SECULARISM IN INDIA :
SOME THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

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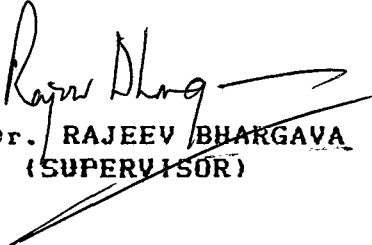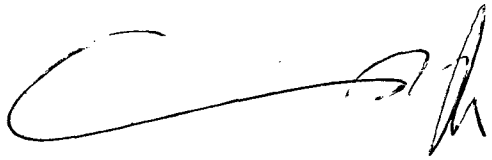NEW DELHI-110067
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CERTIFICATE

This dissertation entitled "Secularism in India : Some Theoretical Considerations" submitted by Amlan Dash, Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of degree of Master of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted so far, in part or full, for any other degree or diploma of any university. This may be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of Master of Philosophy.

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PREFACE

A 'preface' always serves as an apology for the work that is to follow. For me it has been a baffling task because with so much of literature floating around on the topic, my work may not be convincing enough. I felt discouraged in the beginning. But this initial discouragement could not override my zeal to undertake this project. The fact that so much of discussion on the theme has yielded little provided me with the necessary impetus to rip open the problem from the theoretical perspective and analyze it in the light of commonsense observation without seeking unnecessary assistance of abstruse philosophization.

Before moving on to introduce the chapters, a brief note on the methodology applied needs mentioning. The work is essentially a theoretical and conceptual exercise with the aim of understanding the concept in its historical backdrop as well as its current implications and to study the precise nature of its crisis. I have also made a tentative effort to suggest a solution to the problem. The study is primarily a review of literature and is based on secondary sources. I have avoided following any empirical method though help has been taken from already existing empirical works. The entire discussion is based upon arguments, drawn from other scholars although I hope to have developed them in the course of my discussion. The analysis is not issue based (like studying Ramjanmabhoomi - Babri Masjid dispute, the Shah Bano case etc.) though examples of different issues

have been cited in order to provide a solid base to the arguments.

The dissertation is divided into four chapter, each with a separate ambit of discussion; the discussive unity among then is not lost, though. The first chapter puts the question of secularism in the historical perspective and traces its conceptual moorings in the competition for superior authority between the church and the state in medieval Europe. If briefly dwells upon the process of secularization of European society and switches over to various parallel reform movements in the nineteenth century India to underline the differences as well as the similarities and define 'Secularism' in the broadest possible way.

The second chapter grapples with the conceptual issues central to the understanding of 'secularism' and then proceeds to define it in a trans-contextual perspective keeping the Indian society in view. This chapter begins with a note on what our commonsense understanding has been with the aim of going beyond this commonsense understanding to lay my hand on what is not immediately available to our commonsense. This is followed by a conceptual clarification of secularism in relation to other concepts like communalism and nationalism. An effort has also been made to define communalism. The difference in attitude and response to secular ethos across mass-elite cultural divide which has been chiefly responsible for the communication gap between the two, has been given sufficient attention to. The fact

that such contrasting view points have affected the formulation, execution and effectiveness of various policies in India has been stressed here. Prescriptions for bridging the gap has to base upon a proper understanding of the phenomenon at different levels.

The third chapter seeks to examine the various approaches to secularism and unravel the possible lacunae in them which might provide us with rich insights to deal with the problem from a critical angle. My approach here has not been either one of reverence or contempt but (to borrow from Russell) one of 'critical sympathy'. In the first part of this chapter I have analyzed the Nehruvian approach to secularism. I share with the critics their allegation that Nehru could not free himself from narrow considerations of electoral power-game and unwittingly led democracy astray. However, I do not question his convictions. It is situations that failed him, not convictions. I have tried my best not to be labelled 'Nehruvian' by supporting Nehru for what have been his obvious mistakes. In the second part, I have tried to draw attention to the constitutional provisions. My purpose here has been not to enter into the legality of questions involved for which I myself do not feel competent enough, rather to identify certain anomalies which give rise to conflicting interpretations of the constitution as well as make it vulnerable to criticisms. In the concluding part of this chapter, my effort has been to understand the Bharatiya Janata Party's critique of the official secularism as well as its concepts of Hindutva and

positive secularism. The approach here has been one of critical analysis while trying to draw a parallel between the BJP and the Fascist movement in Europe.

The fourth chapter deals with the explanation of the crisis of secularism in India. The arguments of various scholars like Nandy, Madan, Kaviraj, Marriot, Geertz etc have been taken into account. While I have tried to provide a critique of some of these scholars on certain points on which I disagree, I have taken care to show respect to any argument with which I agree and against which I have not been able to develop alternative arguments. In this chapter, the cultural policy of the Indian state and in consequence its impact, the language issue, and the crisis of secularism in relation to the nation-state concept have been highlighted upon.

The discussion draws to a close with the concluding observation. In this chapter, an attempt has been made towards developing a theory of secularism which would be prescriptive as well. This chapter is mainly based on my understanding of the problem of secularism in India and the discussions done in other chapters.

Nothing would satisfy me more than a proper appreciation of my work. I believe, I have not fallen into the same conceptual snares I so earnestly sought to keep clear of. Though I have tried my best to live upto the expectation, the feeling remains that the work could have been bettered still.

CHAPTER ONE

SECULARISM: THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

I. The Church - State conflict in medieval Europe and the evolution of the concept of Secularism.

II. Secularisation of the European society.

III. The Indian context : The reform movements in Indian history towards secularizing the society.

Religion has been the centre of all activity in past socie-
ties. The all-pervasive role of beliefs in supernatural, hidden
force in directing man's destiny have been acknowledged since
time immemorial when man's inquisitiveness led him to wonder
about the universe, about life and death. However, the interfer-
ence of religion in politics is a later phenomenon. The Greek
city-states and the Roman Republics - both are known to be free
from religious influence in, what we call, secular affairs today.
It was only during the medieval period, with the rise of Chris-
tianity in Europe that the debate of religion and politics began.
In ancient Hindu Societies though the caste system sought to
introduce a separation between temporal and spiritual authority,
there was no such strict separation and the ruler often had to
conform to religious values and patronized the spread of particu-
lar religions. It was only after independence that secularism
rather the debate on it has become the central issue not only in
India but also in all newly independent liberal-democratic socie-
ties.

This chapter is divided into three parts : the first part
deals with the evolution of the concept of secularism in the
West, tracing its origin since the days of ascendancy of church
power, the struggle between church and state and the consequent
victory of the latter over the former. The second part deals
with the process of secularization that went on in Europe. In
the third part, an attempt will be made to draw a parallel in the
India context.

The purpose of the first part is to briefly highlight the conflict between religion and politics in medieval Europe. This would make the study of the concept of secularism in India easier. For a concept has to be understood in the particular historical context in which it evolved. The existing socio-political and economic structure and the experience of the people condition the evolution of a concept, more often as a challenge to a hitherto dominant idea. What follows is theorization of the concept that is reflected in the writings of contemporary scholars. Thus, it moves down the history incorporating in itself new ideas and rejecting those ideas it once stood for. The context changes; so does the definition.

Secularism as an attempt to establish an autonomous sphere of knowledge purged of supernatural, fideistic presuppositions originated in the later Middle Ages of Europe. Political ideas of the medieval period were burdened with the controversy between the spiritual and temporal and the search for ways to resolve this controversy. In this sense, it was a break in social and political history which divides the ancient from the medieval period.

The interference of church in secular affairs and its consequent dominance was itself a product of the existing social conditions of Rome that helped it. Though the purpose here is not to study individual philosophers whose writings helped, rather reflected, the existing socio-political situations, occa-

sional references to a scholar or two would make things easier to understand. Rome had fallen into senility, corruption was rampant everywhere and despotism was inevitable. Such a society provided a fertile ground for spiritual absolutism to grow. Reacting to such a socio-political situation, Seneca for example, resorted to a sort of Stoicism and following which he envisaged that everyman was a member of two commonwealths; the civil state of which he was a subject and the greater state, composed of all rational human beings, to which he belongs by virtue of his humanity. The greater commonwealth was, for Seneca, a society rather than a state; its ties were moral and religious rather than legal and political. Thus, *Seneca's stoicism, like that of Marcus Aurelius a century later, was substantially a religious faith which, while offering strength and consolation in this world, turned toward the contemplation of a spiritual life.*[1]

The way was cleared for Christianity to flourish and demand men's loyalty. Though essentially a doctrine of salvation, Christianity began interfering in political affairs. A new role, thus, was adopted. St. Paul gives the outline in the 'New Testament' which had to remain the central thesis for later Christian philosophers to follow :

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1. George H. Sabine, A history of Political Theory (Oxford and IBH, New Delhi; 1973), P.172.

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"Let every soul be subject into the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if you do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil".[1]

Thus, moving away from the erstwhile Roman constitutional theory, stressed by the lawyers, that the ruler's authority is derived from the people, St. Paul and other writers in the New Testament stress the view that obedience is a duty imposed by God. According to this concept of divided loyalty, the Christian was inevitably bound to a twofold duty such as had been quite unknown to the ethics of pagan antiquity. He must not only render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's but also to God the things that are God's, and if the two came into conflict, there could be no doubt that he must obey God rather than man.

