Samaj Darshan,* Harayana Sahitya Academy, Panchkula, reprinted 2004, orig. 1991.

Grewal, J.S., *The Sikhs of the Punjab,* Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, revised 2005, orig. 1994.

Hawton, Hector, *Men without Gods*, Watts and Co., London, 1948.

Hobbes, Thomas, *Leviathan,* reprinted edition, Clarendon Press, Oxford, Great Britain, 1967.

Hobsbawm, E.J., *The Age of Revolution 1789-1884,* ABACUS, 1979.

Holyoake, George Jacob, *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*, 6th impression, T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1906.

Hussain, S. Abid, *The Destiny of Indian Muslim,* Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1965.

Joshi, P.C., *Secularism and Development: The Indian Experiment,* Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1995.

Kumar, Sunil, *Communalism and Secularism in Indian Politics: Study of BJP,* Rawat Publications, Jaipur and New Delhi, 2001.

Lenin, V.I., *Collected Works,* Vol. 15, Progress Publishers Moscow, 1977.

Luthera, Ved Prakash, *The Concept of the Secular State and India,* Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1964.

Machiavelli, Niccolo, *The Discourses of NiccoloMachiavelli,* Vol. 1, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London and Boston, 1975.

Mahajan, Gurpreet, *The Multicultural Path: Issues of Diversity and Discrimination in Democracy,* Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2002.

Miller, David, *Social Justice,* Clarendon Press, Oxford, reprinted 1979, orig. 1976.

Narain, Prakash, *A Practical Indian Philosophy*, Jayyed Press, Delhi, 2001.

Nehru, Jawaharlal, *Selected Readings: Years of Struggle,* Compiled by Arjun Dev, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1989.

----------, *Glimpses of World History*, 13th imp., Oxford University Press, Teen Murti House, New Delhi, 13th edition, 1998, orig. 1982.

----------, *The Discovery of India,* Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 18th impression 1998, orig. 1946.

Parekh, Bhikhu, *Gandhi's political Philosophy,* Macmillan, London, 1989.

Quigley, Carroll, *The Evolution of Civilizations: an Introduction to Historical Analysis*, 2nd edition, Liberty Fund, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1979.

Radhakrishnan, S., *Recovery of Faith,* Allen and Unwin, London, 1956.

Rothman, Stanley, *European Society and Politics*, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, New York, 1970.

Roy, M.N., *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution*, Renaissance Publishers, Ltd., Calcutta, 1955.

Saxton, Alexander, *Religion and the Human Prospect*, Aakar Books, Delhi, 2007.

Simmons, A. John, *Political Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 2008.

Smith, D.E., *India as a Secular State*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1967.

Verma, Ved Prakash, *Dharm Darshan Ki Mool Samasayaen*, Hindi Madhyam Karyanvaya Nideshalaya, Delhi Vishwavidhyalaya, March, 1999, orig. 1991.

Weber, Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, translated by Talcott Parsons, Charles Scribner's sons, New York, 1958.

----------, *The Sociology of Religion*, translated by Ephraim Fischoff with introduction by Talcott Parsons, Social Science Paperbacks in association with Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1965.

Wylie, James A., *The History of Protestantism*, Volume Second, Book Thirteenth, Cassell and Company, Limited, London, Paris and New York, 2002.

Edited Books

Bhargava, Rajeev, *Secularism and its Critics*, Oxford University Press, reprinted 2007, orig. 1998.

Bottomore, T.B., *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1964.

Chakrabarty, Bidyut Chakrabarty, *Secularism and Indian Polity,* Segment Book Distributors, New Delhi, 1990.

Chattopadhaya, D.P., and others *Essays in social and Political Philosophy,* ICPR, New Delhi, 1989.

Dubey, Abhay Kumar, *Beech Bahas Mein Secularvaad,* Vaani Prakashan, Delhi, 2005.

Gopal, Sarvapalli, *Nehru: An Anthology,* Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1983.

Gupta, N.C., *Nehru's speech on Communalism,* Sampradayikta Virodhi Committee, New Delhi, 1965.

Madan, T.N., *Religion in India*, 7th edition, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002, orig. 1991.

Articles

Bellah, Robert N., "Religious Evolution," *American Sociological Review,* Vol. XXIV, June 1964, pp.51-57.

Bhambri, C.P., "Hindutva and Multiculturalism," *Hindu*, Madras, December 6, 1998.

