

*Nothing is conducive more to the making of my life happy,  
than to know THINGS as they are and PEOPLE as  
they are ; and this wisdom must be acquired by  
frequent reflection upon men and their affairs ;  
for otherwise social enquiries will  
contribute little to it.*

**RELIGION AND POLITICS IN INDIA : /**  
**A STUDY OF THE INTERACTIONAL PATTERN**

Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
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**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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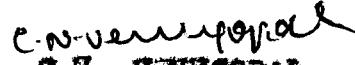
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Certified that the Dissertation entitled **RELIGION AND POLITICS IN INDIA : A STUDY OF THE INTERACTIONAL PATTERN**, submitted by **HANUJ PRASAD** for the Degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other University. We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

  
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Professor of Sociology  
and Chairman

  
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MANOJ PRASAD

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## CHAPTER - I

### INTRODUCTION : Some Concepts

The interactional pattern of religion and politics is unusually complex and diverse in a specific historical context. The literature of the world history suggests that in different periods of time these two institutions have interacted variedly, at different levels, and in different ways. Some of the political systems of the past and present societies like that of theocratic states, secular states as well as some of the greatest historical events like that of the Crusades in Europe, the spread of Christianity in England, the beginning of Reformation in Germany, the revolt against a demoralised priesthood in France during the days

of French Revolution are a few forms and instances of the consequential aspects of the interactional pattern of religion and politics.

The study of the interactional pattern of religion and politics of the contemporary modern societies brings into light three major forms of systems - theocratic system, quasi-secular system and secular system.

The theocratic system is a very old system, which originated in Greece. This was the system in which the system of authority in government shared power with the wider authority with the Gods.<sup>1</sup> In other words, the head of the state in such a system was the spiritual head also.

Barker points out that such a "state exists for the moral development and protection of its individual members."<sup>2</sup> He further points out that such "a state which is meant for the moral protection of its members will be an educational institution. Its laws will serve to make men good"<sup>3</sup> Thus its office ideally will belong to the men of virtue who have moral discernment. Its chief activity will be that of

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1. David, E. Apter, "Political Religion in the New Nations", in Old Societies and New States (ed.) by Clifford Geertz, Amerind, New Delhi, 1963, p. 70.

2. Quoted from David, E. Apter, Ibid.

3. Quoted from David, E. Apter, Ibid.



training and sustaining the nation in the way of righteousness. Such a state in all sense is like a church wherein the political philosophy becomes a sort of "moral theology."<sup>4</sup>

Taking note of Barkor's notion of theocracy, Apter opines that "there is much in common between the Greek state and the aspirations of several of the new nations of the world."<sup>5</sup> In the countries like Pakistan<sup>6</sup>, Indonesia<sup>7</sup>, Burma<sup>8</sup>, Saudi Arabia, Iran<sup>9</sup>, etc, we find that state provides images of virtue and purpose to the individuals. In these countries individual's will <sup>is</sup> bent to serve what state decides is important. The system of law is highly influenced by the system of religion. Thus as long as the system of law of these nations tends to be linked to custom, ritual, and other religious practices, state caters to ritual and custom in its effort to maintain the purity of the society, and strive to prevent the defilement of the sacred by the secular, we can categorize these nations as theocratic systems.

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4. E. Barkor, The Politics of Aristotle. Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1957, pp. 6-7.
  5. David E. Apter, Op. cit.
  6. Wayne A. Wilson, "Ideological dilemmas in Pakistan's Political culture", in Asian Politics and Religion (ed.) E. Smith, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1969, pp. 345-51.
  7. DE Smith, India as a Secular State. Princeton, New Jersey, 1966, p. 51.
  8. DE Smith, Religion and Politics in Burma. Princeton, New Jersey, 1965, pp. 307-328.
  9. David E. Apter, Op. cit., p. 73.

The second category, as noted above, is the quasi-secular system. In such a system the legal demarcation is laid out between religion and state and religion does not legally guide the affairs of men. The state and its ideology maintains neutrality towards all existing religious faiths. It allows every individual to preach, profess and practice any religion which suits his conscience. Besides in such a system, at the operational level, religion is employed to develop a system of political legitimacy so as to mobilise the religious communities for political ends.<sup>10</sup> It is believed, that in such a system religion by itself does not cause differences between religious communities but it is rather the use of religion in politics which causes differences. As examples of such a system, Japan<sup>11</sup> and India<sup>12</sup> may be cited.

By a secular system we mean a system which constitutionally separates religion from politics. In such a system polity dominates and law acquires the sacred symbols. In such a system at both the levels, at the level of ideology and at the level of its practice, separation between religions

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10. David E. Apter, Op. cit., p.77.

11. Felix Moss, "Religion and Politics in Japan: The case of the Soka Gakkai", in ASIAN SURVEY, Vol.3, 1963, pp.133-142.

12. DE Smith, India as a Secular State. Princeton, New Jersey, 1968, pp.405-503.

and politics is cherished by the people and by the "apparatus of the state" as well. In general, the political elites strive to maximize legitimacy not with the help of religion but with the use of "reason and science". The whole community regards the framework of law as the sole and ultimate commitment to live, breathe and prosper. Thus the religious institution, in such a system, loses its hold, and the system of law governs the life of men. This system thus gives rise to a new form of religion-political religion<sup>13</sup>. Such a system is prevalent in the Western World - USA, France etc.<sup>14</sup>

In this research paper our aim is to highlight the interactional pattern of religion and politics among the Hindus and the Muslims in post-Independent India. Although inter-relationship between religion and politics is inclusive of many elements, we have referred here to the Hindu-Muslim religious groups. The reasons for this are as follows:

(a) For nearly three and a half decades the Indian sub-continent has been dominated by the relation governing these two communities, (b) By the act of partition, this inter-relationship has dominated over the national consciousness, (c) The problems faced by these communities in terms of mutual adjustment are in a sense basic to our national existence. The examination of the interactional pattern of religion and politics among Hindus and Muslims will be made in the light of the secular ideology of the state. It is our contention,

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13. David, E. Apter, Op. cit., p. 73.

14. David, E. Apter, Op. cit., p. 76.

which is based on the experiences of the last thirty years, that in India the secular goals continue to remain as lofty aspirations which are yet to be realised. We have witnessed innumerable communal violence erupting in various regions of the country after Independence. A large number of communal problems alongwith a problem of evolving a uniform civil code<sup>15</sup> as mentioned in the Directive Principles of the State Policy, remain unsolved. These communal tensions and the problems of the religious minorities tend to have disintegrative effects on our federal polity. Thus it is our contention that since the professed secular ideology<sup>16</sup> of the state remains an ideal vision, and which is yet not operational, the Indian system falls under the quasi-secular system. In this paper, we are making an endeavour to consider the validity of our above statements.

Before we further complicate the aspects we are going to deal with in this dissertation, we shall first be clear on the methodological dimensions of the paper.

The methodological issues of the study fall under three categories—sources, the meaning of the terms and concepts frequently used, and approach adopted to analyse the hypothesis. The sources of this study are mainly drawn from relevant books, journal, magazines, newspaper clippings and editorials. In eliciting the relevant materials and views from the above mentioned sources we have made efforts to incorporate them objectively.

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15. The Constitution of India, Commemorative edition, Government of India, Ministry of Law and Justice, Bombay, 1971, p. 18.
16. D. D. Das, Introduction to the Constitution of India (3rd ed) Pratiche Hall, New Delhi, 1973, p. 20, 26 & 103.

The second methodological issue pertains to the meaning of the terms and concepts used in this research work. In this regard the following important terms must be defined here in the light of the meaning they convey in this dissertation.

(1) Religion :

The term 'religion' in sociology has wide meaning. This makes it difficult to be defined. However many sociologists have provided their definitions to this term but none of them is all-encompassing. Johnson defines it as a 'coherent system of belief and practices concerning a super natural order of beings, forces, or other entities; a system that for its adherents has implications for their behaviour and welfare; implications that the adherents in varying degrees and ways, take seriously in their private and collective life.'<sup>17</sup> Charles Glock and Rodney Stark define it as "an institutionalised system of beliefs, symbols, values and practices that provide groups of men with solutions to the question of ultimate being."<sup>18</sup> Not considering either of definitions in toto, for our use, we will refer to 'religion' as a coherent system of beliefs and practices of a group of

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17. Henry M. Johnson, Sociology; A systematic introduction, Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi (3rd edn.) 1973, p. 392.

18. Charles Glock and Rodney Stark, Religion and Society in Tension. Rand McNally, Chicago, 1965, p.17.

adherents who identify themselves as belonging to a community. Thus in this paper religion is used to signify a religious community.

(ii) Politics :

The second important term used here is 'politics'. The term politics like religion has a wide connotation and includes various aspects pertaining to government and state. Webster's Universal Dictionary defines politics as 'a science or art of government or of the administration and management of public or state affairs'.<sup>19</sup> The International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences indicates that politics means any action which is connected with the totality of state phenomenon, state institutions as well as state activities. By politics here we mean the same - that is, any act which is directly or indirectly concerned with the totality of state activities and its organs like government, political parties, elections, etc. However, more often the term politics is used to denote the political parties and the state.

(iii) Ideology :

The third term used in this paper is 'ideology'. The term ideology in social sciences is a most debated term.

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19. Webster Universal Dictionary, The Turbri Shale Enterprises, Bombay, 1970, p.1084.

Giddens Sjoberg defines it as a 'set of values and ideas that justify and rationalise the programmes a system carries forward'.<sup>20</sup> For Karl Marx ideology represented the ideas of the ruling class in seeking to rationalise and justify the prevailing order and their privileged position in it.<sup>21</sup> Karl Mannheim defines it as 'biased ideas of the dominant class in society'.<sup>22</sup> In this paper we have taken into account the first definition of Sjoberg and thus by 'ideology' we mean a system of ideas and values that rationalises the programme manifested in the Indian polity.

#### iv State:

The fourth term used frequently is state. There are many definitions of state in sociological literature. Here we comply by this term a system (which includes the government) which has its function in regulating the socio-political life of the country. Thus it means the nation's political authority which functions through government and legislative.<sup>23</sup>

#### (v) Secularism :

Another important term used in this dissertation is secularism. It is a Western concept which

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20. Giddens Sjoberg, Political Structure, Ideology and economic development. Indiana University Press, Indiana, US, 1962.
21. Rao M. Christenson (ed.) Ideological and Modern Politics. Thames Nelson & Sons Ltd. London, 1972, p.12,
22. Ibid, p. 5.
23. R. McIvor and C.M. Page, Society: An Introductory Analysis, Macmillan, Madras, 1974, pp.453-58.

is highly controversial in the sociological literature. D. E. Smith says 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".<sup>24</sup> In this dissertation secularism will imply the same meaning.

The third methodological issue pertains to the approach adopted in this dissertation to analyse the problem. Two approaches have been followed to analyse the interrelationships between religion and politics in India: (1) Historical perspective, and (2) Contemporary perspective. The use of 'historical perspective' is made in the Second Chapter - Historical background and the Survey of Literature. In order to have a clear understanding of the interrelationships between religion and politics, in post-Independent India, we have made an enquiry of the past hundred years through the survey of literature. This historical perspective is expected to provide an insight into the contemporary social set up. Though both historical and contemporary perspective do not stand as a method of investigation in social sciences yet their use has been common in sociological arena. It appears that without the use of such perspectives the analysis of

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24. D. E. Smith, Op. cit., p. 4.



the problems like 'Religion and Politics in post-Independent India' would not have been logical and scientific.

The study of the modern Indian history reveals that religion has played a very significant role in the political evolution of modern India. It has been made use of, in large measure, in the political cleavages, in the competition for power and in the coalition building activities of the last one hundred years.

The dominant feature of Pre-Independence politics was the communal cleavage, and the deep rooted nature of this conflict is attested by the fact that India had to be divided into two sovereign states on the basis of religion. A large number of leaders of Modern India have claimed religion to be the source of their inspiration and sustaining force in their public and personal life. In this country political movements have been organised explicitly to press the claims of religious communities to share power and to fashion the state in a manner that would assure the permanence of community based politics. All this was inevitable given the plural character<sup>o</sup> of Indian society, its legacy of mutual hostility between the two major religious groups - the Hindus and the Muslims - the clash of interests, including those of power, between competing elites, and

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<sup>o</sup> Plural society here means, a society which has heterogeneous population which includes different religious, linguistic and tribal groups.

the colonial political framework within which politics had to operate for over three quarters of a century.

Theoretically speaking, religion and polity are two distinct spheres in modern societies, though the latter has an increasing tendency to claim comprehensive jurisdiction over the social, including religious and personal affairs of the citizens. One of the themes of modern history is the movement of societies from the predominant influence of religion to that of the state, and consequently a central issue in the interaction between religion and politics has been the sphere of life, subject to regulation by each. This is of course not the only type of interaction between religion and politics. In plural societies the interaction between the two often leads to conflict<sup>25</sup>, among the religious communities themselves. This type of inter-relationship between religion and politics is relevant in Indian context.

In the aftermath of Independence the inter-relationship between religion and politics took a new form. Following the partition of the country the context of politics dramatically altered. Religion was soon to have been used to divide the country and, thus, neither Muslims nor Hindus had any

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25. Milton J. Eisen, 'Communal Conflict in South East Asia', in Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (ed.) Ethnicity: Theory and Practice. Harvard University Press, 1978, pp. 392-416.

further use for the political devices that had promoted communal divisions in the past, such as the system of separate electorates. At least for some time political conflicts based on religious differences were suppressed. The Muslim community was both leaderless<sup>26</sup> and afflicted with a sense of guilt over the partition of the country.<sup>27</sup> After independence power had passed to the National Congress Party which created a new political system which was based on secular ideals. It did not allow any sort of communalism to flourish.

The Indian Constitution which was framed in 1950 made the following points with regard to separation of religion from politics: (i) Every citizen of India was free to profess, practice and propagate his religion and establish, maintain and manage religious institutions, (ii) The state would give aid to educational institutions which were managed by religious denominations even though they had practiced instructions on religious worship in their educational institutions, (iii) There would be no religious instruction in any educational institutions maintained wholly out of state funds. (iv) No tax was to be levied specifically to promote or maintain any particular religion. The makers

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26. MRA Baig, 'Enlightened Communalism', Seminar, January 1971, p.13.

27. Gopal Krishna, 'Framework of Politics', Seminar, June 1968, p.33.

of the Constitution also assured that a uniform civil code for the entire people was also an essential aspect of the concept of secularism and they have included it in the Directive Principles of State Policy that state would endeavour to provide one.<sup>28</sup>

Thus by the enactment of the Indian Constitution a movement towards secularization<sup>o</sup> was launched. One of the aims of this secular movement was to bridge the gulf between the two religious communities - Hindus and Muslims. It was believed that the secular polity would gradually bridge the gulf between the two religious communities which would prepare the way for India to emerge a new nation in this subcontinent.

More than thirty years have elapsed since Independence and the time of the enactment of the Secular Constitution. The different scholars, mainly D.E. Smith (India as a Secular State), Mushir-ul-Haq (Islam in Secular

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28. Indian Constitution, Government of India Press, New Delhi, Article 44.