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1.   ibid p. 177

Hence, loyalty to the church held sway over loyalty to the State. St. Ambrose asserted that in spiritual matters the church has jurisdiction over all Christians, the emperor included, for the emperor like every other Christian is a son of the church - he is within the church and not above it. St. Augustine's philosophy of history is a contest between two societies - the earthly city, the city of Satan and the city of God. History, for him, is the struggle between these two societies and the ultimate victory, so runs his prophesy, of the city of God. This is how he explains the fall of Rome: all merely earthly kingdoms must pass away.

Christians, we are told, should not take part in the government of the State, but only of the 'divine nation', that is, the church. This doctrine, of course, was somewhat modified after the time of Constantine, but something of it survived. "It is implicit in St. Augustine's city of God. It led churchmen, at the time of fall of the Western Empire, to look on passively at secular disasters, while they exercised their very great talents in Church discipline, theological controversy and spread of monasticism. Some trace of it still exists : most people regard politics as 'wordly' and unworthy of any really holy man."[1] Church government,

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1. Bertrand Russell, A History of Western Philosophy, (Counterpoint, London; 1984), P.329.

however, developed slowly during the first three centuries and rapidly after the conversion of Constantine. Bishops were popularly elected; gradually they acquired considerable power over Christians in their own dioceses, but before Constantine, there was hardly any form of Central Government over the whole Church. And when the state became Christian, the bishops were given judicial and administrative functions. There came also to be a central government, at least, in matters of doctrine.

While St. Ambrose and St. Augustine merely stressed the autonomy of the church in spiritual matters which implied equally the independence of a secular government, so long as the latter acts within its own proper jurisdiction, it was St. Gregory who went a step ahead in stating that a wicked ruler is entitled not only to obedience - which would probably have been conceded by any Christian writer - but even to silent and passive obedience, an opinion not yet stated with equal force by any other Father of the Church.

The controversy, however, was to continue with each side while claiming to profess the Gelasian principle of two swords, each supreme in its own sphere, tried to assert authority over the other. It is not necessary to go into every controversy but to give some passing references to a few of them. The controversy began with the question of lay investiture of bishops, between Gregory and Henry IV. The papalists emphasized the moral superiority of the spiritual power and the imperialists the independence of the two

powers from one another. The debate continued into the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. However, the controversy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries served to show the instability and vagueness of the relation between the temporal and spiritual powers in the Gelasian tradition. It opened up the gap between the two sides and the necessity of one subordinating the other.

With the "extraordinary intellectual rebirth" and the spread of the "new enlightenment", as Sabine puts it, in the latter years of the twelfth century that made the recovery of ancient works on science, especially that of Aristotle possible, the rift between religion or faith and science or knowledge looked more pronounced. "Although the school of Aquinas, by interpreting reason as merely the preliminary to faith, minimized the antagonism between rational knowledge and revelation, the more radical contention of Duns Scotus and Ockham that all doctrines of faith are permeated with contradictions which the reason is incapable of accepting led to the conclusion that reason can operate only in the realm of verifiable experience and not in the supernatural world. In the eyes of the nominalists, therefore, a line of demarcation had to be drawn between the sphere of knowledge accessible to the human reason and the sphere of faith posited on ecclesiastical authority. It was no longer a question, as in the case of Aquinas, of a difference in degree as between natural and revealed theology but of a

difference in kind as between theology and science." [1]

The adoption of Aristotelian principles by Thomas Aquinas did not, in fact, imply any change either in the fundamental political convictions or in the nature of problems he was thinking about. He had no intention to depart from the great body of political and social tradition that had descended to the thirteenth century from the Fathers of Church. He valued Aristotelianism less as a means of making innovations than as a better philosophical support for well-founded beliefs. Aristotle, thus, was Christianized.

While Thomas's was an interpretation from the point of view of the church, Dante's was a defense of imperial independence against papal control. Hence, on this controversial issue, Dante took the opposite side to that taken by Thomas Aquinas and John of Salisbury.

From this time onward, the Church was only fighting a losing battle. The controversy between John XXII and Lewis the Bavarian permanently settled the independence of the temporal power from the spiritual authority. It was Marsilio of Padua then, whose tirade against papal imperialism, like that of Dante's, as a result of his naturalistic interpretation of Aristotle, gave to political discourse the

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1   Encyclopedia   of   Social   Sciences,   The,
Vol.XIII,(MacMillan, New York;1948), P-631.

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first ever glimpse of a theory of secular government in medieval literature which later echoed in-the writings of Machiavelli. Marsilio's contemporary, William of Occam, though less consistent and more conservative and orthodox in outlook, carrying the legacy of the Franciscan order of Duns Scotus, argued against papal absolutism as an heresy and tried to vindicate Christian freedom against the Pope.

The Church had meanwhile fallen into corruption. The luxury of the Church Fathers became a subject of bitter criticism which continued down the years to Reformation. In Luther, one finds the distinction between faith and knowledge even stronger. He emphasized the immediate relationship between the individual seeker after salvation and God thus excluding from religious experience all knowledge of supernaturalism.

The Renaissance helped develop a new conception of man quite different from that of the medieval world view. " Men now attempted to represent and understand their existence without recourse to a concept of God or a given world view, holding that it was unnecessary to go beyond the view of life as autonomous and humanly constituted"[1]. The cleavage between this world and the next world was established. The beauty and divinity of the higher world was considered to be revealed on earth and the dignity of man was restored. Man was, thus, restored to himself.

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1.   ibid, vol. XIII, p. 279

It was, in fact, with Machiavelli that politics was secularized. As a product of Renaissance, he was completely averse toward the role that religion had to play in politics. He blamed the church for the existing state of affairs in Italy. The tone of criticism in his writings reveals a bitterness not yet seen in the writings of any other scholar preceding him. Thus, in the Discourses, he says, "We Italians then owe to the church of Rome and to her priests our having become irreligious and bad; but we owe her a still greater debt, and one that will be the cause of our ruin, namely, that the church has kept and still keeps our country divided." [1] In this respect Machiavelli's secularism went far beyond.

As a consequence of this Renaissance, the medieval hierarchical classification of priestly and lay was modified. In spite of the ascetic divorced from this world, there emerged the secular intellectual who found the problems of this world sufficient to worry about; in place of the Saint, there appeared the philosopher in whom spiritualism was sustained. There was no longer any distinction between spirituality and corporeality made and both were

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1. Machiavelli quoted in Sabine, Op. Cit, P.316.

conceived together in this world. A new consciousness of man, the demand to 'know thyself' emerged and man started answering questions independent of tradition. The tradition that the Renaissance made use of was the ancient philosophy of Plato et al in which a secular view of the world dominated.

However, despite the rich contribution that the Renaissance made to the development of the concept of secularism, it (secularism) was not yet consolidated properly till the seventeenth century. The rational philosophy of Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz was, in fact, the first sustained attempt at the construction of a rational picture of the universe, purged of any supernatural prejudice and based - on reason. The discoveries made by Galileo and Kepler were but steps ahead in this direction. Their understanding of nature was that of a closed system of causes and effects. With Newton's calculus of fluxions, a new materialist view of the world emerged.

The most radical protagonist of this materialist ethic was Hobbes who found in Galileo his model. His perception of man as composed of moving particles is but one of his many materialistic inheritances. Hobbes, emphasizing the necessity of a strong monarch who derived his power from the people, carried the legacy of Machiavelli and Bodin. The contractual origin of State repudiated the medieval concept of State. This materialist philosophy was later to be used

by philosophers from John Locke to Karl Marx in the eight-
eenth century (Hegal was perhaps an exception, but his
philosophy was different from the Christian one and was not
religious, for that matter). And finally, Darwin's 'Origin
of Species' gave a further blow to the religious construc-
tion of the universe.

The philosophy of Enlightenment had its own contribu-
tion too. According to it, the kernel of religion is not to
be found in dogmas which are received by revelation and
accepted on faith as they are handed down by tradition;
religious truth, as any truth, rather deserves recognition
only as it is founded on ultimate principles of reason.
Thus, the primacy of natural religion above the religion of
revelation is constantly emphasized. In religion, too, the
principles of mere authority and scripture must be given up
so that religion may be founded more firmly on the nature of
man, on his genuine innate faculties. Moral self-certainty
is thus considered the fundamental standard of religious
truth; the use of conscience alone can lead to the objective
certainty of God and a future life.

Another important attitude of Enlightenment towards
religion of which contemporary relevance, especially in
India, is beyond any doubt, is the idea of religious toler-
ance. According to it, the individual religions differ from
one another only with regard to the symbols by which they
describe this meaning. The message that each religion try
to give is the same; the ways are only different. During
the Renaissance, this idea was promoted by Nicholas of Cusa.

Jean Bodin too tries to show that true religion is common to all.

To sum up, the first implication of secularism is a political one, that is, separation of the temporal and spiritual authority and the subordination of the latter to the former. The second meaning of secularism is that, though religion is not altogether rejected, its sphere of action is limited and it is sought to be made free of supernatural and fideistic presuppositions. A rational explanation of the world is rather preferred based on reason. Thirdly, man is accepted as the centre of every activity and he is restored to himself. Man is no longer believed to be an alienated form of God and his place in the universe is recognised. Fourth, there was growing dependence on science as a result of a series of scientific discoveries and people started looking up to science for providing explanations and not to religion. Fifthly, the importance of revelation and scriptures was undermined. More and more researches were conducted by social anthropologists to know the origin and evolution of religion and supernatural beliefs and the socio-economic and political functions such beliefs performed in primitive societies. The result was the discovery of tribal beliefs in the form of animism which the anthropologists termed natural religions as against the revealed religions. And finally, a kind of universalism spread which meant that all religions invoke equal respect and there is no essential difference among them.