Chakrabarti, Saubhik, "God and Us," *The Indian Express*, New Delhi, Friday, September 14, 2007.

Dalrymple, William, "Inside the Madrasas," *The New York Review of Books,* Vol. 52, No. 19, December 1, 2005.

Das, Kumud L., "Death of Secularism at Sixteen," *The Pioneer,* New Delhi, September 12, 2003.

Gajendragadkar, P.B., "The Concept of Secularism," *Secular Democracy,* Annual Number, 1970.

Gautam, Satya P., "Interrogating Injustice: Institutional and Personal Contexts," *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences,* Vol. VII, No. 1, 2000, pp.83-96.

Gordon, Lewis R., "Some Thoughts on Philosophy and Scriptures in an Age of Secularism," *Journal of Philosophy and Scripture*, Vol. 1, Issue 1, Fall 2003, pp.17-25.

Gregorios, Paulos Mar, "On Humanism, Secularism and Socialism," *Journal of Indian council of Philosophical Research*, Vol. XIV, No. 3, May-August 1997, pp.75-89.

Herberg, Will, "Religion in a Secularized Society," *Review of Religious Research,* Religious Research Association, spring 1962, pp.145-158.

Khan, S., "Towards a Marxist Understanding of Secularism," *Economic and Political Weekly,* Vol. XXII, No. 10, March 7th, 1987, pp.405-409.

Madan, T.N., "Whither Indian Secularism?" *Modern Asian Studies,* Vol. 27, No. 3, July 1997, pp.667-697.

Mohan, Lalit, "What Secular Means," *The Times of India,* New Delhi, Tuesday, March 18, 2008.

Panikkar, K.N., "Secularism under Siege," *Hindu,* Madras, March 31, 2004.

Pantham, Thomas, "Secularism and Its Critics: Some Reflections," *The Review of Politics,* Vol. 59, No. 3, Non-Western Political Thought, Summer, 1997, pp.523-540.

Pingle, Gautam, "A Peculiar Secularism," *Deccan Chronicle,* September 24, 2005.

----------, "Ayodhya on Agenda," *Deccan Herald,* April 10, 2004.

Puri, Balraj, "Urdu and Muslim Identity," *Mainstream,* Vol. XLV, No. 26, June 16, 2007

Reddy, Siddhartha, "Ayodhya Status quo must continue," *Deccan Chronicle,* December 6, 2005.

Rege, M.P., "A Fresh Look at Secularism," *The Secularist,* May-June 1989, pp.53-55.

Sahay, Mohan, "VHP show may turn out to be a damp squib," *The Statesman,* December 6, 1998.

Sanghvi, Vir, "Voices on the Temple," *The Hindustan Times,* June 12, 1998.

Sanyal, Parth, "Indian Democracy and Public Reasoning," *Frontline*, India's National Magazine from the publishers of The Hindu, Vol. 22, Issue 04, Feb. 12-25, 2005.

Shahabuddin, Syed, "Secularism as a Facet of Social Justice," *The Pioneer,* New Delhi, June 24, 1998.

Shobi, P.D. Chandra, "Keeping Gods in Captivity," *Times of India,* July 11, 2005.

Singh, R.P., "Secularism: A Conceptual and Cross Cultural Analysis," *Problems and Perspectives of Social Philosophy*, Vol.1, No.1, International Congress of Social Philosophy, 2000, pp.123-131.

Singh, Randhir, "Theorizing communalism: A fragmentary note in the Marxist mode," *Economic and Political Weekly,* Vol. XXIII, No. 3, pp.15-47.

----------, "Communalism and the Struggle against Communalism: A Marxist View," *Social Scientist,* Vol. 18, No. 8-9, August-September 1990, pp.4-21.

Thapar, Romila, "Communalism and the Historical Legacy: Some Facets," *Social Scientist,* Vol. 18, No. 6/7, Jun.-Jul., 1990, pp.4-20.

Yinger, J. Milton, "Pluralism, Religion and Secularism," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,* vol. 6, No. 1, Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, spring 1967, pp.17-28.

Encyclopedias and Dictionaries

Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences

Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics

International Encyclopedia of Sociology

Oxford Advanced Learner's English Dictionary

Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy

Oxford Dictionary of Sociology

The Encyclopedia of Religion

The Oxford India Companion to Sociology and Social Anthropology

The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy

Internet

www.museeprotestant.org

www.milligazette.com

www.holocaustinkashmir

hrw.org/english/docs/

www.southasiaanalysis.org