<sup>o</sup> The concept of Secularization used by M.H. Srinivas, denotes the process of institutional innovation and ideological formulation after Independence to deal with the religious groups and minorities in India. Secularization as a process attempts to stabilize the foundations of religious tolerance and coexistence among sects and communities in India. This is a national ideology which was given shape after Independence.

India), Rajni Kothari and Tarun Seth (Extent and Limits of Communal Voting: The Case of Baroda East), Richard Lambert (Hindu Communal Groups in Indian Politics) reveal that Indian society is still communal and the goals of secularism - mainly the evolution of a uniform Civil Code - are yet to be realised. Secularization as a process has yet to make any dent in changing the communal social structure of India.

A Proposition for the present study :

These facts make it imperative to examine the cause of the failure on the part of the Indian polity to realise the secular goals. Therefore in this research work our aim is to analyse the interrelationship between religion and politics among Hindus and Muslims in post-Independent India in order to examine how far the present political system is responsible for the failure.

The programmes of different national political parties, both Leftist and Rightist, reflect that all of them accept secularism and its ideals. All of them theoretically believe that religion should not intrude into the

realm of politics.<sup>o</sup> However, different case studies pertaining to the electoral behaviour of different communities - mainly S. Alam Kundmiri (Elections and Communalism in Hyderabad: Secular Democracy, 5, 1972, pp. 19-23), Gopal Krishna (Communal Voting in India, EPH, Annual, 1967), Sisir Gupta (Muslims in Indian Politics: India Quarterly, 18(4): Oct-Dec. 1962, pp. 355-381), K.K. Nair (Communal Secularism of Congress, Organiser, 21(44), June 8, 1968, pp. 5-16), Rashooduddin Khan (Muslim Leadership and electoral politics in Hyderabad: EPH, April 10, 1977), etc. reveal that mostly all the national political parties, at the practical level, mainly during the time of elections, mobilise votes on communal basis.

Considering this aspect of the international pattern of religion and politics among the Hindus and the Muslims in India that we intend to examine the following hypothesis:

In<sup>a</sup> plural society like India religion and caste are used as instruments to mobilise people for the political ends. In turn, political resources are often used to consolidate religious group's interests. This sort of interactional pattern of religion and politics gives rise to a process of exchange between religion and politics in a plural society

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<sup>o</sup> See the manifestos of the different political parties. They reflect that they all believe in secularising the Indian social system i.e. keeping apart politics from religion.

(particularly between religious minority communities and the party system). Further, the process of mutual reciprocity between religion and politics generates tension in the social system and thereby widens the gulf between the majority and minority communities.

In the Indian context wherein the party system is the major aspect of the democratic polity, the minority communities act as pressure groups. Particularly the Muslim community has proved to be so. The political mobilization of the Muslims on religious lines has provided them the power to bargain with the political parties for more and more concessions. This type of interaction between the Muslim community and the political parties has wide consequences. The minority community acquires 'politicized religious' identity which ultimately leads it to segregate itself from the majority community. The separate 'politicized-religious' identity of the religious minority communities causes a tug of war between each of them on the one hand, and, in turn, together with the religious majority community on the other. This tug of war is the major cause of communal tension in the secularly oriented plural Indian Social System. In such a tension-ridden social system the evolution of a uniform civil code becomes almost impossible. Thus if the goals of secularism in India have hitherto not been realised, it is not because secularism as an ideology is disfunctional but rather because it has not been operationalised in the plural Indian set up by the political system.

To analyse the above mentioned hypothesis in Indian context, we have divided this research paper into Five Chapters (which is inclusive of introduction).

In the Second Chapter (Historical Background and Review of Literature), there is an attempt to review the literature pertaining to religion and politics in India of the last hundred years. The aim behind reviewing the literature is to gain an insight into the problem under study and analyse the interactional pattern of religion and politics among the Hindus and the Muslims in India under the background of its historical past.

In the Third Chapter - Secular Ideology of the State and Political Parties in India - there is an attempt to explicate<sup>on</sup> the tenets of the secular ideology of the State and its social bases. To do so we shall first, focus upon, briefly, the diverse nature of the Indian social structure and the views on it of the different scholars, politicians, the communal organisations, and the national political parties in India. The chief aim behind enumeration<sup>of</sup> these aspects of secularism is to bring into light the functional dimension of secularism in the Indian context and the extent of its acceptability.

In the Fourth Chapter - Religion, Tradition and Politics in India - We shall point out those social traditional and political factors due to which the secular



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Ideology of the State has not been operationalized in the last thirty years. The aim behind doing so is to reveal that the continuing impact of society, its tradition and its groupings (caste and religious groups) on the Indian polity after Independence, and not vice-versa, has made it difficult to effect any social transformation on the western secular-democratic lines. Rather it has perpetuated the caste and religion oriented politics. The political parties, on the other hand, mainly the Congress, on whom the responsibility of the operationalization of the secular ideology falls, despite having accepted the State's Ideology, have succumbed to these social forces for petty political ends. Thus, this two way process - society's impact on polity and polity's surrender to social forces, has resulted in the accentuation of communal politics, a legacy of the pre-independence era, and has checked the growth of secularization in India.

The aim behind such analysis is to provide explanation to the following questions:

- (1) How far Parliamentary form of democracy has succeeded in realizing the secular goals of the state ?
- (2) To what extent the party system is responsible for failure on the part of the state to accomplish the secular goals ?

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 operationalization here refers to the process whereby the state's secular policy is concretized.

- (3) Is it correct to say that the mutual reciprocity between religion and politics (between Muslim minority community and the political parties) causes or intensifies communalism ?
- (4) Is secularism a myth - meaning not practiceable in a plural society like India ?

The answers to these questions will be provided on the basis of the inferences drawn from the Third and the Fourth Chapters. Thus the Fifth Chapter - Conclusion - will contain the answers of these questions as well as certain suggestions with regard to the problems of Hindu-Muslim communalism and fulfillment of the goals of secularism in India.

The present dissertation is oriented to a conceptual analysis of the interrelationship between religion and politics. As such it is not based upon an examination of empirical materials, although occasionally we have drawn on empirical findings. In the light of this, this dissertation should be regarded as an exploratory study.

## C H A P T E R - I I

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE

In this Chapter there is an endeavour to review a few important books which deal with religion and politics in India. In order to understand the interactional pattern of religion and politics among the Hindus and the Muslims, we shall consider in some detail two types of literature - literature concerning religion and politics in the pre-Independent India and literature concerning religion and politics in post-Independent India. The review of these two types of literature will give us an insight into the nature of the problem under study.

In modern India, the interaction between religion and politics can be traced from the reform movement of the 19th century. It was during this period that we find that religion intruded directly into the realm of politics for political action. Thus one can say that reform movements of the 19th century played a major role in the political evolution of modern India. These movements were not political but were directed towards social and religious reforms.

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In this regard the movements launched by the Brahma Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj, the Theosophical Society and the Rama-krishna Mission are highly significant.<sup>1</sup> These movements were India's response to the introduction of new Western nationalist and humanist ideas. The consequences of these movements were profound. Every community in Indian society was led to reform its socio-cultural patterns. The introduction of western ideas had opened the minds of the people, mainly the upper strata of all the communities. It is these people who provided leadership in India's struggle for independence.<sup>2</sup> The leading strata of various communities were economically prosperous and educationally advanced whereas the vast majority in every community were poor, uneducated, backward and a-political.<sup>3</sup> For them religious and parochial identities alone mattered. In such a case religious affiliations become an instrument for political mobilization

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1. J.N. Farguher, Modern religious movements in India, Oxford University Press, London, 1915, p.217. See also, Charles H. Heimsath, Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reforms, Princeton University Press, Bombay, 1966, p.3,9,11.
  2. J.H. Farguher, Ibid, pp.219-230.
  3. S.N. Agrawal, Growth of Indian Nationalist Movement McGraw Hill, New Delhi, 1973, p.77.

and religion and politics came to be associated with the pursuit of power by the elites of different communities.

Once the process of mobilization started on the community basis, for political action against the British rule, the political conflict soon occurred. The major political conflicts in modern India centered around two related questions. Firstly, the share of power to be enjoyed by different religious communities and, secondly, the constitution of an appropriate structure of government to make this sharing of power more effective.

The Literature concerning religion and politics among Hindus and Muslims in pre-Independent India.

The literature produced therefore during the pre-independence period mainly revolves around communalism. The communal cleavage in Indian politics has received extensive attention from Indian and foreign scholars. Their assumptions deal with manifold features responsible for the growth of communalism from the Aligarh movement.

The Aligarh movement which Sir Syed Ahmad Khan founded and led became the precursor of the later Muslim League, and naturally occupies a major place in the annals of modern Muslim politics. The movement was mainly concerned with the eradication of educational backwardness of Muslims.

It arose in Uttar Pradesh where the Muslims were generally more advanced and occupied a socially privileged position. The educational activities in this state had long-term consequences for the development of Muslim communal politics in India.

The Aligarh movement finds reference in nearly every work dealing with Indian politics.<sup>4</sup> But so far only one full-length study has been devoted to it by M.S. Jain.<sup>5</sup> Jain has argued that the spirit behind the Aligarh movement was to reassert Muslim superiority over the Hindus. The movement generated the urge for a 'separate and Independent status for the Muslims, which later culminated in the formation of the All-India Muslim League. The products of Aligarh emerged as the leaders of Muslim politics in the 20th century. The movement, which was largely confined to the upper class served the political rather than religious interests of the Indian Muslims.<sup>6</sup>

The opposition to the Aligarh movement was provided by the Ulama under the leadership of Abul Kalam Azad. This opposition centered around the Ulama at Deoband, the

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4. A. Seal, The emergence of Indian Nationalism, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1967, Chapter 7.

5. M.S. Jain, The Aligarh movement. Sri Ram Mehra Press, Agra, 1965, pp. 11-12.

6. Ibid, p. 108.

world famous Muslim Theological Seminary in north India. Dr. Zia-ul-Hassan Faruqi has published an interesting study on the political orientations of the Deoband Ulama and reasons for their opposition to Muslim separatism.<sup>7</sup> The Ulama were devoted primarily to the cause of religion rather than of political power, and were opposed to Muslim communalism because they found its votaries not sufficiently orthodox and because the Aligarh movement threatened to contract the sphere available for Islamization.

Maulana Azad wrote a new interpretation of the Quran capable of contributing to greater religious harmony in Indian society.<sup>8</sup> He promoted the political organization of the Ulama as counter weight to the Muslim League, and it has been insinuated by Mushir-ul-Haq,<sup>9</sup> that he expected to be made the Sheikh-ul-Islam of Indian Muslims to provide correct leadership to the community.

The nationalist Muslims were, thus, not averse to using religion for political ends, but in the end the Aligarh

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7. Zia-ul-Hassan Faruqi, The Deoband School and the Demand for Pakistan. Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1963, pp.108-190.
  8. Abul Kalam Azad, Tarjuman-ul-Quran (ed.) by Syed Abul Latif. Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1962, p.38.
  9. M.V.Haq. Muslim Politics in Modern India, 1857-1947, Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1970, pp.15-80.

movement was able to build up a Muslim communal movement deriving its support from the deep sense of religious solidarity of the greater majority of the Muslim people.

The argument that Muslims were discriminated against by the British, and on account of their educational backwardness were left behind in the competition for new economic and employment opportunities was first developed by W.W. Hunter.<sup>10</sup> He wrote it as an attempt to explain the resentment felt by Muslims towards the British activities in India, violently expressed in the activities of the Mahabis. Hunter's thesis that the Muslims were the principal victims of the newly-established British authority and his emphasis on their educational backwardness and failure to secure adequate representation in the services supplied the themes of much subsequent Muslim unity and have been glibly repeated as explanations of the communal orientations given to Muslim politics by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan.

The social backwardness of Muslims, the delayed emergence of middle-class in the Muslim community and the competition with the already entrenched Hindu-Muslim class are popular as explanations of communal Muslim politics with Marxist sociologists.<sup>11</sup>

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10. W.W. Hunter. Indian Musalmans (3rd edn.), Indological Book House, Calcutta, 1945, p.96.

11. A.R. Desai, Social background of Indian Nationalism (2nd edn.) Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1954, Introduction.



The most notable Indian work representing this tendency is A.R. Desai's work. The pioneering work of W.C. Smith exemplifies the same approach. Smith combined Hunter's explanation with Marxian sociology, and argued that communalism was characteristic of those sectors of Muslim society which had yet not experienced the emergence of the modern middle-class.<sup>12</sup>

Rafiq Zakaria, on the other hand, represents what could conveniently be described as the nationalist Muslim understanding of Muslim politics, which traces the sources of Muslim communalism to the backwardness of the community and its claim at the same time to a legitimate share in power and economy. Dr. Zakaria also exemplifies the nationalist Muslims weariness with the politics of Muslim communalism, which is seen to be fundamentally to the Muslim's own detriment.<sup>13</sup>

The thesis developed by Hunter and taken up with variations by Marxist and other writers on Muslim politics, has been challenged by A. Seal and P. Brass. Seal has shown that Hunter generated data from the conditions of Muslims of Uttar Pradesh for the Muslims all over India. But in fact these conditions varied sharply from province to province, and Muslims in Muslim-Minority provinces were far

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12. W.C. Smith, Modern Islam in India: a sociological analysis. Victor Gollancz, London, 1964, pp.157-195.
  13. Rafiq Zakaria, The Rise of Muslims in Indian Politics. Jaico Publishing House, Bombay, 1970, pp.105-190.

from being backward.<sup>14</sup> Paul Brass has shown that Muslims were educationally far more advanced and well placed in the administration than Hindus (his findings are based on a detailed examination of data from the census reports from Uttar Pradesh), and that indeed their fight at the turn of the century was far more for preserving of their privileged position rather than for improving their conditions.<sup>15</sup> Thus one can say that communal movement among the Muslims in India was movement of the privileged rather than of the deprived sections of the Muslim population.

In the pre-independence period the theory of communalism (especially of Muslim communalism) most popular with the nationalist writers was essentially a product of British policy. Patwardhan and Mehta held that Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was not anti-Hindu or even anti-nationalist. He was not certainly pro-Muslim who wanted to provide political recognition to the Muslims in India.<sup>16</sup> He succeeded in this because of the British imperial purpose of 'divide and rule'.<sup>17</sup>

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14. A. Seal, Op. cit., p. 99.

15. Paul Brass, Muslim Separatism in the United Provinces, EPW, Annual Number, 1970, pp. 108-66.

16. A. Patwardhan, and A. Mehta, The Communal triangle in India, Kitabistan, Allahabad, 1942, pp. 7-10.

17. Humayun Kabir, 'Islam in India' in M. Bhattacharjee (ed.) The Cultural Heritage of India, Vol. IV (2nd.), Calcutta, 1946, p. 403.