The second part, as has been pointed out at the beginning of the chapter, deals with the process of secularization that went on in Europe. This part begins with a conceptual clarification. The term 'secularization' should not be confused with 'secularism' as such. Secularization essentially is a process, a process of change. Secularism, or for that matter any 'ism', is an ideology. Secularism may or may not contribute to the process of secularization. It may remain as an ideology of a group of people, let's say, the intelligentsia and the society at large may remain undisturbed. The process of secularization, on the other hand, may begin and go on silently, too quite to be noticed. Taking an example from India history, the abolition of Sati in the nineteenth century was a positive step towards the secularization of Indian society. Similarly, the reform movements started by the reformers like Ram Mohan were towards secularizing Indian society. But secularism was incorporated in the constitution of India and in different party manifestos purely as an ideology. One may try to find a link between the two and certainly there may exist some. Nevertheless, both are different phenomena; the former was a result of heterogenetic process, the latter was necessary for the smooth functioning of democracy in a society like India's. However, whatever may be the differences, both secularism and secularization help in developing what may be

called a secular outlook, a loose way of defining secular-
ism. Both secularism and secularization are concerned with
things that are secular.

However, secularization is not always a process.
Though intrinsically, it is a process of social change, it
may at the same time, be an ideology. In many a third world
countries, there are goal-oriented programmes to secularize
and modernize the societies. These are, therefore, not
normal processes of social change, but ideologies. This is
to speed up the pace of a process which is otherwise slow.
And alongwith these sponsored programmes, the normal process
of secularization also goes on, as a result of both hetero-
genetic and orthogenetic factors. Thus, giving the example
of India, Prof. Yogendra Singh says that "This makes the
study of social change in India a difficult task which is
engulfed in a movement of nationalistic aspirations under
which concepts of change and modernization are loaded with
ideological meanings. In this form, change ceases to be
viewed as a normal social process; it is transformed into
an ideology, that change in itself is desirable and must be
sought for".[1] All the same, the process of 'deseculariza-
tion' may also go on, notwithstanding the ideology of secu-
larization or as a consequence of it, and the society may

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1. Yogendra Singh, Modernisation of Indian Traditions,
   (Rawat, Jaipur; 1986), p. 1

further plunge into religious obscurantism. The process of secularization may face resistance from reactionary forces that want to maintain the status quo and desecularize the secularized. The phenomenon of industrialization, is accompanied by a host of other phenomena: the retreat of old moral value system, the breaking down of joint family system which used to bind individuals together, large-scale migration to cities etc. All these factors create insecurity among the people thus providing opportunity to the reactionary forces to desecularize the society with the promise of bringing back those old value systems and security. Thus, the processes of secularization and desecularization go side by side.

"The process of secularization at one level can actually help to promote desecularization at another level".[1] Giving the example of Turkey, Khan finds that the Ottoman Turkey involved a close connection between the political rulers and the ulema. The very process of constructing a 'modern', nation-state and therefore 'secular', i.e. eliminating the influence of the ulema in the state apparatus actually promoted the integration of the ulema with the depressed classes of rural and particularly, urban

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1. S. Khan, Towards a Marxist understanding of secularism: Some preliminary speculations, _EPW, 22(10)_, March 17, 1987, pp. 405-409.

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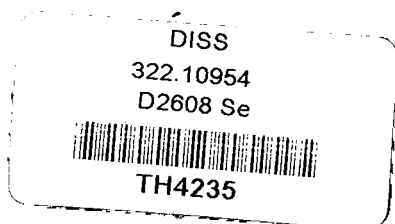
Turkish Society. The Turkish ulema was transformed from being the collaborators of the ruling political elite to being the 'authentic' representatives of the dispossessed in their conflict with the ruling classes. Thus, "Secularization of the Kemalist state was necessarily accompanied by the desecularization of Turkish civil Society."[1] This is a phenomenon of, what he calls, displacement of religious influence, not its overall decline. Further, he adds, that "relative secularization of the state may not only prove to be temporary, it may often serve only to displace religious power and influence elsewhere even within the state as well as to different levels in civil society. A top-down approach, i.e. pre-occupation with the state and its level of secularization can thus help to disguise and prevent a real comprehension of what is going on in the particular social formation under scrutiny."[2]

Secularization is the process by which the influence of religion and religious institutions is diminished. It may occur in four spheres[3] viz, the institutional, the customary, thought and attitude. The ecclesiastical institutions lose their significance and there is a consequent

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1. ibid

2. ibid

3. David Martin, The Religious and the Secular, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London; 1969) P.48-54.

decline in their wealth, influence, range of control and prestige. In the customary sphere, there is a diminution in their frequency, number, intensity and in the estimate of their importance and efficacy. "In the performance of such rites there occurs greater conventionality and insincerity and in the estimate of their importance and efficacy."[1] In the intellectual sphere this means a sort of rationalism, empiricism and scepticism. The attitudinal dimension involves a rejection of the reverential, indifference to charismatic appeals, halo effects, awe or the numenous. The monopoly by religious institutions, of the economy, the polity, law and justice etc. is diminished and each is recognized as separate and independent unit with religion as just one of these units. It is "the process of structural differentiation in which social institutions (the economy, the polity, morality, justice, education, recreation) become recognized as distinctive concerns operating with considerable autonomy is also a process in which conceptions of supernatural lose their sovereignty over human affairs." [2] Thus, the church no longer determines the political destiny; the law of the land is no longer the Shariat; there is

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1.   ibid, P.50

2.   Eneyclopaedia   of   Religion,   The,   (McMillan,   New York;1987) pp.159.

considerable social mobilization and the division of society is no longer on the basis of a traditional line like caste; the recreation is no longer limited to religious ceremonies rather they are extended to more secular activities like sport and game. In short, this is to render redundant religious influence in different spheres of human life thus enabling each to function with the logic and spirit of its own.

Secularization, thus, is a process of laicisation[1], structural differentiation and functional specialization which occurs primarily in association with, or as an unconscious or unintended consequence of, other processes of social structural change. It is a part of the broader process of modernization.

There can be no general or singular theory of secularization. "The fate and form of secularity in any society very much depends on which type of spiral is operative."[2] The

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1. In French, sometimes used as synonymous with secularization has a narrower connotation: it refers specifically to the abrogation of priestly offices and functions or to the transfer of certain functions, such as judicial roles, teachings and social work, to specialists for whom theological qualification are no longer deemed necessary.

2. David Martin, A General Theory of Secularization, (Bastil Blackwell, Oxford; 1978), P.16.

extent and manner of secularization varies from society to society. Each society has its own peculiarities and different sets of circumstances. Secularization of a Catholic society may be different and may have to face different sets of problems than that of a Protestant society. For example, because of the contrasting attitudes of the church towards its laymen secularism in Protestant countries was different in form from that in Catholic. In the former, there developed a new type of layman, who strove to carry over the Old Testament doctrines which he had absorbed as a member of the religious community into the everyday world where he moved as a citizen and member of the social community. Thus, whereas the English layman carried his sectarian convictions into the political and social sphere and gradually diluted them to the point where they did not offend the representatives of other sects with whom he was forced to deal in the new bourgeois economy, the French layman sought at the outset to create a more vital role for himself inside a church which was committed to a policy of ignoring him. The catholic church, however, persisted in its refusal to accept a set of doctrines which would be as intelligible to the amateur as to the carefully trained priest. Under the circumstances the only alternative for the Catholic layman who sought some form of individual self-expression was to transfer his questioning and activities to a sphere in which the church had no jurisdiction. Thus, he rigidly excluded the forces of clericalism from participation in secular affairs and broke away from the church altogether.

Further, the incidence of pluralism and democracy rooted in religious bodies have its impact on the larger process of secularization. In the Indian context, Donald Eugene Smith (1963 and Rajni Kothari (1970) have emphasized the pluralist character of Hindu culture. Whether, it is so or not, is a different question altogether which I shall deal elsewhere. Even in a society like that of India, the existence of different traditions is likely to pose problems that are quite different.

Secularization, all the same, is a historic process. True, the concept came to use only recently, but looking retrospectively one may find traces of secularization even during the hey-day of religion itself. Secularization, as we have seen in the first part of this chapter, does not occur at a certain point of time, rather it is a gradual process, spread over a long period of time. It has to be some sort of a 'permanent revolution' as a particular movement towards secularization loses its appeal after a certain point of time and tends to become reactionary. The case in point is Buddhism in ancient India and Brahmo Samaj in recent past.

The development of monotheistic religions involved rationalization and systematization of the conceptions of supernatural and therefore could be termed as agencies of secularization. Similarly, movements within religions have secularizing impacts. Although, these movements are not against religion as such, they try to reform different reli-

gions by freeing the religions of supernaturalism and dogma-tism. Bryan Wilson describes such secularizing movements within Christianity in following words :

> "The ethic of Calvinism justified and promoted the disposition to work in the calling of townsman and trader in the sixteenth century Europe. Later when industrial society evolved, the ethic of puritan was reinvoked. The social ethic was expressed by methodism in England, though with an application to the masses of working men and not simply to an elect merchant class. Wisely's Armenian theology emphasized that all men had a chance to choose Christ and salvation. And this emphasis suited the new mass-society, and facilitated the socialization of a large work force, better than the aristocratic theology of Calvinism which emphasized the fewness of those who would be saved." [1]

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1.   Bryan Wilson, <u>Religion in Secular Society</u> (Penguin, Middles-sex;1966),pp.41.

Weber's thesis on Protestantism brings out the relationship between the Protestant work ethic and the spirit of capitalism. While trying to find out any affinity between social conditions and the degree to which these social conditions, religion in particular, were favourable to the development of capitalism in the West, he concludes that the ethic of unlimited quest for profit and rational discipline of work is consistent with protestantism. He, thus, finds an 'elective affinity' between these two. Calvinism, for example, excludes all mysticism, since communication between the finite mind of the creature and the infinite mind of God, the creator, is by definition, impossible. By the same token, such a conception might be called anti-ritualist; it disposes the mind to recognition of a natural order which science can and should explore. Such a religious philosophy is indirectly favourable to the development of scientific research and contrary to all forms of idolatry and ritualism.

It is difficult to assess how Marx would have acceded to Weber's thesis of 'elective affinity'. But Marx did accept the historical importance of the connection, and strongly accentuated the 'ascetic rationality' of modern capitalism. Modern capitalism is dominated by market in human relationships and the pursuit of monetary gain is an end in itself. Capitalism is 'ascetic' in the sense that the actions of capitalists are based upon self-renunciation and the continued re-investment of profits. He frequently underlines the secularizing effects of the progression of capitalism, which 'has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine

sentimentalism, in the icy water of egoistic calculation. To quote his words: 'all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life and his relations with his kind. [1] By alleging religion as the 'opium of the people', he, in fact, is not criticizing religion as such, though he is not reluctant to show his hostility, rather he means by it that religion represents a sort of 'illusory happiness' which is not otherwise possible in the given social condition. The decline and the demystification of religion makes the real implementation and actualization of such beliefs possible.

Thus, secularization of Weston society went on along with the development of capitalism. The society was being transformed by geographical, geological discoveries and industrial developments. These scientific discoveries raised doubts about the foundations of old ideas and simultaneously movements within Christianity tried to purge it of these doubtful theses and make it a more rational ethic in order to suit the needs of the industrial society. The discovery of the craft of printing, for example, coincided with the demand by the reformers to get the Bible translated into the vernacular. The growing accessibility of

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1.   Marx quoted in Anthony Giddens,. Capitalism and Modern Social Theory, (Cambridge; 1971), P.215.

religious literature made the discrepancy between the spirit of religion and the practice of it look more pronounced. The church was shorn of its mystifying aura and was gradually perceived to be just another centre of human activity. "By proclaiming that the church is composed of all believers, and not a privileged corporation of clerics, protestantism undermined the authority of church as a self-sufficient institution. By denying the immunity of the priesthood as a separate caste .... Luther by implication justified the intervention of the secular power in the internal affairs of the church." [1]

Religious ideas spread fast through symbols and ceremonies among the illiterate masses. The translation of scriptures into vernacular was an effort at appealing to the mind through the words of the masses. This gradual undermining of symbols and myths had further secularizing impact in the sense that people, who lack the intellect needed to interpret the scriptures, do not bother to go beyond these symbols and religion itself wanes into insignificance with the gradual withering away of symbols. Thus, the Protestant appeal to the mind through word "may have limited the original spread (of religion) in a society where the peasant majority was not only largely illiterate, but addicted to concrete visual symbols." [2]

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1.   Christopher Hill, The collected Ecsays,Vol.II (Harvester, Sussex; 1986), P.38.

2.   ibid, P.25-28

In this part, an effort is made to draw a parallel in the Indian Society tracing the movements which contributed towards secularization.

Although, parallels cannot be drawn, yet an effort at drawing parallels provides new insights. A study a various orthogenetic and heterogenetic movements for social change in the history of India shows that such denominations were not altogether absent. Buddhism and Jainism represent the earliest forms of protest movements against the Brahmanical tradition of Hinduism. Though, these two traditions retained many elements of the old tradition, there was a distinct challenge to the hegemonic Hinduism. These two new traditions, by providing a new social ethic of equality, compelled Hinduism to change itself on the one hand, and which on the other liberalized the social customs. In the later periods, Guru Nanak's Sikhism provided a very close parallel. It synthesized two predominant value systems, Islam and Hinduism, and created yet another new value system. Vaishnavism perhaps was an effort at making Hinduism monotheistic. The Sufi Saints by preaching the message of peace and brotherhood among the lower classes, brought together Islam and Hinduism.

Similar efforts were made both at the level of lower strata and upper strata of the medieval society of India. Kabir's effort is a case in point, while Akbar's effort was mainly at the level of nobles. "Indeed Kabir was at the centre of a powerful

movement among the lowly classes wherein Hinduism and Islam achieved a coming together that made it difficult to distinguish one religion from the other." [1] Apart from this effort at the popular level, at the elite level Akbar's and Dara Shikoh's attempts were worth pointing at though they did not achieve much success in this respect.

Similarly, there were many others like Ramdas, Mirabai Raman, Tulsidas, Dadu Tukaram etc. who contributed towards liberalizing the Indian tradition. "A very important function of these orthogenetic movements in the tradition was that through re-formulation and re-interpretation the basic tenets of the cultural and ritual structure of Hinduism was brought nearer to the life of the people ...... Another significant development which had taken place during this period was the emergence of a liberal reform movement in the ritual status of the Shudra or the lower castes. Both Ramanuja and Madhava favoured the temple entry for the lower castes, and the removal of their many disabilities." [2] In almost all these movements "conscious effort was towards liberalization of the Hindu tradition and its synthesis with Islam." [3]

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1.   Ravindra Kumar, The Secular Culture of India, Occasional papers on History and Society, NMML, Teen Murti, New Delhi. P.14.

2.   Yogendra Singh, Op. Cit, P.42

3.   ibid, P. 43

Our discussion of secular denominations in the Indian history will concentrate on the modern period. Strictly speaking, such secular denominations as we find in European society are, in fact, missing in the nineteenth and twentieth century India. Nevertheless, we have in Ram Mohan Ray, Akshya Kumar Dutta et al reformers who did try to purge the Indian society of dogmatism and conservatism. A study of a few of the movements, their character, their socio-economic base would help in understanding secularization of India better.

"Indian society in the nineteenth century was caught in a vicious web created by religious superstitions and social obscurantism. Hinduism, as Max Weber observed, had 'become a compound of magic, animism and superstition' and abominable rites like animal sacrifice and physical fortune had replaced the worship of God. The priests exercised an overwhelming and, indeed, wealthy influence on the minds of the people ...... The faithful lived in submission, not only to God, the powerful and unseen but even to the whims, fancies and wishes of the priests." [1] To this social situation, the newly educated Indian intellectuals provided a rational critique. They, being influenced by the progress made by western science, tried to transform the Indian society by scathing the existing dogmas of faith. The influence of Western science on Ram Mohan Roy is clearly understandable when he says,

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1.   Bipan Chandra and others, India's Struggle for Independence, 1857-1947, (Penguin, New Delhi ; 1990), P. 83-84.

" The secret of the universe lies in this that in this world, the existence of everything depends upon a certain cause and condition ...... It is not hidden from those who have a sound mind and are friends of justice, that there are many things, for instance many wonderful inventions of the people of Europe and are not obviously known and seem to be beyond the comprehension of human power, but after a keen insight acquired by the instruction of others these causes can be known satisfactorily." [1] The more radical among them, the members of Young Bengal, and Akshay Kumar Dutta, stood for a total rejection of Hinduism as they considered it irrational and superstitions. "If there is anything that we hate from the bottom of our hearts, it is Hinduism" [2] claimed Madhav Chandra Mallik, a member of the Young Bengal group. The critique of reason was not limited to matters religion alone; it embraced the secular domain as well. The social issues came to be decided not by religious faith and sanction but by the criteria of reason and social requirements. A rational and scientific basis for social change, instead of traditional authority and religious sanction, was sought to be employed. The attempt was

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1.   Ram Mohan Roy quoted in K.N. Panikkar, <u>Culture and Consciousness in Modern India</u>, (People's publishing House, New Delhi, 1990), P.8-9.

2.   ibid, p.9

to divorce the social institutions and practices from their religious connections and bring about their transformation strictly on religious grounds. For instance, Akshay Kumar argued that the criterion for abolishing child marriage should be medical opinion and not the sanction of religious priests. Among the Muslims, it was Syed Ahmed Khan, the pioneer in the Aligarh movement, who emphasized the role of religion in the progress of society: " if religion did not keep pace with and meet the demands of the time it would get fossilized as in the case of Islam in India."[1]

However, all these efforts were aimed at the few educated Indians and did not really appeal to the masses. There were some inherent weaknesses in these movements. The Arya Samaj, for example, while trying to create a counter-culture to the colonial one, heavily depended upon India's ancient past and ended up glorifying it. "Strongly native in tendency, they were clearly influenced by the need to defend indigenous culture against colonial cultural hegemony ...... Some of these tendencies however, were not able to transcend the limits of historical necessity and led to a sectarian and obscurantist outlook." [2]

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1. Sayed Ahmed Khan quoted in Bipan Chandra and others, op. cit. P.85.