The fundamental problems faced by the Indian people were more or less identical and attempt to solve them were 'bound to cut across discussions on communal or religious lines'.<sup>18</sup>

This view that communal cleavage in India was caused by the British is not accepted by many. For example, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar argues that 'Muslim politics takes no note of purely secular categories of life, namely, the differences between the rich and poor, capital and labour, landlord and tenant.'<sup>19</sup> He maintained that the antagonism between the Hindus and the Muslims was spiritual in character.<sup>20</sup>

Following the same line, G.S. Ghurye has presented an analysis and contemporary conflict between Muslims and Hindus.<sup>21</sup>

M.A. Karandikar represents yet another attack on Muslim sectarian politics, and its domination by religion or orthodoxy. He has argued that Muslim politics has been

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18. Mehta and Patwardhan, Op. cit., p.261.

19. B.R. Ambedkar, Thoughts on Pakistan. Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1968, p.47.

20. B.R. Ambedkar, Ibid, p.337.

21. G.S. Ghurye, Social Tension in India. Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1968, pp.47-75.

characterised by a spirit of revivalism since the days of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, and this has prevented it from coming to terms with the modern ethos of nationalism, tolerance of other creeds and nationalism.<sup>22</sup> However, this view has been criticised by S.C. Misra who believes that generalised picture shown by Karandikar overlooks the different facets of Muslim politics.<sup>23</sup>

Contrary to these views Prabha Dixit maintains that communalism in India was a motivating force in the pursuit of power. She holds that Hindu communal politics has been similarly motivated. In a plural society where religious identities are primary, political power bound to be assessed by the relative share of power each community can secure for itself.<sup>24</sup>

J.H. Broomfield argues, conflict over power is the essence of communal division in politics - but that division is confined to the communalism as such.<sup>25</sup>

As against these, several scholars have maintained that Muslim communalism was a consequence of the

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22. M.A. Karandikar, Islam in India's transition to modernity, Orient Longman, Bombay, 1968, pp. 367-387.
23. S.C. Misra, Undifferentiated Islam, EPW, March 22, 1969, p. 1096.
24. P. Dixit, Communalism: A Struggle for Power, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1974, pp. 1-11.
25. J.H. Broomfield, Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth Century Bengal, University of California Press, Bombay, 1968, pp. 22-105.

failure of Indian nationalism to develop a truly non-communal ethos.<sup>26</sup>

The expression of Hindu religious attitudes in politics came through the outlook of individual political leaders. The revival of Hinduism of the 17th century and profoundly influenced leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai in the Punjab, Aurobindo Ghosh in Bengal and Tilak in Maharashtra. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya was deeply orthodox in his outlook and behaviour. Mahatma Gandhi even acknowledged Hindu religion to be the foundation of his politics. Gandhi called himself a sanatani and believed in vanashrama dharma, and yet rejected the authority of the sacred texts if they conflicted with his own moral sense. He derived his first principles in politics or rather in life, from the Gita.<sup>27</sup>

How much influence all this had on Indian politics is hard to say. There was in the past and there is now criticism of Gandhi for importing religion into politics, and at least some part of the communal division in Indian politics has been attributed to his 'excessive' pre-occupation with Hinduism.<sup>28</sup> Most of the works reviewed here on communalism

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26. Bakar Ali Mirza: Hindu-Muslim Problem, quoted in Mehta and Patwardhan, Op. cit., p.183.

27. D.Keer: Savarkar and his times. Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1956, p.103.

28. D.Keer: Savarkar and His times. Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1956, p.103.

pertain to Muslim communalism. This is because in the pre-independence period politics was dominated by the claims of nationalism and the counter claims of Muslim communalism. Hindu communal politics was never very vigorous and commanded little physical support.

Thus the views and assumptions of the work related with religion and politics in pre-independence India fall under the following categories:

- (a) India consisted of communities at different stages of social, economic and political development advancing in the scale of modernization at different rates and over different time periods; the gaps which thus developed account for the particular shape and evolution of the communal politics.
- (b) The Muslims in particular were backward community, persecuted by the British authorities in the aftermath of the Mutiny, and at a disadvantage in the competition for political and economic power; therefore, initially atleast, they had no choice but to pursue communal interests extensively.
- (c) Hindu society with its caste system did not have the institutional openness needed for the construction of a composite national community.

- (d) Islamic with its rigid and fanatical religious ethos, was bound to promote separatist politics.
- (e) Democratic politics, with its emphasis on numbers, was likely to lead to communal polarization in a society fragmented into antagonistic religious communities. In any events each community was bound to claim for itself the greatest possible share in power as the inevitable consequence of political modernization.
- (f) The presence of an outside power, eager to promote and exacerbate communal decisions was a crucial factor..
- (g) The economic problem was fundamental, but the exploiting classes misled the masses and channelled their frustrations into communal forms of expression.
- (h) The conflict was not between communities, but between the competing elites of different communities. Furthermore, the problem was essentially regional rather than national in character.
- (i) The nationalist movement used religious idioms and symbolism, thus importing communal overtones into the movement itself, instead of developing a revolutionary, secular, economic ideology.

- (j) The leadership of Tilak, Aurobindo, Lala Lajpat Rai and Gandhi became identified with the revival of Hinduism. They failed to build up a secular national movement and instead imported religion into politics, with its inevitable consequence of communal polarization.

Under this background of the causes of the growth of communalism in India an endeavour will be made here to analyse the inter-relationship between religion and politics among the Hindus and Muslims in post-independent India.

## II. Literature concerning religion and politics among Hindus and Muslims in post-independence period.

Scholarly studies concerning the interactional pattern of religion and politics in post-independence period are of three types, (i) jurisdiction of the state in the sphere of religion, (ii) political behaviour, (iii) communal violence.

### (i) Jurisdiction of the state in the sphere of religion:

The major work regarding the jurisdiction of the state in the sphere of religion is done by D.E. Smith (India as a Secular State). Taking the United States as his model for the neutrality of the state in matters of religion, Smith found the Indian state insufficiently secular because of the initiative it had taken in reforming the law, religions



institutions and practices of the Hindus.<sup>29</sup> This did not detract from the overall record of the Indian government; its liberal policies towards religious minorities were fully in conformity with the tolerance of dissent and freedom of religious characteristics of the Indian tradition. Ved Prakash Luthera following Smith's position on what 'secularism' technically requires of a secular state, has argued that in India the state cannot abdicate the responsibility of bringing about religious reforms even if such proceedings do not appear to be wholly in accord with the state's proclaimed secular character. By 'secular state' Luthera means a constitutional separation of state and religion, rather than equal status accorded to all religions as in Indian usage.<sup>30</sup>

#### (ii) Political Behaviour :

These formal issues apart, a mere systematic scrutiny of the political behaviour of religious communities has received attention from both sociologists and political scientists. They mainly deal with the electoral behaviour of the different religious communities. The most notable study in this regard is done by Rajni Kothari and Tarun Seth.

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29. D.E. Smith: India as a Secular State, (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1963), Chapter -1.
30. Ved Prakash Luthera, The Concept of Secular State and India, Oxford University Press, London, 1964, Chapter 1.

Kothari and Seth examined in their study (Extent and limits of community voting : the case of Baroda East) in great detail the boothwise population composition and candidate support in Baroda East Constituency and came to the conclusion that 'no community voted en-block for one party. The votes of every community were split..., except those of the Muslims.'<sup>31</sup> The Congress Party managed substantial support among the minority communities. Besides, a more important conclusion was that the Muslim candidate of the Congress Party always secured substantial Hindu support. There have been other studies showing the pattern of community voting, using boothwise data.<sup>32</sup> The general conclusions drawn so far seem to be that the community vote is never given en-block, except Muslims and that political divisions have eroded community solidarity, though much less among the Muslims than the other communities.

The electoral strategies followed by the minority communities have been discussed by many scholars. In this regard the works of Rasheeduddin Khan, ZM Qureshi and VKS Nair are important. Professor Khan gives an account of the Muslim

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31. Myron Weiner and Rajni Kothari (eds) Indian Voting Behaviour, Calcutta, 1965, Chapter I.

32. See Paul Brass, Factional politics in an Indian state. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1965; A. Berger, Opposition in a Dominant Party System. Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969; H. Gould, Religion and politics in a UP Constituency, in DE Smith(ed) South Asian Politics and Religion, Princeton, 1966.

politics of Hyderabad as it has developed since the integration of the state into <sup>the</sup> Indian Union. He uses mainly electoral data from the four general elections from 1952 to 1967.<sup>33</sup> He also provides an account of the various Muslim political groups operating in the region and their leadership.

Professor Quraishi gives a brief account of the electoral activities of the Muslim Majlish-e-Mushawarat, a body founded in 1964 'to articulate Muslim interests in India.' The Majlis, Qureshi states, 'was an embodiment of the political frustrations accumulated among the Muslim leadership since 1947. The Majlis marked a departure from earlier Muslim political movements in India in various respects, including the very idea of forming a pressure group as an integral part of the constitutional framework. Instead of augmenting distrust against democratic institutions and predominantly non-Muslim political parties, the Majlis leadership accepted normal democratic processes and sought to promote Muslim interests through these.'<sup>34</sup>

Nair has argued that politics in Kerala is dominated by religion and caste-centred interest' groups. The Nair Service Society formed in 1914 to promote social reform and

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33. Rasheeduddin Khan, Muslim leadership and Electoral politics in Hyderabad : A pattern of minority Articulation, Economic and political weekly, April, 10, 1971, p.

34. Z.M. Quraishi, Electoral strategies of a Minority pressure group : The Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat, Asian Survey, 8(12), December, 1968.

Modern education among the Nairs, became after 1948 a protagonist of Hindu interests.<sup>35</sup>

(iii) Communal violence :

The communal violence has been one of the major aspects of the role of religion in politics. There has been substantive study of this recurrent phenomenon of Indian political life. In the pre-independence period the main incidents of communal violence used to be associated with cow slaughter, music before mosques, religious and political processions, etc. Not until almost the very end of British rule was communal violence deliberately incited for political purposes. But irrespective of how they originated, communal riots always had the major political consequence of mobilizing the mass of otherwise unpolitical people. Riots, have played a major role in building up the Muslim League's mass following. There could be no doubt that large-scale communal rioting was a major factor leading the congress party to accept the partition of India.

For several years after partition there was a decline in the number and intensity of communal riots. They have, however, been on the increase since about 1962, and a number of fierce communal violence have now occurred.

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35. VKS Nair, Communal interest groups in Kerala in DE Smith (ed) South Asian Politics and Religion, Op.Cit., Chapter 8.

UNESCO experts carried out a study in 1953 on the psychological causes of communal hatred leading to violence. Since then the Gandhian Institute of Studies at Varanasi has done a psychological study of the riots in Rourkela.<sup>36</sup> This study, based on a sample survey of 200 respondents (31 Muslims, 38 Adivasis and 131 Hindus) enquired into the socio-economic and demographic composition of the population, the mutual fears of the Hindus, Muslims and Adivasis, and the role of rumour in inciting the riots.

The Government of India and several state governments, e.g. the Government of Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir and Maharashtra, had appointed commissions to enquire into the causes of particular riots. In 1967 the Government of India appointed a commission of inquiry to report on five communal disturbances that had taken place during that year in Bihar, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, with the intention that at the end of the enquiry it should be possible to arrive at some definite conclusion regarding the nature and causes of communal disturbances.

The commission has so far submitted only two reports, one on Ranchi-Hafia riots of August 1967 and the other on the Jaunpur and Suchetpur riots of September, 1967.<sup>37</sup>

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36. Chatterjee, Singh and Rao, Riots in Rourkela, Ajit Publication, New Delhi, 1967, Chapter I & II.

37. Report of the Commission of Inquiry on communal disturbances, Ranchi-Hafia. August 1967 and Jaunpur and Suchetpur, September, 1967, 1968 & 1969 respectively.

The few empirical studies on Muslim society done in recent years show that what is taking place is increasing Islamization rather than modernization,<sup>38</sup> and that community solidarity is being emphasized particularly in the context of the growth of Hindu communal parties.<sup>39</sup>

The works concerning religion and politics of the post-independence period clearly indicate that the Hindu-Muslim communalism, a legacy of the communal era, continued to prevail in the socio-political structure of independent India. The differences between the Hindus and Muslims remain as wide as before. Besides the secular goals of the state, mainly the evolution of the uniform civil code have remain unaccomplished.

Under this historical background of the consequential dimensions of the interaction between religion and politics we, in the next chapters, will make attempts to unravel the pattern of interaction between religion and politics in post-independent India.

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38. See S.C. Misra, *Muslim communities in Gujarat*, Bombay, 1964; Pratap C. Aggrawal, *The Revival in modern India: the case of the Meccs*, *EPW*, October 18, 1969.

39. Craig Baxter, *The Jan Sangh: the brief history*, in D. E. Smith (ed.) *South Asian politics and religion*, Princeton, 1969, pp. 74-10.

## CHAPTER - III

### SECULAR IDEOLOGY OF THE STATE AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES IN INDIA

In this Chapter, it is our endeavour to explicate<sup>on</sup> the secular ideology of the state and the views on secular ideology of the different political parties in India. The chief aims behind the enumeration of these facts are the following :

- (i) to examine whether the secular ideology of the state is functional in the Indian context or not;
- (ii) to bring into light the extent of its social acceptability and finally to state that such an ideology is the device of the state to deal with the forces of communalism, casteism etc. ; and
- (iii) to evolve gradually a uniform civil code so as to make India a modern secular state.

In order to accomplish the above mentioned aims this Chapter will be divided into two sections. In the first section - Indian Social Structure and the Secular Ideology of the State in India - we will briefly focus upon the patterns of the diverse Indian Social Structure and the existence of the outdated traditional institutions. The emphasis on these two major aspects of the Indian society will give us an insight into the dynamics of the Indian social structure. The analysis of the components of the Indian social structure will enable us to evaluate the functioning of the secular ideology of the state in India - which will be dealt with at considerable length in this section.

In the second section - Social Basis of the Secular Ideology in India - we shall, in order to examine the social acceptability of the secular ideology of the state in India, point out the views of the different scholars and communal organizations and then examine the views of the national political parties in this context. In order to examine the views of the national political parties on the secular ideology of the state in India we shall consider mainly their



secular programmes concerning the minorities as enlisted in their election manifestos. The examination of the views of different scholars, communalists and political parties on the secular ideology of the state, will show considerably the extent of its social acceptability in India. Above all, in the light of the inferences drawn from the analysis of the above mentioned aspects of secularism, we shall briefly point out the aims of secular polity in India and its achievements.

### Section - I

#### Indian Social Structure and Secular Ideology of the State in India

In the contemporary sociological literature the Indian social structure and cultural pattern are characterised by unity in diversity. Unity of the Indian social structure is manifest in its political institution<sup>1</sup> whereas diversity lies in its socio-cultural complexes.<sup>2</sup> Unity is symbolised by the political system which operates within the framework of the Indian Constitution. This symbolic political unity is also manifest in the psychological form - national consciousness, nationalism, etc. Barring this, other institutions like religion, marriage, kinship, family, etc. are

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1. M.N.Srinivas, India: Social Structure. Western Publishing Corporation (India), Delhi, 1980, pp.1-2.

2. Ibid.

highly diverse and vary at both village and regional levels.