2. ibid, p.90

The social reformers of the nineteenth century also looked upon the colonial state apparatus to provide support in bringing about social change in India. Thus, Ram Mohan had to ask for Bentick's interference in abolishing the practice of Sati. This dependence on the state apparatus has been inherited by independent India which has made secularism in India an ideology. But what was important that after the 1857 uprising the colonial power did not want to disturb the social structure of Indian society and with that ended the state-sponsored secularization process in India. This may count as a factor why reform movements are not as active in the later years of the nineteenth century.

The inherent weaknesses in the reform movements that followed would be clear if one studies the scholars like Bankim Chandra, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo. Bankim Chandra, a great literary figure while trying to bring nationalist feeling among the Indians, had a very strong Hindu militant tinge. "It is interesting that when Bankim Chandra has a vision of national liberation he still fails to rely on the people, but on a bond of dedicated patriot mendicants, and the thrust of the book becomes notoriously anti-Muslim"[1]. This religious tinge, the glorification of Indian culture rooted in the ancient past becomes even -

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1.   Hiren Gohain, The idea of popular Culture in the early nineteenth Century Bengal, (Bagchi & Co, Calcutta;1991), P.23.

more obvious when one studies Aurobindo. "Even Vivekananda, the disciple of universalist Ramakrishna, turned universalism upside down by declaring Hinduism as the only universal religion." [1]

The reforms, started by these intellectuals, had very little following, "Such movements were largely confined to the gentry and were marked by meetings and propaganda through the press. But there was never any question of mobilizing the people and awakening the people to the results of such social evils. The press propaganda rarely reached the illiterate masses."[2] The case of the Muslims was even worse. The nationalist conscious-ness rarely touched them and it was, as Gohain points out, defi-nitely weak among the Bengali Muslims, as they were virtually kept out of this nationalist discourse. "The link between the popular and the enlightened gentry was at first a Hindu identity, or rather a Hindu classification of the colonial authorities. Yet the Hindu, split up into a thousand castes and subcastes, deflects and ultimately defeats the universalist Enlightenment discourse of humanity .... And there is nearly unbroken si-lence on the Muslims, the majority of the population over large areas of Bengal."[3] Even the working masses of the inferior castes had only a passive role in this nationhood.

The only movement that had a mass following was the one started by Gandhi. But his was essentially a political movement.

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1.   Panikkar, op. cit. p.21

2.   Gohain, op. cit. p.27

3.   ibid, p.29

This may partly explain why secularization of Indian Society did not break much ice. The immediate goal of the Indian freedom movement was independence; nationalism was its primary objective. Such an approach undermined the process of secularization. Unlike the west where the process of industrialization made the symbolic growth of secular ethic so urgent and necessary, the freedom movement in India with its overwhelmingly Hindu participation to back it up perhaps did not give sufficient attention to this process. In these colonial societies, nationalism with an anti-colonial feeling was a potent force than that of the Protestant ethic. Religion, that is Hinduism, could possibly have played a positive role in the freedom movement had there been a single tradition in India. For " a dominated society or a society sandwiched between other societies which throw its identity into high relief turns into its religion."[1] But the existence of different traditions only helped to breed suspicion and communalism. The society was politicized and nationalism, in its broader meaning, even included secularism. Indian nationalism, with a strong Hindu tinge, defined secularism as something anti-Hindu. It was easy to mobilize people on religious lines but this acted as a hurdle on the way of secularization. One could, thus, say that secularization was postponed to the post independence period and all efforts were gathered together for winning freedom without bothering about how the masses were mobilized. Tilak's revival of Ganapati and Shivaji festivals and even the

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1.   Martin, 1978; op. cit. p.55

frequent use of Hindu symbols by Gandhi only ended up in alienating the Muslims.

Thus, politicization of society meant relative marginalisation of religious issues. This meant that the role of religion in politics and the need for secularization were undermined. Religion mattered as far as mobilization on communal lines was concerned. Religion was used only for putting the stamp of Hindu or Muslims on a person. The role of religion ended up here and beyond this point, the narrow politics of communalism reigned.

To conclude this chapter, the concept of secularism evolved in the west as a result of the victory of the temporal power over the ecclesiastical one. The defeat of the church power was marked by the rapid growth of scientific knowledge. The implications of secularism has already been discussed in the first part of the chapter. In the second part, we have seen how the process of secularization went on in Europe. It never meant a complete repudiation of religion as such rather new sects and new cults evolved to suit the changing circumstances and provided a work ethic corresponding to the economic development of the society. The example of Calvinism has already been cited.

In the final part of the chapter, we have tried to draw a parallel in the Indian context. Though reform movements are not altogether absent in Indian history, leading to a more or less secular view of life, such denominations as we find in the process of secularization in Europe are, in fact, missing. The differences between Europe and the Indian contexts can be summed up

here. In the first place, there was never a struggle, as bitter as we find in Europe, between the temporal and spiritual powers in India. In the latter case, the issue was not of who should control whom. Rather, the reform movements only tried to rationalize the religious beliefs and bring the followers of different religions into a single fold so essential to the Indian secularism even today. Secondly, the reform movements started not in response to any development in scientific knowledge and economic growth and did not provide any work ethic as Calvinism did. Rather, these movements were influenced by the progress achieved by Europe and were led by a handful of Western educated intellectuals and never appealed to the masses. Thirdly, it is also wishful to draw a parallel between Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and India in the nineteenth century . In Europe the Renaissance initiated a period of amazing creativity in which social change and value-seeking kept place. In India, as G.C. Pande sees, the Anglicized or Westernizing elite can hardly be said to have displayed a parallel creativity, " The real creativity of the from Ram Mohan Roy to Gandhi had its focus in spiritual and moral life. That it did not succeed in adequately transforming society and culture may be said to have been partly due to the absorbing need of a political struggle and partly without doubt to the role of English education." [1]

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1.   G.C. Pande, <u>Reflections on the Indian Renaissance</u>, Occasional papers on History and Society, NMML, Teen Murti, p.3.

Thus, though the conditions essential to the development of secularism were missing in India, the process of secularization nevertheless began. The differences between the processes of secularization in Europe and in India have already been discussed. The Indian situation had many compulsions; it had also many limitations. These compulsions and limitations curbed the path of the process of secularization in India.

We have tried to draw a parallel and in our attempt to do so, we have noticed the similarities and the differences. The Indian situation had its own peculiarities which made the nature of the process of secularization in India quite different altogether. Thus, India proved to be a case of sui generis.

CHAPTER TWO

SECULARISM IN INDIA: SOME CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

I. The commonsense understanding of secularism.

II. The secular - communal paradox.

III. A critique of the commonsense understanding:the elite-mass cultural dichotomy.

"Social theory is concerned with finding a more satisfactory fundamental description of what is happening. The basic question of all social theory is in a sense: What is really going on? We have to ask this question because our commonsense descriptions of what is happening are inadequate, or sometimes even illusory. They fail to give us any explanatory grip on our situation, or to help us act effectively. And the answers offered by theory can be surprising, strange, even shocking to commonsense."[1] Thus, a social theory has to go beyond the commonsense understanding or the "constitutive self-understanding" as Taylor puts it and look for "the hitherto unidentified course of events."[2]

In the light of this statement, when one is analyzing the concept of secularism in India, one ends up with theories that are bewildering to one's commonsense. For example "often the nationalist history of nationalism, the story it tells of itself and imposes on its adherents," says Sudipta Kaviraj, "obstructs our understanding of the historicity, and the historical fragility of things."[3] Such an argument, while theorizing the phenomenon of nationalism in India, implicitly speaks of what our common-

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1. Charles Taylor, <u>Social Theory as Practice</u> (Oxford; New Delhi; 1983), P, 2-3

2. Ibid, p.4

3. Sudipta Kaviraj, <u>On the Discourse of Selcularism</u> in Bidyut Chakravarty ed. <u>Secularism in Indian Polity</u>, (Segment, New Delhi; 1990), p. 191

sense understanding has been. In this particular argument, our commonsense understanding of nationalism is the product of the nationalist history of nationalism. This understanding is challenged as obstructing our understanding of the real, unidentified course of events, of the historicity and the historical fragility of things.

In this chapter, my first attempt will be at examining what our commonsense understanding of secularism is. Secondly, the effort will be at conceptual clarification of secularism, communalism and nationalism. Thirdly, going beyond our commonsense understanding, an examination of elite and mass culture will be made.

I

The first attempt is at "understanding our commonsense understanding" of secularism. So, what is our commonsense understanding? This question can be put in a slightly different way: what exactly do we mean by Indian secularism? To quote a distinguished jurist in his widely consulted text-book: "The unity and integrity of the people of India, professing numerous Faiths, has been sought to be achieved by enshrining the ideal of a 'secular state', which means that the state protects all religions equally and does not itself upheld any religion as the state religion ..... There is no provision in the constitution making any religion the 'established Church' as some other constitutions do. On the other hand, the liberty of 'belief, faith and worship' promised in the Preamble is implemented by incorporat-

ingthe fundamental rights of all citizens to 'freedom of reli-
gion' in Arts 25-29, which guarantee to each individual freedom
to proffess, practise and propagate religion, assure strict
impartiality on the part of the state and its institutions to-
wards all religions .... This itself is one of the glowing
achievements of Indian democracy when her neighbors, such as
Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Burma uphold particular
religions as State religions.'[1]

This is our understanding of India as a secular state, so
clearly summed up by the above writer, while elaborating the
secular aspect of Indian Constitution. The fact that we have
declared ourselves to be secular while our neighbours, Pakistan
in particular, have not done so and that we guarantee all reli-
gions equal place and freedom in our political system while
others do not, we are secular. This is how we argue, at least,
by giving the example of Pakistan across the border notwithstand-
ing the fact that there are other countries which have made
considerable progress in the field of secularism than India.
Such an understanding does not really help us to understand why
secularism has not been able to break much ice in India. Even if
it does, the explanation often given is within the parameters of

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1.   Durga Das Basu, Introduction to the Constitution of India
(Prentice Hall, N. Delhi; 1991), P.267

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commonsense understanding. Thus, we readily blame the Muslims for not being able to adjust themselves to a secular society and to a secular political system; we blame them for voting en masse and we blame their religion for being against all forms of secularism. Our understanding of secularism conditions another understanding: the religion of Islam is always intolerant towards other religion and therefore cannot survive in a secular society. It would either die out by the pressure exerted by a secular political system or it would break the system itself. We hardly bother ourselves by the fact that Turkey is a secular society. The case of Indonesia provide opportunity to criticize the Indian Muslims. The argument runs like this: if a Muslims of Indonesia can respect the cult of Ram as a national heritage, why the Muslims in India cannot do so! But this argument can be put in a different way : first, Indonesia is an example of a tolerant Muslim Society. Therefore, it is not the Muslims who are not secular but it is immediate historical experience which conditions such an understanding (partition, in case of India). Second, if Indonesia can respect the values transmitted to its culture from India why cannot India respect the elements transmitted to its culture from Persia !

There is also another way of explaining this phenomenon. We give the example of Pakistan where ethnic conflict has become, of late, a regular phenomenon. And we argue, rather console ourselves that Pakistan, though consisting only of Muslims (a very negligible proportion in Pakistan are non-Muslims) is also not free of such conflicts. Such an explanation with its false note of

consolation prevents us from understanding the phenomenon in any hopeful way. But since India, unlike Pakistan, is a secular state, communal and ethnic conflicts in India are something to be sincerely thought about. Further, India and Pakistan, both belong to the category of newly independent countries and such conflicts in these two countries could be explained in the context of the third would in general where there is a clash of the values of modernity and tradition, notwithstanding the fact that one is secular while the other is not. We can explore better avenue for our understanding thereby.

There is yet another dimension of commonsense understanding of secularism,; our understanding of communities which figure out in our discussion on communalism. These communities are chiefly understood as religious communities. Thus, we seriously overlook the entire gamut of meaning that 'secularism' is associated with. We need to know that religious communalism cannot be dealt with in isolation. It is a part of a general trend, the causes left aside, in which people rally around common traits to form communities and assert themselves. We have recognized language as a powerful rallying point and have given a legitimate position to linguistic communities in our constitution. Thus, when a caste riot takes place, we do not talk of secularism. It is only after a communal riot that we are reminded of the secular credentials of the Indian state. The burning of a bride, an offense against women, (and, for that matter, women too constitute a community) is never taken as a blow to secularism. In the notorious Shah Bano case, the word secularism was murmured not because women as

such were offended, but because women belonging to a particular community, the Muslims (notorious, as per the subjective assessment of Hindus, for ill-treating their women) were offended and the government was blamed not because of offending women but because of playing into the hands of Muslims fundamentalists.

Yet another commonsense understanding is the superiority of the elite culture over mass culture. The masses are looked upon as communal whose lack of education has prevented them from being secular while the elite, proud of his western education, considers himself more secular, and therefore, capable of leading the masses. In the last part of this ongoing chapter, an attempt will be made to counter this understanding.

To sum up, our commonsense understanding, and perhaps, our way of arguing have not been altogether flawless. Our commonsense understanding has been guided by our immediate historical experience, the partition to be more specific. Our understanding of secularism is what the constitution speaks which itself is not altogether flawless. The most ardent of all critiques, the Bharatiya Janata Party, argues but within this commonsense understanding and has not be able to go beyond. There are other claimants to secularism who honestly search for secular elements in different religious traditions and frequently quote religious scriptures to qualify that every religion has secular dimensions forgetting that such enquiries yield little. Every religion has its secular and antisecular elements; it is only how one interprets them.

Our next attempt is at a conceptual clarification of secularism, communalism and nationalism. Though seem opposed to each other, the terms secular and communal are difficult to separate. _An action may be secular from one point of view while it may be communal from another points of view. At the same time, an action may be both communal and secular yet not wholly incompatible. We shall proceed by citing a few examples.

The lower castes fighting for their rights is an act that is communal as well as secular. It is communal in the sense that they are a single community as against the upper castes and they aim at material benefit of their own community. It is also a secular act in so far as they are fighting for their rights hitherto denied to them and refuse to accept the age-old myth that God has designed it so.

The upper castes, on the other hand, while trying to resist this attempt no longer resort either to the Purusha-sukta hymn of Rigveda or the Manusmriti rather they do it for a purpose other than religious, that is, the continuance of the political and economic benefit and the maintenance of status quo. Thus, their action is both secular and communal; secular in the sense that they no longer try to justify the old myth and communal in the sense that they desire the benefit of their own community. But at the same time, their action is "anti-secular" in so far as they desire the maintenance of status quo and social-political-economic dominance on a traditional line like caste.

Similarly, in the on going Ramajanam bhoomi dispute, one can contemplate what is not secular in it. In the first place, in so far as the parties involved in the dispute are religious authorities claiming to represent their respective religious communities, it is not secular. Secondly, the demolition of a mosque, a historical monument can not be a secular act. The mosque, even if it is a built on the rubrics of a temple (though evidence to this is lacking), is a witness to our history and deserves protection on its own right as it is a part of our history. The circumstances in which the temple was destroyed and the mosque was erected on its place, if we accept the argument, were quite different from the present circumstances. A few centuries ago, it was a quite rational act, a rational act on the part of the victorious over the vanquished. Nobody could be held responsible for this act; Babur was not the ruler but the invader and the real ruler was a defeated lot. But today India is a secular democratic society and the constitution is the supreme law of the land. In such a circumstance such an act of demolition could not be but irrational and anti-secular. However, so far as interference of secular institution of government, judiciary is concerned and the attempts of the parties to conform to the guidelines laid down by these institutions, the whole thing more or less takes place within a secular framework.

The use of the words 'communal' is, thus, avoided in the above example. The terms 'secular' or 'anti-secular' best express the above phenomenon. However, in India, the meaning of

the word communalism goes much beyond its semantics. Sticking to their semantics, communalism and secularism may not appear antithetical. Communalism, here, means a kind of irrationality and intolerance among different communities, particularly the religious ones. And it is exactly at this point that secularism turns it back on communalism. "Broadly we use the term (communalism) to characterize two situations. When someone demonstrates behaviorally an excessive commitment to his/her religious community, excessive in the sense of sharing exclusiveness. Second, we also use it to condemn what we take to be an illegitimate use of the community, its resources, its symbols and its identity. It is primarily a question of parochial values invading public space."[1]

Thus, while secularism may mean tolerance and positive attitude of respect in a multi-religious society, communalism may mean the absence of it. It is essentially a negative phenomenon. It is manifested not so much in one's religious belief as in one's way of arguing and defending the things pertaining to one's community that are not secular.

The phenomenon of communalism manifests itself roughly in three ways :first, a dormant one when let's say, a public authority, in defiance of the spirit and nature of his occupation

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1.   K. Raghavendra Rao, <u>Secularism, Communalism and Democracy in India</u> in Bidyut Chakravorty ed. p.44

shows favours towards a member of his own community. Second, an overt one, manifesting itself in one's way of arguing which does not allow any scope for other arguments. Such a way of arguing is conditioned by one's conviction and assumptions without any inquiry. This conviction is the result of the socialization process. And finally, a violent way of manifesting one's hatred, that is, in a riot. This is rather a difficult situation in which the mob notwithstanding the number of heads, acts as one mind. The hatred is transmitted from one person to another as a contagious disease and the mob, acts like one demon. The mob is quick to act but cannot think. But in all these three manifestations of communalism, a person in order to be communal should not necessarily be anti-secular or deeply religious. He may very well be secular as far as his private beliefs are concerned, that is, he may not be a practising Hindu or a Muslim or a Sikh, not strictly following the ritual pattern and may as well be an agnostic, but he can, nevertheless, be communal. Thus, another essential element of communalism is that it is a manifestation that is in public and which is aimed at material gain and not spiritual gain so much essential to any religion. And this leads one to conclude that there is nothing religious in communalism. It is a secular phenomenon in a sense and yet not secular, for secularism also means, as we have already noticed (in the first chapter) a rational, humanist outlook. Communalism, moreover, divides people on lines that are not secular. It mobilizes people on traditional, primordial lines. Here we can add that the same violence and intolerance is also manifested in

a secular person's argument while trying to convince somebody the former considers communal. The communal person considers himself secular and his way of arguing manifests equal degree of violence and hatred. The persons involved consider themselves secular in their own way but the hatred and animosity is manifested in their way of arguing.