The population of India is racially diverse, containing elements from six main racial types: the Negro, the proto-Austroloid, the Mongolians, the Mediterraneans, the western Brahycephals, and the Nordic.<sup>3</sup> The heterogeneity of population in terms of race and colour is sociologically not very significant. From sociological viewpoint institutional diversity is more important. At the institutional level, the Indian social structure, as it exists today, is highly diverse in terms of religion, caste and tribe. There are as many as ten major religious groups.\* Each has its own code of conduct and each is guided by its own personal law - Hindus by Hindu personal law, Muslims by Muslim personal law. Besides, there are innumerable caste and tribal groups which exist side by side. The marriage, family and kinship systems of these religions, caste and tribal groups are not uniform and differ markedly from region to region. In India, we find various types of marriage systems in practice like polygamy (Kerala castes), polyandry (the Todas and Kotas of the Nilgiris, the Khasa of Jaunsar Barmar, etc.), polygamy (Muslims), monogamy (upper caste Hindus, Jains and Buddhists). Apart from this, certain rules, practices and customs like

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3. Ibid.

\* See Table I.

divorce, widow remarriage, etc., vary from one group to the other. If widow remarriage is permitted among Muslims, Christians and Parsis it is forbidden among the higher castes of Hindus and Jains. If divorce is allowed among certain tribal and Muslim groups it is forbidden among the Hindus. Similarly family system is also not of uniform type. Both joint and nuclear family systems exist - each type, in turn, is matrilineal and patrilineal.

TABLE - I

|                  |                        | (Census, 1951)               |
|------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Religious groups |                        | Percentage of the Population |
| 1.               | Hindus                 | 85                           |
| 2.               | Muslims                | 9.9                          |
| 3.               | Christians             | 2.3                          |
| 4.               | Sikhs                  | 1.7                          |
| 5.               | Jains                  | 0.50                         |
| 6.               | Buddhists              | 0.03                         |
| 7.               | Jews                   | -                            |
| 8.               | Other Tribal religions | 0.47                         |
| 9.               | Non-Tribal religions   | 0.03                         |
| 10.              | Zorastrians            | 0.03                         |

Source: M.N. Srinivas, Ibid, p.43.

Further, the classification of these religious groups in terms of rural-urban residence and occupational affiliation indicates the following: The tribal people are predominantly rural; the relative urban percentage of Muslims, Christians and Jains is higher than their rural percentage; Parsis and Jains are mainly urban while Sikhs and Tribals are minimally urban.<sup>4</sup>

At the village level, we find these religious and caste groups, which differ with each other on various terms like, marriage system, family system, etc., existing side by side and cooperating with each other in the economic field. There are villages with Hindu tenants and Muslim landlords (Uttar Pradesh) and Hindu landlords and Muslim tenants. There are many other villages with landowners from other Hindu castes (from Brahmins to the Harijans) and a few Muslim landowners as well. Sometimes big Muslim landowners have Hindu servants while Hindu landowners have Muslim servants.

From this it is clear that the Indian social structure is institutionally very complex. Amidst the social diversities in the fields of marriage, family religion, cast and various other practices and customs, the people are unified by the socio-economic ties. It is the latter which is

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4. M.N. Srinivas, 'Social Structure', in Gazetteer of India by N. Kabir, Vol. I, Publication Division, 1965, p. 501.

responsible for the socio-economic development of the Indian civilization.

Above all, another important feature, apart from the unity and diversity of the Indian social structure, has been the durability of its traditional patterns. There are large number of traditional institutions and practices like untouchability, devadasi, sati, etc. which continue to persist in India despite the onset of modernization. These institutions were dysfunctional for they were responsible largely for the prevalence of rampant inequality in the Indian society.

This was the complex tradition bound and diverse social structure for which a new polity had to be set up after independence. The Indian political elites inspired by the modern ideas of equality, justice, freedom, citizenship, secularism, democracy, etc., and having desires to effect change in the Indian social structure gave to its people a secular and democratic polity. The constitution of India under which the Indian political system functions incorporated the modern secular democratic ideals. These secular and democratic ideals were structured in accordance with the legitimate interests of mostly all the groups - religions, caste and tribal groups. Individual was made the unit and he was made equal before the law. Every individual was given

right to freedom of religion. The constitution made state neutral in regard to its religious affiliation and thus a separation was laid out between state and religion. But there existed a restricted separation between religion and state which was not absolute. The constitution gave state the right to interfere in the religious affairs "if and when necessary". But at the same time it made state silent in its affiliation towards any particular religion. Such a restricted separation appears to have been drawn with the purpose of reforming the outdated traditional institutions and evolving a uniform civil law for all Indians.

Now let us know in detail about the tenets of the secular ideology of the state in India. For the proper understanding of the secular ideology of the state as embodied in the Indian Constitution we should look into its three ideal components - freedom of religion, citizenship and separation of state and religion.

#### Freedom of Religion:-

The Indian Constitution specifically guarantees religious freedom both to individuals and organised groups. The Article 25(1) states: "subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate

religion".<sup>8</sup>

While the constitution fully guarantees the sovereignty of the individual conscience in matters of spiritual, this liberty even extends to the overt manifestation of religious beliefs (practice, profession and propagation). A further point of relevance is that this freedom of religion extends not only to citizens but to all persons (even the right to propagate religion); this includes foreign missionaries in India who are actively engaged in the propagation of religion.

However, there are the interests of public welfare to be safeguarded. All the above rights are guaranteed, subject to "public order, morality and health". This indicates state's right to interfere in the religious affairs. This is justifiable on two grounds. Firstly, for amelioration of many inhuman practices, like Sati, Devadasi, which are derived from the Hindu religion. It is held that state's interference in the realm of religion in the Indian context is necessary and warranted. Secondly, unless state interferes in the religious affairs there can not be any chance of evolving a uniform civil code. "V.K.Nambiar also believes that the state's right to interfere in the religious affairs is warranted in the Indian context. To quote him, "One could hardly expect

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8. D.E.Smith, Op. cit., p.103.

the state to desist from interfering in religious practices which involve human sacrifice. In the case of practice like 'Sati' and 'devadasi', even though they are purportedly derived from the Hindu religion, the state must have the constitutional power to ban them. The same applies to the practice of untouchability which the state has abolished in Article 17, on the basis of human equality.<sup>9</sup> There are further drastic limitations on the right guaranteed in Article 25(1) of the Constitution, they are embodied in Article 25(11) and they include, (a) the regulation and restriction by the state of any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice; (b) the provision for social welfare and reform and the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus.

By this provision, the state was enabled to make extensive modifications in the Hindu Personal Law (relating to marriage, divorce, succession and adoption etc.). This provision enabled to state to enact the Harijan temple entry laws and the Central Untouchability (offences) Act of 1955.

The collective aspect of religious freedom has been dealt with in article 26 which gives religious denominations

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9. V.K.Nambiar, Religious Freedom and Secular State in India, Social Action, Vol.14, No.8, August 1964, p.355.



the right to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes; to manage its own affairs in matters of religion; to own and acquire movable and immovable property and to administer such property in accordance with law. Every religious denomination is given the right to decide what rites and ceremonies are essential according to the tenets of the religion held and no outside authority has the power to intervene in this matter. Apart from these, all minorities whether based on religion or language, have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their own choice; no discrimination from the side of the state in granting aid to educational institutions run by the minority groups.

#### Citizenship :

The second component of the secular state, the concept of citizenship, is based on the idea that the individual, and not the group, is the basic unit. Under this the constitution guarantees the right to equality before the law. It states that "the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on ground of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any one of them."<sup>10</sup> This general principle is applied to three specific areas: public appointment or office; admission to state educational institutions; and voting and

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10. Quoted from D.E. Smith, Op. cit., p.115.

representation in legislature."<sup>11</sup>

This notion of citizenship has been modified on the ground of social justice. The protective discrimination of the state to the backward castes is the best example. The assumption of the further of the constitution was that the special provisions based on protective discrimination would be of a temporary nature. With the expected rise of mass education and the general standard of living in India, there should be more of equality and fewer special provisions with the state's dealing with its citizens. Individuals coming from groups which in the past have been underprivileged will be able to compete with others on a basis of relative equality.

#### Separation of State and Religion :

The third component of the secular state is the separation of state from religion. In India there are three major aspects of separation of state and religion which are supported by the constitution: (1) there is no provision regarding an official state religion, (2) there can be no religious institutions in state schools, (3) there can be no taxes to be levied to support any particular religion.<sup>12</sup>

From the above two components of secularism in India it appears that there is no absolute separation between

11. D. E. Smith, Op. cit., p.127.

12. D. E. Smith, Op. cit., p.115.

the state and religion. So long the state is permitted to interfere in the matters like, the financial administration of the temples, the religious laws like divorce, marriage, etc., the question of absolute separation does not arise. This has been justified on two grounds that (i) Hinduism lacks the kind of ecclesiastical organization necessary to reform itself, and (ii) this is important to evolve a uniform civil code.

Thus we find from these three components of the Indian conception of secularism that the constitution establishes no state religion; creates no category of preferred citizen; throws citizenship open to all; guarantees equality of status and of opportunity; and promises to promote dignity of the individual. It throws open to all creeds, religious groups and castes all public offices including the highest office of the President, prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion in educational institutions; and introduces joint electorates to emancipate politics from religion. It provides to all religious denominations freedom of religion, forbids the state from levying taxes to promote any particular religion; and prohibits imparting of religious instructions in state institutions.

However, all these were put under check by the Article 25(2) which entitled the state to interfere in any

religious matters which were against the interest of the whole community and had no function in the modern context.

### Section - II

#### Social basis of the Secular Ideology of the State in India

The secular tenets of the Indian Constitution have been a subject of debate for many scholars, politicians as well as political parties. Some of the religious minded scholars like M.R. Masani equated secularism with atheism and asserted that only communist countries are secular.<sup>13</sup> Ved Prakash Luthera interpreting secularism on the American pattern denied that India was a secular state and maintained that it was, to use his term, "a jurisdictionalist state."<sup>14</sup> D.E. Smith, on the other hand, gives a different meaning to secularism and avers that the secular tenets of the Indian constitution are in accord with the concept of secularism. Subsequently, by all means, provided a few anomalies are removed, India can be considered as a secular state.<sup>15</sup> S. Radhakrishnan justifies the secular tenets of the Indian constitution and believes that they are "in accordance with the ancient Hindu tradition" which is famous for its tolerant character.<sup>16</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru providing

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13. Times of India, 18 May, 1966, Speech was quoted of Masani at the public session at Bombay.

14. Ved Prakash Luthera, Op. cit., Chapter I.

15. D.E. Smith, Op. cit., p.3.

16. Quoted in Mohammad Ghouse, Op. cit., p.12.

a rationalist justification of religious liberty, said that secularism in India "stands to reason." Further he said that the denial of the right to freedom of religion means the blow at the roots of the faith itself. However, if "a given faith proves a menace to public order, or its teachers attempt to thrust it down unwilling throats of men owning other persuasions there can be no justification for measures which deprive any community of its right."<sup>17</sup>

But departing from all such issues, M.N.Roy, a radical humanist, believes that religious freedom or spiritual freedom can not be obtained through legislation or incorporation of certain westernized secular tenets into the Constitution. It can be achieved only with the abolition of the idea of the supernatural. True spiritual freedom, he maintains, means not the freedom to choose any of the various religious doctrines but the freedom of human spirit from tyranny of all of them.<sup>18</sup> 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 religions practised in India are entitled to equal freedom and protection."<sup>19</sup>

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17. Quoted in D.E.Smith, Op. cit., p.176.

18. VK Nambiar, Op.Cit., p. 354.

19. P.B. Gajendragadkar, "The concept of secularism," in Secular Democracy, New Delhi, Annual number, 1970, p. 71.

S. Abit Husain also understands 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."<sup>20</sup> Apart from these scholars the members of the two major communities - Hindus and Muslims - view Indian secularism variably. In the present day circumstances we find Muslims divided into three groups on the question of secularism. There are, first, those who reject secularism outright putting it in part with 'irreligion' and unfaithfulness to God.<sup>21</sup> In the second group, comes those Muslims who are usually called 'Modernists' and 'secularists'. To them secularism is not anti religion. However, "this group has less rapport with the Muslim populace. They are suspected of not being as respectful to the Shariah as, according to general belief, a Muslim should be. They prefer to express themselves mostly in English for the sake of a longer and 'mixed' audience whenever they try to communicate in Urdu, especially on

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20. S. Abid Hussain, The Destiny of Indian Muslim, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1965, p. 170.

21. Niyazi Berkes, The development of Secularism, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1972, p.16.

religious issues, the 'Ulama' find their writings 'unconvincing and often motivated.'<sup>22</sup> In the third group come the majority of the Ulama and the Muslim masses. They accept secularism as long as it denotes the state's neutrality in the sphere of religion. They are very vigilant and anxious to expose and criticise the second group for its alleged anti-Shariah stand. Mir Mushtaq Ahmad, Chairman of the Secular Forum (Delhi) once asserted that secularism entailed an attitude of 'positive respect' to all religions. But Maulana Akhlag/Ahmad Qasimi of the Delhi Jamiyat-i-Uluma, said that secularism must be explained not in terms of 'respect' but in terms of 'tolerance'!

However, at practical level, we find that on the question of secularism the Indian Muslims are divided into two sections. The first group is in a majority and rather contemptuously called 'secularist' includes modern educated Muslims who held that religion, as a faith, can co-exist with secularism. The second group led by the Ulama, stands by the view that religion is not only faith but Shariah also. Faith may also co-exist with secularism, but Shariah cannot. The members of the first group are to be found in the Indian political mainstream whereas the members of the second group have kept themselves aloof from it and have played significant role in arousing communal feeling among the majority of the Muslims in India.

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22. Mushir V. Nag, Islam in secular India, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1972, p. 16.

The political and cultural organisations like the Hindu Mahasabha, the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh and the Muslim League, have denounced secularism. The Hindu Mahasabha (non-existing) stood for the re-establishment of Akhand Bharat (undivided India). Professor V.G. Deshpande declared in 1949 that the Mahasabha would not shrink from waging war with Pakistan to achieve this if other methods failed.<sup>23</sup> It held with regard to secularism in India, that "misconceived notion of secular democracy can not inspire the masses" and that only the ideals of Hindu Rashtra are capable of doing this. In the face of the fissiparous tendencies of provincialism and linguism, according to the Mahasabha, "the real uniting link among the people of this vast country is Hinduism, which has been systematically ignored and thrown into the background by the present set up. Like the Hindu Mahasabha, the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh, a cultural organization, also believes in creating Akhand Bharat. Its one of the most vocal leaders, Golwalkar, demonstrated great dexterity in dealing with the concept of the secular state. "To a Hindu, the state is and always has been a secular facet. It was only a departure from the Hindu way of life that brought about, for the first time, a non-secular theocratic concept of state under Ashoka."<sup>24</sup>

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23. D.E. Smith, Op. Cit., P. 461.

24. D.E. Smith, Op. Cit., p. 468.



The concept of secularism according to Golwalkar is western which separates religion from the state. In the Indian context, it is just not applicable because Hinduism is not only a religion but a way of life which includes customs, manners, habits, rituals, laws etc. In this sense Hinduism can not be separated from the state.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the western concept of secularism that India has adopted in its constitution, according to Golwalkar, is not acceptable. "We can not give up religion in our national life...as it would mean that we have turned faithless to our Race Spirits, to the ideal and mission for which we have lived for ages."<sup>26</sup> Thus, the ideology of the organization states that like England, India too should have a state religion and could yet be liberal to the minorities. "Why should the overwhelming majority of the Hindus deny themselves a pre-eminent position for the sake of minority that had shown itself disloyal to any idea of a composite state."<sup>27</sup>

The movement launched by these communal organizations, in the early period of the aftermath of Independence gained considerable support among certain sections of aggressive Hindus, who had long opposed what it called the Muslim

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25. D.E. Smith, Op. Cit., P. 467.

26. D.E. Smith, Op. Cit., P. 467.

27. The Statesman, 9 June 1947, p.6, Cols., 3 & 4.

appeasement.<sup>28</sup> But in course of time the movement subsided, nevertheless in certain pockets of the country it retained its hold.

The Muslim League, another communal organization which led the movement in western Pakistan to create a new independent state before Partition, rejected the Indian form of secularism. It believed that the secular ideology of the state was a device of the majority community to gradually assimilate the minority communities into its own culture.

The views of these scholars, politicians and communal organizations on secularism are highly diverse and there do not appear any uniformity in their thought. However, broadly they can be grouped under four schools - one which conceptually holds India to be a non-secular state (Luthera, M.N. Roy etc.), the second expresses the fear of the gradual eclipse of the old institutions and customs sanctified by religion (Hindu communal organization and the Muslim League), the third finds it unacceptable on the ground of irreligiosity which secularism stands for (orthodox sections of Muslims) and the fourth which is anxious to modernize India

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28. K.M. Pannikar, The Foundations of New India, George Allen and Unwin, New Delhi, 1963, p. 164.

on the western democratic lines accepts secularism in the Indian context.

These four different schools of thought on secularism are dominated mainly by academic scholars, politicians and the leaders of a few religio-cultural and communal organizations. They do not in any way represent the masses of the country.

To know about the opinions of the masses we should look into the views of different national political parties for they represent different groups, castes, religions, tribals etc. Though the actual opinion of the masses can not be obtained through the opinions of the parties, yet their opinion will show considerably the common interests of the masses.

#### The political parties on secularism

The views of different national political parties on secularism are observable in their programmes and ideology which they preach before the people. The manifestoes in this regard throw ample light and these could be made use of in this regard. The manifestoes of the political parties like the Congress (Now, Congress-I), the Communist Party of India, the Communist Party of India (M), the Bharatiya Janata Party (formerly Jan Sangh), indicate that they all, by and large, accept the secular ideals of the state. This unity of opinion is clearly reflected in their programmes to uplift the state of religious minorities.

After independence, "the Congress Party placed before the country two principal aims - one the establishment and successful functioning of a secular democratic political structure and two, the building up of a technologically progressive economy and social order based on social justice and equal opportunity to every citizen."<sup>29</sup> The fulfilment of these two goals has been the major concern of the Congress Party since independence. Dealing with its first aim the Congress Party stated in one of the resolutions in May 1964, "Secularism is a priceless heritage of our country, and is the foundation on which a progressive modern state can be built for the welfare of the common man."<sup>30</sup> It also resolved in another resolution to maintain and consolidate national integration based on secularism as a necessary condition for the country's march toward democratic socialism.

The manifestos published during the time of elections have stated that "the Congress has always stood and stands today for a united, non-sectarian and secular India." "It believes that only on this basis can our country progress and achieve greatness."<sup>31</sup> Further, it stated that the

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29. Sadiq Ali, The Congress Manifesto, in 1962 General Elections in India (ed), New Delhi by S.L. Poplai, Allied Publishers (P) Ltd., 1962, p. 30.

30. Quoted in V.K. Sinha, Secularism in India, Lalvani Publishers, Bombay, 1968, p. 30.

31. Election Manifesto, 1962, The Indian National Congress Paragraph 51, 52.

progress of the Indian people depends, above all, on their unity and cohesion and integrity of our country. The communal and sectarian approaches are not only bad in principle, but harmful in their results and weaken the nation.

The Communist Parties of India (both CPI and CPI-M) also believe in secular ideals of the state. The Communist Party of India (M) declared that "it stands for effective guarantee of the secular character of the state."<sup>32</sup> It further stated that the party stands for equal rights of all citizens irrespective of religious caste, sex etc. and safeguarding the interest of Muslim minority in India."<sup>33</sup> The Communist Party of India, on the other hand, declared in one of its manifestoes, "the Communist Party advocates for effective steps at all levels, including joint campaign by all secular parties, against propaganda and activities which are designed to arouse communal passions, caste feelings. Our party is totally against intrusion of religion into politics in any form or under any cover. It demands that the administration be rid of all communal elements. Our party is prepared to work with all secular forces in the country in order to combat the forces of communalism, casteism

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32. Election Manifesto, 1972, Communist Party of India(M),  
p. 4.

33. Ibid, p. 6.

and separatism and promote national integration. We are, at the same time, conscious that in the final analysis, the problem of national integration is the problem of democracy and national progress."<sup>34</sup>

Even among the rightest parties the Bharatiya Janata Party (formerly known as Jan Sangh) believes in secular ideals and its leaders affirm their faith in secularism.<sup>35</sup> This party which stands for Hindu revivalism and creation of Hindu Rashtra declared that "While different political parties were busy encouraging communalism, casteism and regionalism just to gain petty political advantages, the Jan Sangh attached supreme importance to national welfare and constantly and unrelentingly waged a war against these perverse and fissiparous tendencies. The Bharatiya Jan Sangh guarantees full freedom of faith and worship to all but it is opposed to the tendency, so contrary to the ideals of a secular state, of exploiting religion in politics and of demanding special privileges on that basis. It is wrong to divide the people of Bharat into a majority and minority groups on the basis of religion. It only shows a lack of conception of the true nature of Bharatiya nationalism. Its programme promised educational and economic

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34. Election Manifesto, Communist Party of India, 1962, p. 22.

35. Geeta Puri, Bharatiya Jan Sangh : Organization and Ideology. Sterling Publication, New Delhi, 1970, p.19.

help to backward classes to bring them into line with the whole society; with a view to obliterate all vexatious distinctions of high and low, touchable and untouchable.<sup>36</sup>

Another political party which is non-existent now in its original form, is the Janata Party. It was a coalition of political parties like Congress (U), the Bharatiya Lok Dal, the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, the Socialist Party, etc. It had its short political life but keeps importance on many accounts. It came to power ousting Mrs. Gandhi's dictatorial regime in 1977. This party professed its commitment to democracy and rural development.

In its election manifesto it pledged to preserve the secular and richly diverse political character of India. It accorded the highest respect to the rights and legitimate needs of the minorities. Believing in equality of citizenship it looked forward to provide all kinds of protection and facilities to minorities.<sup>37</sup> The Janata Party like other parties, stated in its manifesto a firm commitment for a secular state. It pledged to preserve the secular and richly diverse character of the state. It stated, "the party will accord the highest respect to the rights and legitimate

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36. Election Manifesto, 1962, Bharatiya Jan Sangh, pp. 2 & 3.

37. C.P. Bhambhri, The Janata Party : A Profile. National Publishing House, New Delhi, 1980, p. 21.

needs of the minorities. It believes that all citizens are equal and should be treated as equals and that they should have full protection against discrimination of any kind."<sup>38</sup>

The Janata Party also made three important points in its programme for minority communities -

- (a) to restore minority character of the University (AMU);
- (b) to provide travel facilities to Mecca pilgrims;
- (c) to activate and give new directions to the work of the Central Wakf Council.<sup>39</sup>

From the ideological and programmatic stands of these various political parties it appears that secularism as embodied in the Indian Constitution is commonly accepted. The commonality of views of these political parties, which differ with each other on various other issues of national concern, on secularism also indicates that ideologically, it is widely acceptable.

However, it is a strange paradox that despite the acceptance of secularism as an ideology by most of these national political parties the aims of the secular ideals of the state are yet to be realized. This is not to say that efforts have not been made in this regard by the government.

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38. Election Manifesto, The Janata Party, 1980, p. 36.

39. Election Manifesto, Ibid, p. 23.



A great many legislations have been enacted in this regard in the past but all the legislations have dealt with the social evils connected with the Hindu religion. For example there have codification and alternation of Hindu personal law which have reformed various practices connected with temple worship such as criminal sacrifices and temple prostitution and the financial administration of Hindu temples, etc.<sup>40</sup> The Hindu religious endowments Commission in its 1962 report made recommendations, regarding such matters as : state legislation to regulate temple deities, the establishment of institutes for the training of temple priests, the qualifications and scales of pay of these functionaries and the appointment by temple authorities of religious teachers to deliver discourses to the Hindu public.<sup>41</sup>

Apart from this the personal Hindu law has been codified and radically amended by legislative action. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, for example, confirmed the validity of all forms of inter-caste marriage (this had been established by special legislation in 1949). Before 1949 marriage between persons of different Varna was strictly prohibited but the constitution permitted it to do so.

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40. D. E. Smith, South Asian Politics and Religion, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, New York, 1969, p.30.

41. D.E. Smith, Ibid, p.30.

These efforts on the part of the government to secularize the Indian society has been very partial. As it is apparent, all these reforms have been effected in the Hindu institutions and practices. In the past more than thirty years, there has been no reform introduced in the institutions and practices of Muslims in India. This clearly indicates the failure on the part of the state to make any effort to evolve a uniform civil code which has been one of the major goals of the secular tenets of the constitution.

Besides this, i.e. the failure of the state to evolve a uniform civil code, we find that the contemporary India continues to grow under the forces of communalism, casteism etc. The continuance of these forces in the form of communal violence, communal electoral behaviour, etc. indicates that India is far from a secular state.

From the above discussion on the diverse Indian social structure and the secular ideology of the state as well as the social basis of the secular ideology, we can draw the following conclusions : Firstly, in the diverse Indian social structure wherein various religions, caste and tribal groups exist side by side and where outdated institutions and practices like sati, Devadasi, untouchability, etc. are still existing, the restricted separation between religion and state as outlined earlier is desirable

and warranted. It is also functional for it aims to bring about a uniform change in the society. Secondly, it is legitimate. It is so to the extent that it gives freedom of religion to an individual, if not at the cost of other on the basis of its affiliation to religion, caste or tribe. Thus it meets the legitimate interests of all groups without discriminating any one in particular. Thirdly, it is commonly accepted by the national political parties. Its acceptance by these political parties suggests that the secular ideology has social basis of legitimacy in India. Finally, the goals of secularism, have been partially fulfilled for the aim of evolving a uniform civil code remains unfulfilled and communal hostility continues to persist in the Indian social structure.

For our analysis the third and the fourth conclusive statements are highly important. We have seen that the political parties have commonly accepted the secular ideology of the state. At the same time we find that secular aims of the state have remained unfulfilled.

Thus, one can conveniently say, keeping in view the above statements, that if secularism is yet to get institutionalised in the Indian social structure, it is largely because of the failure of the political parties to make any efforts in this regard.\*

\* This view is based on the assumption that political parties are operational instruments of the state. The operationalization of the ideology of the state directly falls on the political parties.

This makes it pertinent to raise the following questions :

1. Why the political parties, despite having ostensible faith in secularism have, failed to operationalise the secular ideals of the state ?
2. Why a uniform civil code has not been evolved?
3. Why communalism, still continues to hold sway in the Indian Society?

We shall make an attempt to provide answers to these questions in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER - IV

### RELIGION, TRADITION AND POLITICS IN INDIA

In India, secular polity is trying to operate in a society which is largely non-secular. But society and polity do not operate independent of each other and each tries to impose its own values on the other. What is observed in the last thirty years of independence is the continuing impact of Indian society on the Indian polity - political parties. Like pre-independence period, "the Indian society which has both hierarchical (caste and class) and horizontal (tribal, religious and linguistic) groupings,"<sup>1</sup> continues to affect the functioning of the polity quite substantially.

Despite the fact that state's ideology places an emphasis on the individual citizen and does not encourage groups or communal politics, the caste

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1. H. Weiner, Quoted in Moin Shakir, Politics of Minorities: some perspectives. Ajanta Publication, New Delhi, 1980, p.96.

and religion (horizontal and vertical groups) continue to determine quite considerably the contours and structure of politics. In other words, caste and religion are still used as instruments for the political mobilization and political consolidations in post-independent India. The factors like caste and religion have so much of political significance that the political ideology does not count and get diluted at the practical level.

From the above statements two separate aspects of the Indian society can be deduced. First, secular polity is operating in a non-secular society, and, second, influence of religion and caste in the functioning of the polity.

In this Chapter we will enumerate those two aspects of the Indian society in detail. To do so we will divide this Chapter into two sections -

- (i) Anti-secular aspects of the Indian society, and
- (ii) The process of exchange between religion and politics in India.

In the first section, we shall make an attempt to

critically pin-point some of the anti-secular aspects of the Indian society. For this, we shall highlight, first, the anti-secular elements of the Indian tradition (both Hindu tradition and tradition of Islam) and, then, focus upon the existence and functioning pattern of the communal organizations (both Hindu and Muslim communal organizations). The existence of these communal organizations has been considered as an anti-secular aspect of the Indian society.

The aims behind dealing with these anti-secular aspects of the Indian society are : to show that the Indian social structure, some of its characteristics, is such that it does not allow any social transformation on the lines of secularism and democracy; to point out that the communal organizations act as pressure groups which interact with the dominant political party in each state to demand protection of the Muslims in turn for Muslim support to that party.

In the second section - process of exchange between religion and politics in India - we shall highlight the functioning pattern of the political parties and show as to, what extent they are guided by the forces of religion and caste in India. The study of the functioning pattern of these political parties will proceed at two levels:

- (i) structural - organizational level, and
- (ii) organizational - functional level.

At the structural - organizational level, we shall mainly pin-point the influence religion and caste exerts on the activities of the members of the political organization and show its consequences in the plural Indian context.

At the organizational - functional level, which will further be classified into two:

- (i) ideological level, and
- (ii) mobilizational level- we shall focus upon the function of religion and caste in the Indian politics.

Such a study would indicate: the influence of religiously diverse and traditionally communal society on the Indian polity; organization of politics, largely on caste and religious lines, and not on secular basis, perpetuates communalism or rather intensifies it; the practice of religious and caste oriented politics creates division between the religious communities - mainly between the Hindus and the Muslims and provides politico-religious identity to each of them; practice of such politics gives birth to a process of exchange between the political parties and religious communities.

The focus on these aspects, in turn, would answer the following questions: why the secular ideology of the



state has not been operationalised in India; why the secular goals, mainly the uniform civil code for the whole Indians, have not been realised; why communalism flourishes in the Indian socio-political structure.