There are terms often used in social science analysis on communalism like minority communalism and majority communalism. However, there is an important difference between these two; both are not the same. The majority communalism is often interpreted as nationalism while the minority communalism is interpreted as separatism. This makes the minority communalism susceptible to criticism while the majority communalism escapes under the garb of nationalism. This is so because our immediate historical experience, that is, the freedom movement and the partition that followed, condition our understanding. The major diversion from Indian nationalism was the Muslim League which claimed to represent a particular community, the Muslims. On the other hand, the Congress under the leadership of the extremists became overwhelmingly Hindu in tone. A minority communalism can, at best, demand for a separate statehood, as is evident from the Khalistan movement. The majority communalism, in its effort to suppress such a demand, is easily identified with nationalism.

The example of communal voting may be cited here in our effort to understand the concepts of communalism and secularism. In a liberal democracy, politics is essentially a long the line of identity of interests. A group of Muslims voting for a par-

ticular candidate or a party is not anti-secular as they are using a secular right for a secular purpose. They want a particular candidate to get elected because they feel that their interests will be best protected if he does get elected. This may be communal, but is not anti-secular.

There are examples of even socialist parties, despite their secularist traditions, coming into concorant with religious organizations. "A case of this kind illustrates the relative marginality of religious issues to the political parties in the secular society: religion is no longer a matter on which the parties fee sufficiently concerned to quarrel."[1] Another case in point is the religious minorities, especially the Muslims, supporting the left in India. This is a universal phenomenon everywhere where there is a monopoly by the majority's religion. "The minority religions in France have persistently allied themselves to the political left, in spite of its militant secularism. This alliance is the precise mirror image of the fact that Catholics in Protestant societies have allied themselves to the political left ......"[2] The reason may be attributed to the necessity to contain the majority from dominating the minority. And

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1.   Bryan Wilson, Religion in Secular Society (Penguin; Middlessex;1966), p.80.

2.   David Martin, A General Theory of Secularisation. (Bassil Blackwell; Oxford; 1978), p.19.

within the militant secularism professed by the left parties, the minority feels secured. The Muslims in India supported the congress as long as the latter did not succumb to the pressure of Hindu militant rightists. But once it succumbed to their pressure, they today feel safer under the banner of left despite the fact that on the point of secularism, there is not much of a difference between the left and the Congress. Yet another reason may be that by supporting the left, the issue is diverted to economic ones cutting across religious communities.

III

The next attempt, as we have already pointed out at the beginning of the chapter, is to go beyond the commonsense understanding of secularism and analyse the dichotomy between the mass and elite cultures. Our commonsense understanding is that the masses, illiterate and unreflective as they are, are communal and not secular while the western educated ones, with the insight that they have because of their education, are secular in outlook.

Secularism in India has to be studied from two standpoints as far as the question of culture comes in. First as a mode of living together with tolerance and positive attitude of respect among different communities. This is what by absence of communalism we mean. Second, in relation to supernatural and fiedeistic presuppositions and primordial bonds.

The purpose here is not to arrive at any conclusion but to raise some issues and lay bare the arguments. Such a differentiation is a legacy of the nineteenth century reform movements, though the cultured differention across the elite-mass divide is a very old one. In ancient Greece, the idea of citizenship was nothing but to make the elite a race apart. In India, since the ancient period, such differentiation has manifested itself in the language they spoke; first, Sanskrit was the language the elite consisting of upper castes spoke and Prakrit was the language which the sudras and women spoke. Sanskrit was later replaced by Persian during the medieval period and finally, it was English which become the language of the elite.

During the nineteenth century, the new culture that was ushered in by the educated intellectuals was loaded with the word "Savyata", as Hiren Gohain has pointed out. "The identity of the 'Savya' is maintained by clear-cut differences from those marked as 'asavya', the unenlightened ones .... The savya is known by his distance from the rude, ignorant working masses, uncouth in manners, sunk in superstitions. Their distress must of course be relieved, and their burden lightened, as part of the social charity of the gentry. But there is no question of extending the 'savyata' to all such people whose animal vulgarity after all supports the 'savyata' of the gentry through incessant toil."[1]

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1.   Hiren Gohain, The Idea of popular culture in the early
      Nineteenth Century Bengal (Bagchi & Co, Calcutta; 1991) P.25

The study of secularism as a mode of living together has to base itself upon a proper study of cultural orientations at the mass level. If one looks at empirical studies done in this respect one finds (in Shamirpet in Andhra Pradesh, for example, S.C. Dube writes), "Hindus and Muslims serve together as elected members of the village council, and participate in the same general economic system. They perform certain ritual activities jointly. The Muslims do not believe in any of the Hindu Trinity, nor in any of the later incarnations; but they share with Hindus a living faith in the existence of ghosts, spirits and witches. They participate with the rest of the community in village ceremonies and sacrifices. To ward off cholera, plague and small pox, they too think that it is necessary to propitiate the local deities and goddesses."[1]

In another village Gangapur, Bookman finds that "Hindus and Muslims definitely perform similar, if not identical religious rites. These rites are performed for the same specific ends and involve the same supernatural beings, regardless of whether the participants are Hindus or Muslims."[2] One of these rites, he

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1.   S.C. Dube, quoted by L.M. Bookman, Hindus and Muslims: Communal Relations in Giri Raj Gupta Ed. Cohesion and Conflict in Modern India (Vikas: New Delhi; 1978), p.106.

2.   Bookman, ibid, p.109

gives an example, concerns the worship of a local village deity named Sarvar Sayyed. The villagers, both Hindu and Muslim, believe that Sarvar Sayyed has special powers to insure the health of cattle and water buffalo which in turn maintains the prosperity of the family. Thus, Sarvar Sayyed is called the god of 'cattle-wealth'. When a calf is born among the livestock of either a Hindu or a Muslim family, the first milk of the cow is offered at the shrine of Sarvar Sayyed, who is requested to make milk rich and the calf stronger. If a cow or water-buffalo falls ill, offerings are made to the deity for its recovery.

Thus, concluding, Bookman says "certainly not all social and cultural activities segregate Hindus and Muslims in Shamirpet, Karba Narayangarh and Gangapur. In each of these villages, Hindus and Muslims share some aspects of religious belief and practice. They do so because they are co-members of a single village society with its own local cultural traditions. Those local cultural beliefs and practices are concerned with aspects of daily life not specifically dealt with by the formal beliefs and practices of transcendental Hinduism and Islam - that is, by scriptural religions. Local religious beliefs and practices do not supplement them. They do not segregate Hindus and Muslims, they integrate them as members of a shared culture. Hindus and Muslims in each of these small rural communities share certain assumptions, principles and values concerning the nature of local environment, the world they live in from day to day. They have a common cognitive view of the worlds, and of the specific affairs,

problems and crises which occur in it. It is a doubtful proposi-
tion, then, that "Hindus and Muslims at least in small rural
communities, always see themselves as (as Jinnah had said), two
different civilizations which are based on conflicting ideas and
conceptions."[1]

Thus, it is the educated Indians, the elites, with whom this
feeling of exclusiveness, as far as their religious or ethnic or
communal identity is concerned, resides; it is the educated
Hindus and Muslims who see themselves as the inheritors of two
different civilizations and cultures. It is among these people
that this difference is manifested in dress, in habits, in man-
ners etc. Nandy's[2] classification of the Indians into western-
ized seculars, semi-modern zealots and non-modern ethnic and his
thesis of two types of affinities and three types of enmities
runs a close parallel to Bookman's study of popular culture. To
him, there is a covert affinity between the peripheral Hindus and
the peripheral Muslims which is not accessible to the modern
Indian. Among the three types of enmities, the first is an overt
hostility between the Hindu and the Muslim zealots who hate each
other but understand each other's motivation perfectly. Second-
ly, a less overt one, is the hostility of the westernized ethnic

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1.   ibid. p.112-13.

2.   Ashis Nandy, An Anti-Secularist Manifesto Seminar (314), 1985.

towards the peripheral of his own as well as other faiths whom the westernized ethnic sees as passive or prospective zealots. The third type of enmity that Nandy speaks of is a covert hostility of zealot whose hatred is for the everyday practitioner of his own faith. Nandy further says that to this peripheral believer (and he is peripheral because the zealots and the secularist have declared him so), Gandhi turned to give a political basis to his concept of religious and ethnic tolerance. His textual knowledge of Hinduism was poor. He even sometimes paid lip service to it but, as Nandy feels, there could be little doubt that his primary allegiance was to the folk theologies of Hinduism and Islam.

The point to be made here is that the hallmarks of the so-called Hindu and Muslim culture are language, literature, dress etc. Whether it is Urdu or Hindi, the rural folks have very poor knowledge. They speak their own colloquial irrespective of their religion. Urdu, for example, is purely a elite language spoken by the North Indian Muslims. Even in Pakistan, where it has been officially accepted as the national language, it is spoken by a handful of persons, some three to four percent of the entire population. If one remembers, language was one of the major causes of discontentment among the erstwhile East Bengalis. Similarly, the chaste Hindi, like the chaste Urdu heavily borrowing from Persian, is spoken only in the elite circle of the North Indian Hindus. An illiterate Muslim has hardly any knowledge of Ghalib.

The pattern of dressing, the manners are other distinguishing traits. A Muslim from the upper strata knows exactly how to dress up that would distinguish him from his Hindu counterpart and vice-versa. But such a sense of dressing up is missing among the rural folks, excepting on some special religious ceremonies. Of course, today more and more people are taking to European style of dress but the traditional way of distinguishing still persists.