### Section - I

#### Anti-secular aspects of the Indian social structure

The Indian social structure is not only diverse, but also traditional. Despite the onset of modernization the traditional values are still upheld by the common people. The continuity of tradition in the midst of the forces of modernization is proving to be an offsetting factor in the realization of any 'modern goal'. Secularism being a modern institution is also facing this challenge in India.

Indian society and its tradition has many facets. It includes the tradition of Hinduism (the tradition of the majority community), tradition of Buddhism, Jainism as well as the tradition of Islam (the most powerful minority community). Each has its own history and each is guided by its own "belief and practice systems." Thus by Indian tradition we mean the tradition of all these religious communities who have existed in India since very long sharing each other's customs and practices.

For our purposes, we shall deal mainly with the traditions of Hinduism and Islam to show some of their aspects which are anti-secular and which are largely responsible for the failure of the secular goals to get realised in India.

To begin with, let us first look into those anti-secular aspects of the Hindu tradition which have played an offsetting role in realization of the goals of secularism in India.

There are many schools which put forward their opinion regarding the interactions between the Indian tradition and secularism. According to one school, (dominated by S. Radhakrishnan), the elements of the secular state have a long tradition in Hindu India.<sup>2</sup> The pioneers of this school consider the tolerant character of Hinduism as an important element suitable to secularism in modern India.

The other school (dominated by D.E. Smith) considers five aspects of Hindu religion as helpful towards the making of the secular state : attitude towards history, tolerance lack of organization, separation of political from religious functions and regulation of social organization.<sup>3</sup>

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2. S. Radhakrishnan, Religion and Society, 1947, pp. 20-21.

3. C.P. Ramasami Aiyar, Report of the Hindu religious endowments commission. Ministry of Law, Govt. of India, 1962, p. 6.

Now let us deal with each of them and see how far these "elements" of tradition are helpful towards the making of the secular state.

Dealing with 'tolerance' Smith says, "Religion which regards history as unreal, or, if real, ultimately unimportant may be assumed to be unconcerned with securing or maintaining secular power. This should be helpful to the secular state."<sup>4</sup>

But what he says does not appear to be correct. Commenting upon Smith's opinion, V.K. Sinha opines, "that is to say, religious values of Hinduism do not require a Hindu state, or any particular kind of a state, for that matter."<sup>5</sup> He says the very concern for political forms makes it difficult to secure a democratic government. No form of government needs a more enlightened, vigilant and above all a committed public than does democracy. An attitude which is a-political, not merely does not preclude setting up of a non-secular state, but would encourage its setting in an essentially traditional society. Belief in the unreality of this world, Maya, makes it well-nigh impossible to transform a traditional society into a modern

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4. D.E. Smith, India as a secular state, Princeton, New Jersey, 1963, p. 24.

5. V.K. Sinha, Secularism in India, Lalvani Publication, Bombay, 1968, pp. 22-23.

society. It is not that the majority of the people believe that the world is 'Maya'. But it is used as a convenient camouflage to cover one's apathy towards politics."<sup>6</sup> Further, he says that quiteism in Indian tradition makes it all the more easy for politics of communalism and regionalism (emotionally charged and pseudo religious base) to emerge. This tradition of quiteism, though dominant, is not all pervasive. It does, however, encounter the newer political forces released by the freedom movement. "These new forces, moved by high idealism and impatient for change are not, paradoxically altogether incompatible with quiteism. As a matter of fact, between them they have squeezed out the more "pedestrian" constitutional protests. The politics of opposition in India seems to combine sporadic eruptions with long stretches of complacent inertia." This, thus, appears to be hardly conclusive to the building up of a secular democracy.

Secondly, tolerance of Hinduism has been a myth. No doubt, the nature of Hinduism permits an endless variety of opinions and beliefs but its flexibility is limited. It allows tolerance to the extent it fits into the social structure of Hinduism. "Tolerance was limited to speculation alone and was not permissible to faiths which

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6. V.K. Sinha, Ibid., p. 23.

questioned the social structure based on religion."<sup>7</sup> Further, what passes for religious tolerance has been for the most part mere indifference. Moreover, underlying this assumption of 'tolerance' is the belief that all religions have a share in truth and are therefore of equal value. "This syncretic view may have some sincere votaries but what really happens is that it makes a Hindu intolerant of all those who believe that to their religion alone the truth has been revealed."<sup>8</sup> It is this which makes it difficult for a Hindu to comprehend the proselytising zeal of the Christians. That is why J.C. Winslow says, religious tolerance of Hinduism "as true only of matters of faith. In practice, as in regard to the breaking of the caste rules, Hinduism is as intolerant as any other religion."<sup>9</sup> The example of this truth we find in the instances of the suppression of the Chakravartist - "the materialist philosophers of ancient India." Certainly, speculations which tended to question the social basis of Hindu society was discouraged. Till today we find that Hinduism as a religion of the Hindus is highly pervasive and maintains its basic structure - caste. The prevalence of the system of caste and the practice of its

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7. V.K. Sinha, Op.Cit., p. 23.

8. V.K. Sinha, Ibid., p. 24.

9. J.C. Winslow, 'The Intelligentsia', The Christian task in India (ed). Jhon Mckenzie, Macmillian, London, 1929, p.16n.

rules and regulations and rituals is the chief anti-secular aspect of the Indian society.

Thirdly, a major feature of Hinduism is the lack of any organization. This has been considered favourable for the functioning of the secular democratic polity. But the lack of organization is not favourable for secular change. No doubt the lack of any organization has made it easier for the state to bring about changes in the Hindu social customs (sanctioned largely by religion). But at the same time by the same virtue, the Hindu society has been proved to be remarkably resilient to any fundamental change. It has shown tremendous capacity to absorb the shocks of external challenge.<sup>10</sup>

V.K.Sinha believes that "the absence of an organization makes it next to impossible to register any victory for the state or any defeat for the religion. With no recognised "head" of religion, no treaties of compromise or surrender can be made with religion. When there is no organised resistance, there is no recognised victory either. A devout Hindu has not ceased to be less doubtful caste conscious because the Hindu constitution has laid down the principle of social inequality".<sup>11</sup> This is the reason why even

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10. V.K.Sinha, Ibid, p.24.

11. V.K.Sinha, Ibid, p.25.

when profound changes are enacted in social organization with religious foundations, they do not penetrate into the consciousness of the Hindu and therefore inspite of legislation numerous social evils continue to exist.

Thus it appears that the Hindu tradition with its pronounced authoritarian overtones presents a real challenge to any social transformation on the lines of secularism and democracy. If one looks at some of these features of the Hindu tradition - authoritarian structure of caste, etc., one finds that secularism in India finds a great challenge.

Similar to the Hindu tradition the tradition of Islam, which is the major component of the Indian tradition, also provides a great challenge before the realization of the goals of secularism.

Islam has been one of the most powerful religions of the world. Arising at the time of "new class formations" in the existing Arab society, it consolidated the power of the state. The role of the prophet as a ruler of the state distinguishes Islam from other religions like Christianity and Buddhism. The latter could turn hostile to the acquisition of great power. The subsequent Caliph's role bears witness to many modifications deviations and even contradictions in the political practices as there is no definite political theory or practice which has the sanction

of the Quran.<sup>12</sup> It therefore resulted in confusion. The benefit, of course, has been taken by the Ulema who justified the powers that be. They do not distinguish between religion and state. Besides, the Shariah, according to them, is the governing code, which prescribes rules and regulations of the traditional Islam. These rules and regulations are invincible. The contention of most of the orthodox section of the Muslim community in India is that the "Dal-ul-Islam" and the "Dar-ul-Haab" can be considered in the Indian context and Dal-ul-Islam (the Abode of Islam) a country where the law of Islam is in full force) may not be given importance but Dar-ul-Haab (the Abode of man, a country belonging to infidels which has not been brought under the rule of Islam) should be given importance and Shariah its constitution must be considered sacred. This traditional belief that Shariah is unviolable makes it all the more difficult for the 'secularists' to think of bringing any reforms in its 'code of conduct' to evolve any uniform civil code for the total secularization of the society.<sup>13</sup>

We find many instances when even the liberal section of the Muslim community expressed -

- its deep concern for the protec-

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12. Moin Shakir, Politics of Minorities. Ajanta Publication, New Delhi, 1980, p.74.

13. M.A.Karandikar, Isham in India's Transition to Modernity, Meenakshi, Meerut, 1969, pp.304-1345.



tion of Shariah. In 1948, the Muslim members sought to get exempted the Shariah' from the directive principle regarding a uniform civil code.<sup>14</sup> One of the members declared "Muslims hold religion as the most valuable thing in life and it is governed by their religion. Shariah or personal law is a vital part of their religion and they can not conceive of the possibility of the abrogation of Shariah law on any account."<sup>15</sup> Though the constituent Assembly did not accept the argument and included in the directive principles of state's policy, aim to evolve a uniform civil code, the Indian Muslims, in the past more than thirty years, have shown that their personal law (Shariah) can not be touched. This orthodox stand of the Muslims in India is highly anti-secular and is working as a force against the process of secularism in India.

✓ Apart from certain traditional and institution patterns of Hinduism and Islam there are certain other social forces which are anti-secular aspects of the Indian social structure and are working against the process of secularization. They are the forces of Hindu-Muslim communalism in India.

In augmenting the process of Hindu communalism the role of three organizations has been quite significant -

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14. D.E.Smith, Op. cit., p.421.

15. Quoted in D.E.Smith, Op. cit., p.42.

\* Communalism here means the tension prevalent between culturally distinct communities. This tension is the result of the power struggle.

the Hindu Mahasabha, the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) and the Ram Rajya Parishad.

The Hindu Mahasabha stands for the reestablishment of Akhand Bharat (undivided India) since 1947 partition agreement. Besides it also stands for re-establishment of Hindu Raj in Bharat, with a form of government in accordance with Hindu conceptions of polity and economy.<sup>16</sup> The Mahasabha is highly critical of the state's secular ideals and advocates for total ban on cow slaughter, the repealation of the Hindu Marriage Act and other "anti-Hindu legislation," the complete integration of all of Kashmir with the Indian Republic.

The second Hindu communal organization is the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh. It's famous leader Golwalkar who was highly influenced by Senskar stated that "Hindus were a nation". He believed therefore that "All the non-Hindu peoples in Hindustan must adopt Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in common Hindu religion".<sup>17</sup> The RSS which is cultural organization is holding this statement of Golwalkar as its ideology and working for the accomplishment of the goal.

The Ram Rajya Parishad is another Hindu communal organization which supports the Hindu Rashtra theory of

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16. D.E.Smith, Op. cit., p.461.

17. D.E.Smith, Op. cit., p.466.

the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak. This party has its hold only in a small pocket of Rajasthan. The ideology which this organization preaches before the people pertains to the creation of Rama Rajya in modern India. According to it, "secular materialism does not possess the power to bring into existence the state of eternal bliss".<sup>18</sup>

On the other hand, the Muslim communal organization like the Muslim League, Jammat-i-Islami, etc. have also tended to revitalise Islam in India. The founding father of Jammat, Maudoodi, argues that foremost aim of the Muslims in India is to establish Islamic way of life.<sup>19</sup> The party believes that Islam is an indivisible whole, and politics an inalienable part of it". "The party cannot ignore politics. It also believes in persuading non-Muslims to accept the Islamic way of life in order to establish an Islamic state in India. It does not believe in present politics of democracy and secularism,"<sup>20</sup> and therefore does not intend to join it. It may participate in the politics when the Islamic state is established in India. Maudoodi's thesis suggests that a Muslim living in an ideally secular state does not cease to be a Muslim until he accepts secularism as a public policy and a way of life.

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18. Mohammad Ghouse, Secularism, Society, Law in India, Vikas Publication, New Delhi, 1973, p.57.

19. Mohammad Ghouse, Ibid, p.57.

20. Mohammad Ghouse, Ibid, p.56,

The Muslim League, another communal organization which is active in Kerala, also believes in the same ideology of creating Islamic state in India.

Above all, the formations of Majlis-e-Mushamarat which is the federation of (1) Indian Union Muslim League, (2) Jamiat-ul-Ulamie-Hind, (3) Jammat-i-Islami, (4) Tamir-i-Millat, (5) Ilthad-ul-Mushalman, (6) Muslim block and (7) Muslim Majlis. The formation of such an organization is a positive sign for the organization stands to combat communalism, check communal riots and safeguard the social and cultural interests of the Muslims. But in practice it has worked to strengthen communalism in India. It has accepted the secular ideals of the constitution but not the aims of it - uniform civil code. It does not want any change in the Muslim personal law.

Further the organization acts like a pressure group representing a large community of Muslims in India. The President of the organisation says he could talk to the dominant political party in each state to demand protection of the Muslims in turn for Muslim support to that party.<sup>21</sup>

The existence of these communal organizations in the Indian social organization is highly anti-secular. Their functioning procedures, their preachings and ideolo-

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21. Mohammad Ghouse, *Ibid*, p.56.

gies are full of communal germs. They do not want 'secularism' to seep into the society's structure and get accepted by the people. Rather "they want communalism to flourish and secularism to perish in India".<sup>22</sup>

In such a social structure where there are various types of anti-secular elements present (tradition communalism, communal riots etc.) chances of the ideals of secularism to get institutionalised in the society appear weak.

### Section - II

#### Process of exchange between religion and Politics

In the light of the anti-secular elements of the Indian tradition (the existence of the religious and caste groups and communal organizations) that we should make an attempt to study the functioning pattern of the national political parties.

In any democratic set up a political party, in the struggle for power, intends to strengthen its mass base. The extent of the support of the mass determines the extent of the accessibility of power. The wider the support in the masses the greater are chances for gaining the power.

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22. Mohammad Ghouse, Ibid, p. 58.

Thus, the political life of any party depends upon the support of the mass.

To gain the support of the mass is to gain the legitimacy. However, to gain the legitimacy depends upon various factors.

D.E. Smith says, "A political system acquires legitimacy when the belief become widespread that its political institutions and procedures are right and proper for the society and that its decisions should be accepted and values obeyed as a matter of moral obligation."<sup>23</sup> Semmour M. Lipset points out, "Groups will regard a political system as legitimate or illegitimate according to the way in which its values fit in with their primary values."<sup>24</sup> From these two statements it appears that there are two important features which act as determinants in gaining political legitimacy. First, the acceptance of ideology at the wider level, and second, ideology must serve the interests of all the groups.

Every political party, in order to maximise its support and thereby to <sup>gain</sup> legitimacy, keeps into account these two factors of legitimacy and functions accordingly.

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23. D.E. Smith, Religion and politics in Burma. Princeton, New Jersey, 1965, p.308.

24. S.M. Lipset, Some social requisites of democracy: economic development and political legitimacy. American Political Science Review, 1959, Vol.33, pp.86-87.

In India, where different religious, caste and tribal groups co-exist, the formulation of any particular ideology is a difficult task. However, since throughout India, religious and caste values rank high, among the primary values of the masses, the close association of religion with the political parties would thus appear to constitute an invaluable means to maximise its support. This is the reason why religion and caste values form important components of the ideology of any particular party in India.

Now let us look into the two levels at which any political party functions in a democratic set up and point out the different ways through which religion influences these parties at each of the separate levels.

(a) Structural-Organizational Level :

At the structural organizational level, we find that most of the political parties, mainly the National Congress, have certain components (members) which are anti-secular.

Almost since its inception we find that the Congress Party has been a platform for all kinds of people. It has been a heterogenous party. Its members have been democrats, socialists, secularists as well as communalists. Nehru

admitted this and said that the Congress is a heterogeneous party and many<sup>a</sup> Congress member is a communalist.<sup>25</sup>

The communalists came into the lime light only when the issues like the Hindu Code-Bill, proposals to ban cow slaughter, the questions of foreign Christians missionaries and Muslim minority came up. Purshotam Das Tandon, Pandit Thakur Das Bhargava, and Govind Seth Das have been the most out-spoken advocates of Hindu causes.<sup>26</sup> While the late Deputy Prime Minister, Sardar Patel took vigorous action against the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh, he did not hesitate to press for some recognition of Hinduism in India's national life and vowed not to rest until the Sarnath temple destroyed by the Muslim invaders in the eleventh century was renovated. Such activities of the communalists as well as secularists like Sardar Patel did not deter, however, the other members to carry on<sup>the</sup> struggle for secularism and socialism. But such activities had a negative impact on the minds of the people. Recognising the consequences of such actions of these members the Congress Party declared in its 1961 resolution, "Those Congressmen who by their act or inaction in an emergency, support directly or indirectly the communalistic tendencies and indulge in communal activities are not worthy of

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25. Jawaharlal Nehru, Autobiography, Macmillan, London 1953, p.136.

26. D.E.Smith, No.4, Op. cit., p.479.

\* It has been contradicted by Romila Thapar.



remaining in the party."<sup>27</sup>

There have been many other members of this party who held high positions were highly religious minded. Even the first President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad is included in it. These members, holding state positions, have been participating in religious functions like Kumbha Mela, anniversary celebrations of Vivekananda, Lord Buddha etc. without bothering to emphasise that they were doing so on their personal level.<sup>28</sup>

In the contemporary period, the Congress Party has all kinds of members - orthodox Hindus , orthodox Muslims, Communalists, and secularists.<sup>29</sup> The communalists are of two types-Hindu communalists and Muslim communalists. The Hindu communalists are politically less vocal whereas the Muslim communalists are politically very active. [The main function of the Muslim communalists is to point out the grievances of the Muslims and accuse the political parties for their hand behind all the evils.] These communalists are not those who openly come out in support of one community at the cost of the nation's interests, but rather work indirectly for the same. They do not<sup>even</sup> hesitate

*This is not long-munahim.*

27. Quoted from D.E. Smith, n.4, Op. cit., p.48.

28. V.K. Sinha, Op. cit., p.2.

29. See Radiance, Congress and Communalism."  
24 May 1964.

decrying communalism. Often they rise in protest against the RSS, Jan Sangh and even the Muslim organizations.

Even the Communist Parties also have such components in their organizations. EMS Namboodiripad for example, who represents an organization which is avowedly secular in outlook and aims to achieve a classless and casteless society, in 1970 demanded for the proportional representation for Muslims.<sup>30</sup> He attested his views to the demand of the Muslim communalists for separate electorates. The Muslim communalists have an objection to the joint electoral system because they find that the Muslim legislators are not in proportion to the strength of the total Muslim population. They also believe that those who are elected are not true "representatives" of the Muslims in India.<sup>31</sup> Attestation to such demands which are anti-secular are communal activities for they are performed for the instrumental purposes, to gain the support of the Muslims. Such activities of these leaders have wide consequences. They create community consciousness and strengthen community hold. Further in turn, religious community gets politicized which is often used for the political purposes. Such activities have been highly

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30. Moin Shakir, Muslims in Free India. Kalamkar Prakashan, New Delhi, 1972, p.65.

31. Moin Shakir, Ibid, p.65.

defunctional in the way of secularization in India.

**Organizational Functional Level\* :**

The political parties, in a democratic set-up, function commonly at two levels - ideological level, and mobilizational level. We have enough materials to enumerate that at both these levels, the political parties operate under religious and caste constraints.

**Ideological Level :**

As we have seen in the last Chapter, most of the political parties in India believe in secularism. Their manifestos reveal that all of them are keen in accentuating the process of secularism in India. The concern for minorities, mainly Muslims and national integration is well shown in their programmes. They all, in common, decry communalism and believe in the tenets of secularism and democracy.

This commonality of views makes it pertinent to raise a question as to why these political parties, both rightist and Leftist commonly believe in secularism? Broadly speaking, there could be two possible reasons for this. Firstly, it is because they firmly believe that

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\* By organizational - functional level we mean the level at which the political parties function in a democratic set up.

secularism is functional in the Indian context. It serves the interest of the nation, mainly in the field of national integration and national unity. Having genuine faith in its tenets they want to operationalise them on the Western democratic lines so as to give a fillip to the process of modernization in India. Secondly, they accept secularism and its tenets not because they have firm faith in secularism and genuinely intend to operationalise the secular ideology of the state on the western democratic lines but rather because its ostensible acceptance as an ideology carries "instrumental values" which help gain the support of all kinds of groups\* - both horizontal and vertical groups.

The experience of the past thirty years suggests that all the political parties - the national Congress (now Congress-I), the Communist Party of India (M), the Communist Party of India, the Bharatiya Jan Sangh (now Bharatiya Janata Party), the former Janata Party, believe in secularism more because of the second reason and minimally because of the first.

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\* Secularism carries instrumental value in the Indian context for two reasons: (i) it meets the legitimate interests of all kinds of groups - religious, caste, tribal etc. (ii) its acceptance means meeting with the interests of all these groups. Therefore, for the political parties which strive to maximise their mass support, in the Indian context, secularism carries instrumental values.

At the national level, they hold secular ideology and advocate it mainly to maximise their support in the masses, and not because they genuinely believe in it and intend to operationalise it. The validity of this argument lies in the fact that, in the last more than thirty years, no political party has strongly demanded for a uniform civil code for the whole of India, no Muslim member of any organization has so far put-forward this demand, no political party that has a majority of Hindu followers has protested against the hullabaloo created by Hindu revivalist groups in favour of banning cow slaughter everywhere in India.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, we find that at the national level, the secular ideology is accepted by the political parties to secure the support of the different religions, caste and tribal groups. It is not operationalised because of the fear that they might alienate their support. In this way, secularism, as an ideology of the political parties in India, is proving to be instrumental and status-quoist.\*

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32. A.B. Shah, "Secularism in India" in secularism in India (ed.) by V.K. Sinha, Lalwani Publication, Bombay, 1968, p.3.

\* Instrumental and status quoist means that the secular ideology of these political parties are performing two functions. First, it helps them to secure support of different religions, caste and tribal groups, and second, it is preserving the status-quo, for change is not introduced in actual practice, on secular lines as stated in the Constitution.

### Mobilizational Level :

At the mobilizational level, we find that religion and caste play very significant role in guiding the functioning of the political parties. Let us deal with the role of caste and religious groups separately.

Different case studies conducted in different areas in India after independence indicate that the caste associations sprang up at the state, district and village levels. Political mobilization transformed castes into pressure groups.<sup>33</sup> The dominant castes - Lingayats and Okkaligas in Mysore<sup>34</sup> Reddis and Kammars in Andhra Pradesh, and the Marathas, Brahmins and Makkars in Maharashtra - utilised the resources of the state for projects and schemes that benefitted them in connection with jobs, licences, and permits necessary for entrepreneurial activity.

The political parties, too shrewd to ignore these reservoirs of political power, in order not to loose support of any particular caste, resorted to a

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33. Gunnar Myrdal, Asian Drama, Vol.I, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, London, 1968, p.294. Also see, Myron Weiner, Party building in a New Nation: the Indian National Congress. Chicago: University Press, Chicago, 1970, Chapter 3.
34. M.N.Srinivas, Social Change in Modern India. Allied Publishers, Bombay, 1966, pp.128-30.

"clever balancing of one caste against another."<sup>35</sup> In a broadcast on the eve of Independence Day in 1962 President Radhakrishnan admitted, "The recent elections showed that the system of caste and communal feelings had not loosened their hold on the mind of the people."<sup>36</sup>

It has been stated that one of the functions that sustains casteism is that castes are reservoirs of political power.<sup>37</sup> It is the political interference that has increased caste-consciousness.<sup>38</sup> In rural areas the political elite activate and operate caste groups. They wield "the real political, social and economic power at the local level, and, indirectly, at the state and federal levels."<sup>39</sup>

The political parties, mainly the Congress, mobilise their support on the caste and religious lines. Soon after Independence the Congress Party began to appeal to ascriptive loyalties, even though, till the fourth General Elec-

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35. Quoted in Mohammed Ghouse, Op. cit., p.49.

36. Quoted in Gunnar Myrdal, Op. cit., p.309.

37. See "Notes and Comments on Social Education and Casteism" in Indian Journal of Adult Education, 19, Vol.I, October 1968.

38. M.N.Srinivas, "The Indian Road to Equality", Economic Weekly, June 1966, p.867.

39. Gunnar Myrdal, Op. cit., pp.292-93.

tions, there was no political party in India which posed any threat to it. Rudolph and Rudolph point out that when the political parties formed by Vinnar Kula Ksatriya in 1952 successfully mobilised the Vinnar votes in the election in 1955,<sup>40</sup> the congress government sought their merger into the Congress in return for two seats in the state cabinet, reservation of five out of twenty civil service positions, increase in place of the universities for and allocation of a fitting number of nominations on Congress tickets to the Vinnars. Consequently they obligingly dissolved their parties and joined the Congress.

Other parties including Socialists and the Communists emulated the Congress in appealing to the ascriptive loyalties. "Like the Congress, they too professed, but hardly practised secularism."<sup>41</sup>

As caste sentiments has been used by the political parties to mobilise people and maximise their support religious sentiments also have been exploited for the political purpose. We find that all the political parties, in the struggle for power, employ various techniques to mobilise Muslims in India.

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40. Lloyd I. Rudolph and S.N. Rudolph, the Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1967, pp.60-64.

41. Mohammad Ghouse, Op. cit., p.51.



One of such techniques universally adopted by the political parties is the caution made in the selection of candidates. It is said that in nominating candidates to contest elections, the Congress often took into consideration the voting strength of the various caste and religious groups in a constituency. Even a leader like Maulana Azad was assigned a constituency which had a sizeable Muslim vote.<sup>42</sup> D.E. Smith points out that the religion and caste of the candidate is always taken into account while selecting a candidate for the election in a constituency. If the religion or caste of a candidate is "right" for a constituency, meaning he has substantial number of "votes" of his own community, he is preferred over others.<sup>43</sup>

Another common practice in the process of mobilization of the Muslims is the catchy slogans used to win the Muslims. All the national political parties, both rightist and Leftist, often come out in defense of the Muslims with provocative slogans like "Minorities are in Danger", "Protest the rights of minorities" etc. During the election campaigns, the Congress leaders told the

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42. Mohammad Ghouse, Op.Cit., p. 50.

43. D.E. Smith, Op.Cit., p. 483.

Muslims that only the Congress could save their lives and property and that the state would not interfere with their personal law, if they voted for a Congress candidate.<sup>44</sup> While campaigning for the 1972 elections, a Congress candidate promised: "She will be the first Indian lady to resign from the Assembly and also from the Congress if Muslim law is amended. Muslim law is based on the Shariah and even the Muslims have no right to demand any change in it."<sup>45</sup> Even the late Zakir Husain was aware of such activities of the Congressmen and had complained against such activities in the National Integration Council and suggested that the<sup>46</sup> Congress should be ready to go into wilderness rather than succumb to communal influence.<sup>46</sup>

Such activities of the Congress which were emulated by other political parties appear to be indirectly responsible for giving a fillip to the Muslim and Hindu communal organizations in India. They appear to have realised that if united their community stood they can bargain from the government on various issues. Thus, the Muslim organizations which had become politically

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44. Mohammad Ghouse, Op.Cit., p. 50.

45. Quoted in S. Alam Khundmiri, "72 Elections and communalism in Hyderabad" in Secular Democracy, June 1972, p. 22.

46. Mohammad Ghouse, Op.Cit., p. 50.

inactive after independence, regained their vigour. Side by side, many other new Muslim organizations mushroomed in various places in India. In reaction, the Hindu organizations also activated their activities in every nook and corner of the country.

Most of these communal organizations like Jammat-i-Islami, the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh were not political but were directly involved in the politics of the country. The Muslim organizations convinced with the reality that they can not gain the political power without the support of the Hindus preferred to act as pressure groups to secure more and more political concessions.

The emergence of such communal organizations in the Indian society had profound damaging impact on the entire secular polity of the country. The periodic elections, which are held in a democratic political system to provide opportunities for the expression of the electorate's judgement on the performance of the government, became instrumental in developing new political alignments based on religion. The instances are many when both leftist and rightist political parties entered into an electoral alliance with the communal organizations.

In India, it is true that the communal organizations except Muslim organizations never had hundred percent support of their community. But the Muslim communal organization always commanded substantial support of the community. It was so, on two accounts - (i) the elites of the community, who were though divided into two sections - nationalists and orthodox, in general, wanted a share in the power for the consolidation of the community and consequently succeeded in winning over the conscious and political minded people of the community. (ii) The masses were and are generally poor for whom religious symbols and cultural norms alone mattered. Thus, the elites succeeded in exploiting the primordial sentiments and thereby succeeded in mobilising them for their own selfish political action.

For the national political parties, mainly the Congress, what counted most was the "votes". The solidified and Unified votes of Muslims appear highly alluring to them. To secure them, these parties entered into a process of exchange with the Muslim organizations. The former promise to fulfill the demands of the latter (mainly elites) while the latter extend support, in terms of votes, to them for the fulfillment of their demands.

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47. Rajni Kothari, Extent and limits of communal voting: the case of the Baroda East, in Indian Voting Behaviour (ed) by Myron Weiner and Rajni Kothari, Forma Publication, Calcutta, 1965, p. 20.

The manifestation of such a "process of exchange" is observable in the form of electoral alliances concluded during various elections between the political parties, on the one hand, and the communal organizations on the other.

The Congress Party, for instance, made in the beginning an alliance with the Hindu Mahasabha<sup>48</sup> and later in 1959 with the Muslim League to overthrow the communist power in Kerala.<sup>49</sup> In recent elections (Assembly elections, 1982) the Congress Party made an alliance with the Indian Union Muslim League under the banner of United Democratic Front.<sup>50</sup> Not only in Kerala but elsewhere also the Congress Party has entered into such alliances.

Other political parties like the Bharatiya Jan Sangh and the Janata Party have also indulged in such alliances during the time of elections. It is a well known fact that the Bharatiya Jana Sangha heavily relied on the support of the Hindu communal activists of the RSS in 1978 elections. In fact, in most of the elections

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48. D.E. Smith, Op.Cit., p. 431.

49. D.E. Smith, Op.Cit., p. 432.

50. Deccan Chronicle, May 22, 1982, p. 9.

the Rashtriya Swayan Sevak Sangh has actively supported the candidates of Jan Sangh.<sup>51</sup>

Jan Sangh, being identified as a pre-Hindu Party, never got the support of the Muslims. This was the case, by and large, with the Janata Party too. Having in it the strong hold of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh and thereby the RSS, the nationalist as well as <sup>the</sup> orthodox sections of the Muslims showed apathy towards the candidates fielded by the Janata Party.

Likewise, the communist parties (both CPI and CPI-M) have also made such alliances. For instance, in 1951 the Communist Party made an alliance with the DMK in Madras.<sup>52</sup> In 1969, the Communist Party of India(M) made an alliance with the Indian Union of Muslim League in Kerala Assembly elections.<sup>53</sup> In the Assembly elections of 1982 both the communist parties under the banner of the United Left Front made an alliance with the All India Muslim League to win the elections.<sup>54</sup>

51. Richard Lambert, "Hindu Communal Groups in Indian Politics" in Richard L. Park and Irene Tinker (eds) Leadership and Political Institutions in India, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1963, p.214.

52. M. S. A. Rao, "Present Day Growth", in Seminar, August, 1961.

53. Deccan Chronicle, May 22, 1982, p.9.

54. Deccan Chronicle, Ibid, p. 9.

Such alliances between the political parties and the communal organizations are clear expression of communalism.<sup>55</sup> These activities of the political parties, selection of candidates in terms of caste and religion, use of provocative slogans and electoral alliances have wide consequences. These activities provide political recognition and identity to the religious communities. The political identity together with the already existing religious identity of the Muslim community provides the elites the power to bargain with the political parties for more and more political concessions. The President of the Muslim League, who has opened branches of his party in some of the Hindi-speaking states, says that "he could demand protection of the Muslims in turn for Muslim support to that party."<sup>56</sup>

In the last thirty years this process of exchange between the political parties and the communal organizations has got institutionalized in the political system of India. The institutionalization of this process of exchange has caused serious damage to the process of secularization in the following ways : Firstly, it has

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55. Deccan Chronicle, Ibid, p. 9.

56. H.S.A. Rao, Seminar, August 1961.

enabled the Muslim elites to organise their community politically. In course of time they have become politically so conscious and strong that they are in a position to make their weight felt as a worrying variable in the electoral game which is played mainly by majority community leaders in India. Secondly, though the skillful political bargaining by the Muslim leadership has strengthened the economic and cultural roots of the community, it has certainly offset the design of evolving a uniform civil code, one of the most important goals of the secular tenets of the Indian Constitution. Thirdly, it has resulted in the emergence of many Muslim communal parties in India in the late sixties and early seventies which is perhaps responsible for the reintroduction of irresponsible communal idioms in Indian politics, reminiscent of pre-independence days. Consequently, such political idiom which is full of communal germs does not let secularism seep into the society's structure and get accepted by the people.

We can say, to conclude, that the Indian social structure whose various traditional elements are anti-secular and where many communal organizations exist which pressurise the polity, wherein communal contract takes place between the political parties and the communal



organizations, the chances of operationalization of the secular ideology of the state do not appear to be plausible. This is the main reason why India is yet to become a secular state.

## CHAPTER - V

### CONCLUSION

THE THREE Chapters of this study namely Historical Background and Review of the Literature; Secular Ideology of the State and the Political Parties in India; and, Religion, Tradition and Politics in India; were selected to study the interactional pattern of religion and politics in post-independent India. After having analysed the interactional pattern of Religion and Politics in the last Three Chapters that we are making an endeavour, in this concluding chapters, to test the validity of our two hypothetical statements- ((a) India is a quasi secular system, (b) And in India, religion and caste are used for political ends. In turn, political resources are used to meet the religious groups Interests)- in the light of the findings and conclusions of the last two Chapters. Besides, we are also making an attempt to answer the following questions in the light of our findings - (a) How far Parliamentary form of Democracy has succeeded in realizing the secular goals of the state; (b) to what extent the party system is responsible for the failure on the part of the state

to accomplish the secular goals; (c) is it correct to say that mutual reciprocity between religion and politics (between Muslim minority community and the national political parties) causes or intensifies communalism; (d) is secularism a myth? - meaning not practicable in an ethnically plural society like India.

In order to test the validity of our hypothetical statements we will piece together the findings and conclusions of the last two central chapters and enumerate them in a logical sequence. This process of enumeration of findings in a logical sequentiality will help us judge the hypotheses objectively.

Thus, to begin with, let us now look into the findings and conclusions of the last two chapters. In the third chapter - Secular Ideology of the State and the Political Parties in India - we after having focussed upon, at length, the diverse Indian Social Structure, the secular tenets of the constitution, the views of the different scholars, politicians and national political parties on secularism, the partial achievement of secular goals, prevalence of hostility between Hindus and Muslims, etc. have gathered the following conclusions. First, in the diverse Indian social structure the incorporation of the secular ideals in the Indian Constitution is a progressive design of the Indian polity. It is also functional for it

guarantees individual and the group the right to freedom of religion (to profess, practice and propagate); it does not allow state to discriminate any individual or group or religion on ascriptive grounds, etc. Secondly, the Indian polity is ideally secular. It is so on two accounts. (a) It aims to secularise Indian society, and (b) It makes state neutral in its religious affiliation and forbids it to impart any religious instructions in any state maintained educational institutions.

However, if we consider the Indian form of secularism which separates religion from politics only restrictedly\* in the light of the traditional Western notion of secularism which creates absolute separation between religion and politics, our contention that Indian polity is ideally secular may not appear theoretically sound. But, if we consider the Indian form of secularism which allows restricted separation between religion and state in the Indian context we may find justifiability to our contention.

The dysfunctional structural and institutional aspects like un-uniform marriage, kinship, inheritance rules and practices, the system of caste, untouchability, Devadasi, etc. which are the part and parcel of the system

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\* The Indian constitution provides provisions of restricted separation between religion and state. The Article 25(2) of the Indian constitution authorise the states to interfere in the religions affairs.

of religion urgently need total reformation for total democratisation and secularization of the society and polity. In this context, the provision of restricted separation between religion and politics by which state acquired the right to interfere in the religious sphere to introduce reforms and to evolve a uniform civil code, appears meaningful and purposive. Therefore, notwithstanding the western concept of secularism which is an "end in itself" and considering the restricted separation as a "mean to an end" we may conveniently say that India is ideally a secular system. Thirdly, the secular ideology of the state in India has considerable social acceptability. Except a few scholars and rightist politicians and communal parties most of the major national political parties, liberal scholars and politicians have reiterated, time and again, their firm faith in secularism as embodied in the Constitution; Fourthly, despite having been accepted by the national political parties and political leaders the goals of secularism have remained unfulfilled. The differences between the Hindus and Muslims remain unbridged\*, a uniform civil code is yet to be enacted, ununiform religious laws (Hindu law, Muslim law etc.) etc. are still followed and practiced.

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\* The frequent eruption of Hindu-Muslim communal riots is the testimony of the strained relationship between Hindu and Muslims in post-independent India.

In our attempt to find out the causes responsible for the failure on the part of the Indian polity, the national political parties, mainly the Congress which has been the ruling party ever since Independence, to realise the secular goals, we in the Fourth Chapter (Religion, Tradition and Politics in India ) focussed upon some anti secular aspects of the Indian tradition and process of exchange between religion and politics in India. The analysis of these two themes brought into light the following facts. Firstly, there are certain anti-secular elements in the Indian social organisation like attitude towards history, authoritarian character of caste, lack of organization in Hinduism, intolerant view of Ulama on Shariah as well as the prevalence of communal organizations which offset the design of secularism in India and do not allow the secular elements to seep into the Indian social structure. The communal organizations act as pressure groups which exist mainly to consolidate the interests of their respective communities. Secondly, the secular ideology of the state which is accepted by most of the political parties, at the practical level, is functionally proving to be highly instrumental and status quoist. It is functionally instrumental for it helps political parties to enlist the support of all variety of religions and caste groups. It helps them to

broaden their base and acquire legitimacy. On the other hand, we find that it is functionally proving to be status quoist. It is not augmenting change for which it is employed. To say this is not to mean that the secular ideology of the state is status quoist by itself. It is a highly dynamic when activated and operationalised. But since it is not being operationalised by the men who are not holding it, 'it is serving the status quoist purpose and perpetuating the communal social structure, a legacy of pre-independence India. Thirdly, religion and caste are frequently used by the national political parties for political ends. In fact interest articulation and aggregation take place through communal vote banks. The communal organizations act as communal vote banks. The electoral alliance between the national political parties and the communal organisations are the testimony of this fact. The communal organisation which enters into such alliances act as pressure group which articulates its demands for their fulfillment when approached by the national political parties for the political support. This violates the principles of secularism. The political bargaining which takes place in the process of formation of an alliance between the communal party and the national political party presses beyond the legitimate social, economic and political needs of the community and seeks to dominate the cultural springs and special interests of other

communities. This has wide consequences. To considerable extent the political bargaining strengthens the economic and cultural roots of the community. This in itself is not dysfunctional. What is bad is the introduction of communal idiom in politics. The community as a whole gains political identity which finally leads the community to segregate itself from the other communities. This widens the differences between the one community and the other causing tension in the entire plural social system. This is one of the factors responsible for the perpetuation of Hindu-Muslim communalism in post-independent India.

Thus, the above mentioned findings of the study of Religion and Politics in India sufficiently indicate that our both hypothetical contentions - ((a) India is a quasi-secular system; (b) In India, religion and caste are used for political ends. In turn, political resources are used to consolidate the religious group's interests)-have empirical validity.

Now let us answer the questions we have raised. The overall analysis of the interaction between religion and politics in India makes it imperative to put forth a view that secularism is incompatible with total and closed plural system like India. It is an assumption



that secularism can find its basis only when collective efforts on the basis of free enquiry are made. This is in agreement with what Karl Popper calls "piece-meal planning than total social engineering" as recommended by the adherents of total ideologies.

When we make an attempt to view the contemporary Indian situations in the light of the forgoing analysis we find that the present Indian situation offers more obstacles than opportunities for the development of secular spirit. The present socio-cultural situation, on the whole, does not foster the secular attitude, on the contrary, it thwarts and obstructs its free flowering. The total Indian society as it has historically developed consists of opposing and mutually exclusive systems of belief and conduct. The presence of two great historical religions having separate histories and representing two entirely different attitudes towards life, morality and social obligation offer a great challenge to the modern spirit of secularism.

The existence of such religions in themselves is not a historical calamity but what makes the situation problematic, in the modern context, is the use of religion in the political domain. The absence of scientific outlook and enquiry has resulted in a situation in which religious ideologies of the dominant section have been formulated

with the purpose of claiming extra jurisdiction over polity. In such a situation the secularism cannot find proper soil to grow.

It is thus safe to say that the parliamentary system or party system which has succeeded quite partially\* in accomplishing the secular goals has in itself no limitation. It is the social situation in which the system is operating and the men who are operationalising the system are responsible for this partial success. The establishment of parliamentary form of democracy and introduction of the party system was the need of the time. In plural Indian context, perhaps, it was most desirable. It was functional also because it provided all the citizens irrespective of caste, religion, sex etc. the equal right of freedom of religion and equality. These modern western concepts of citizenship, equality and freedom which were the gifts of the 'modern age' and its social forces - scientific revolution were needed by the ongoing process of modernization. In the midst of the transition from tradition to modernity, the right standard of religious

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\* Please see the achievements made by the state in introducing change in the Indian social organization. Except a few legislative changes in the customs and practices of Hinduism in the early post-independence period there has hardly been any attempt on the part of the states to secularize the society and polity. Also see D. E. Smith (India as a Secular State, Chapter V)

theology, the order of the medieval age, was unfit to guide and provide direction to the Indian social system. The parliamentary system and the party system were instituted to activate social change. But instead of activating social change the system succumbed to the challenges of tradition - communalism, casteism, etc. and perpetuated the forces of traditionalization. This happened because the men (after Nehru era) who were handling the system were traditional minded. They did not want change for change would have jeopardised their instrumental designs. Thus, communalism flourished and secularism<sup>NAL</sup> relegated to the background.

The realization of the ideals of democracy and secularism depends upon the change in the value and belief systems of the society. The value and belief system can not originate from religion or religions alone in the present Indian society, nor can it come from the narrow sphere of political activity, because<sup>the</sup> absence of such a set of value-belief system make common politics the replica of the social system. This is what we find in the politics of India today. Ostensibly there exist communal and non communal organizations. But in actual reality the gap between the two types of political parties is not very wide. In some cases, the articulate views of the so called

communal parties are the inarticulated assumptions of the non communal parties. The presence of the communalists in the non communal parties shows the presence of powerful pressure groups within the non communal parties. Their presence in the party and party's run for power ultimately relegate the professed secular ideology to the background.

Therefore, if a new 'value and belief' system has to be evolved in the Indian society for the proper realization of the ideals of democracy and secularism, the change has to be brought about at the attitudinal level. The experience of the Western societies indicate that the modern social political changes were the products of the scientific revolution. It was not the democratic revolution which cause the birth of scientific revolution but conversely the changes in the modes of thinking which gradually fostered the democratic spirit. In the West the scientific revolution took its birth in the midst of the Catholic domination and ultimately weakened the very foundation of the Catholic Church. The secular spirit was the gift of the scientific revolution which pressed for the final separation of politics from the church. Secularism in an aspect of the totality of the Western civilization.

In India, the institution of secularism<sup>\*</sup> which had its outgrowth in the West where it grew out of social forces has been imposed upon the society. If it has to endure similar social forces also have to be generated. In this regard education and economic development can play a significant role.

More than economic development, the evolution of secular scientific education seems to be more important. It is even more important than the evolution of a uniform civil code which can transcend the existing personal laws of the different religions and caste groups. The most serious obstacle in the way of the evolution of a uniform civil code itself is the absence of a conscious public opinion. The different groups have, somehow, identified themselves with separate personal laws and therefore the demand for a civil code must come from these groups themselves. A rigorous educational campaign seems to be a pre-requisite for the evolution of a common code. The orthodox Muslims are not unjustified in their attempt to preserve their separate code because there are powerful groups in the majority community which hold their separate legal patterns sacred and inviolable. But separation of religion from politics cannot be partial; it must be total. It will save religion itself from the changing demands of politics and liberate politics from the dogmatic tyranny

\*\*\*\*\* Kothari, of course, holds the opposite view that secularism in India emerged to a great extent from within the traditional social structure. However Kothari seems to be referring to the growth of secularism at substantive

of the decadent religious outlook. It may ultimately result in the flowering of new possibilities in the sphere of religion because religion would be free to seek its own creative channels.

Thus, so long<sup>as</sup> religion and politics are joint together and are not divorced from each other secularism will remain a myth and communalism will hold sway under the umbrella of secularism in a plural society. But as soon as it is divorced from politics by the forces of emergent value-belief system, secularism will be a reality and a 'social fact' in the plural Indian system.

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(cont--/ 119) caste groups for secular education. Here my reference is to secularism in a broader context involving national ideology or the search for a national identity in the post - independent India.

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