At the beginning of the chapter, I have already pointed out that my purpose is to lay bare the arguments and not to arrive at any conclusion. Notwithstanding the above argument, there are indeed certain trends that could very will challenge, if not defeat the above thesis. Even among the rural folks, there are certain traits that distinguish a Muslims from a Hindu. For example, the lungi, the cap and the beard are enough to distinguish a Muslim. In Orissa, for example, Muslims despite their poor knowledge of either Urdu or Hindi, try to speak broken urdu heavily drawn from Oriya. This is enough to distinguish a Muslim. However, this desire to distinguish oneself is relatively lesser among the rural folks. What is most important is that such distinguishing traits among the rural folks do not result in any claim for separate culture or civilization so prominent among the elites. Despite the mutual suspicion (for example, on the issue of eating beef or pork), they share a common world-view where the same supernatural beliefs predominate, a world view in which the supposed conflict between Islam and Hinduism is absent. There could be two possible inferences; either such distinguish-

ing traits existed earlier and the people have learnt to live together over the centuries out of practical necessity. or such distinguishing traits are a later phenomenon.

To make the arguments clear: at the mass cultural level people do not see themselves as the inheritors of different civilizations though they acknowledge their mutual differences. There are, no doubt, enough distinguishing features in the mass culture but as opposed to the elite culture, it is quite different. Among the elites, the differences are too obvious, if not in dress, for European style of dressing has come to dominate, at least in speach, the way of arguing etc. A muslim or a Hindu from the countryside understands nothing of these arguments carried on at the elite level. The militancy and animosity is missing in the gossips that go around in the countryside. Thus, the difference must be noted. If suspicion is growing today, it is because of the information revolution that takes the news of riots to the villages and teaches them not to trust each other.

E.M. Foster in his "A Passage to India" portrays the psychological make up of educated Indians. "Slack Hindus - they have no idea of society."[1] or elsewhere "All illness proceeds from Hindus".[2] Though these expressions go more as gossips, nevertheless these expose the psychology of the Indians. Aziz's (the

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1.   E.M. Forster, A Passage to India. (Penguin; 1978), p.86
2.   ibid, p.118

character, an educated doctor and no zealot) understanding here is the commonsense understanding. V.S. Naipaul, as an Indian immigrant in Trinidad, has this to say about his socialization: "Race was never discussed, but at an early age I understood that Muslims were somewhat more different than others. They were not to be trusted; they would always do you down; and point was given to this by the presence close to my grandmother's house of a Muslim, in whose cap and grey beard, avowals of his especial difference, lay every short of threat."[1]

This is how then the process of socialization go on for the Indians. At a very early period of their childhood, they are made to think in a particular way which even education in their late age finds difficult to erase. Their socialization go on differently, harping upon the exclusiveness and distinguishing traits and ignoring the innumerable similarities. But such socialization of exclusiveness is not restricted to communal perceptions alone - this is also true of castes and other kinds of group feelings. This phenomenon is also highlighted by Foster. "For here the cleavage was between Brahman and non-brahman; Muslims and English are quite out of the running, and sometimes not mentioned for days."[2] And when it comes to the hatred towards a third party, the suspicious Indian becomes a nationalist: "Indian shall be a nation. No foreigners of any sort. Hindu and Muslim and Sikh and all shall be one .... we may hate

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1.   V.S. Naipaul, <u>An Area of Darkness</u> (Penguin, 1964), p.31.
2.   Foster, op. Cit. p.288-89

one another, but we hate you the most."[1]

Our above discussion excludes an important aspect of secularism, i.e. secularism as against supernatural and fideistic presuppositions, as against obscurantism. In this respect, the picture may not be as optimistic as we would like it to be. Sudhir Kakar's analysis of the other in ethnic conflicts needs mention here. In his attempt at providing a psychoanalyst's approach to ethnic conflict, he finds the 'bhuta' or the malignant spirit possessing Hindu men and women turns out to be a Muslim. "In that, Muslim bhutas were universally considered to be the strongest, the most malignant and the most stubborn of evil spirits, the Muslim seemed to symbolize the alien and the demonic in the unconscious part of the Hindu mind."[2] The root of this attitude, Kakar too, finds in the process of socialization during the early childhood. "These disavowed aspects, or the demonic spirits, take birth during that period of our childhood when the child made conscious of good and bad, right and wrong, begins to divide himself into two parts, one that is the judge and the other that is being judged. The unacceptable, condemned parts of the self are projected outside, the projective processes being primitive attempts to relieve pain by externalizing it.

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1.   ibid, p.315-16.

2.   Sudhir Kakar, Some unconscious aspects of ethnic violence in India in veena Das ed. Mirrors of Violence (Oxford; Delhi;1990), P.137

The expelled parts of the self are then attached to various beings -animals and human - as well as to whole castes, ethnic and religious communities."[1]

Thus, though the masses have learnt to live together and possess a similar world-view irrespective of their religion, they are still prisoners of superstitions. They still look upon the nature as consisting of deities; they still pray these deities to ward off evil spirits. They look upon the natural calamities as evil omen's wrath. In this sense, secularization of Indian society has to go a long way. However, one must explain the reasons for these superstitions. Superstions, in fact, are predominant where thing largely depend upon chance. In case of the masses, superstitions are the result of their condition. Lack of preventive measures for cholera and other diseases and natural calamities forces them to resort to supernatural deities to rescue them. Krishna Kumar catches this point brilliantly: "We need not wait for the campaigns against religiosity and indeed the spirit of religion never died in these countries (i.e. in the West), nor did the scientific temper became a mass, or even an elite religion. All that happened was that the function of religion as a source for unhappiness, death, disease, and poverty, diminished, without much dimunition in the function of

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1.   ibid, p.137

religion as a source of solace; when child mortality declined, and it became possible to expect reasonable health in old age, secular explanations of poverty and disease gained ground."[1]

Thus, Krishna Kumar says, in India the advocates of secularism by and large ignored this linkage. They professed secularism as an ideology. Their naive hope was that the state could actually propagate secularism with the help of education and the media even as the majority of deaths continued to occur in childhood, and life for the poor remained totally unpredictable and tenous. "This was obviously a fond hope, and it is little wonder that secularism has not made impressive strides along the route the Indian bourgeois had charted for it. The failure of secularism is hardly the failure of an ideology. It is essentially the failure of a ruling class that used secular ideals as means of seeking legitimacy, but which largely ignored the social tasks associated with the development of a secular society."[2] Further, says Krishna Kumar, "We need not enter that terrain (the terrain of culture and whether a Western idea like secularism is suitable to the Indian cultural mil'ieu) as long as a quotidian social act

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1.   Krishna Kumar, Secularism: Its Politics and Padagogy, EPW, Vol.XXIV, Nos. 44 & 45 Nov. 4-11, 1989.

2.   ibid, p.2476

like delivering a baby continues to pose each day a risk to the lives of thousands of women and as long as about half the deaths occurring in the nation are those of children below six."[1]

To conclude, in the first and third parts, we have discussed what our commonsense understanding of secularism has been while trying to go beyond this commonsense understanding, we have, tried to examine the dichotomy between elite and mass cultures studying them from two angles viz first, as a mode of living together and second, as against supernatural and fideistic beliefs with an explanation of reasons for such beliefs. Despite all suspicion and differentiation, the masses have learnt to live together and secularism as a mode of living to-gather may not be altogether absent. But secularism as against supernaturalism and obscurantism has far way to go. In the second part, we have tried to discuss the secular-communal paradox while trying to distinguish secularism from communalism and nationalism and defining communalism. Secularism is not always opposed to communal behavior (if we stick to the semantics of communalism) and communalism is not always opposed to nationalism. It is a matter of how we perceive them - for the majority, it is one thing and for the minority, it is another. And finally, in this second

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1.   ibid, p. 2476

part, the effort has been to define communalism as it manifests itself in three ways: first, show of favour, for instance by a public authority; second, our way of arguing, a more overt and violent form of communalism; and finally, riots, the most violent and open form.

CHAPTER THREE

SECULARISM IN INDIA : DIFFERENT CONCEPTIONS

I.   The Nehruvian understanding.

II.   The Constitutional provisions.

III.   The Bharatiya Janata Party and its idea
        of Hindutva and Positive Secularism.

The adoption of Secularism in India was a practical necessity and a political expediency. The decision was guided by both internal and external compulsions. Internally, keeping in view the diversity that India is, she could not but be secular. For the Indian elite of the independent era, it was politically expedient for gaining legitimacy. Externally, it was the international image, in contrast to Pakistan's preference to a theocracy, that compelled India to adopt secularism as one of its ideals. " The secular state is important to the future of Indian democracy itself. It stands or falls as a basic and inseparable component of the modern liberal democratic state. The secular state is thus a fundamental aspect of India's democratic experiment, an experiement which might conceivably break down as much by establishing Hinduism as the state religion as by eliminating freedom of press."[1]

In the preceeding chapter, we have discussed some conceptual issues and have tried to clarify the concepts. In the present chapter, we will discuss the different strands of secularism in India. This chapter is divided into three parts. In the first part, our task will be to discuss Nehru's idea of secularism, communalism and religion. Secondly, we will take up the constitution of India and will try to find the anomalies, if there are any. And

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1.   D.E. Smith, India as a Secular State, (Princeton, New Jersey; 1967), Preface.

finally, our discussion will concentrate on the Bharatiya Janata Party's critique of official secularism in India and its own conceptions of 'Hindutva' and 'positive secularism'. An effort will also be made at providing a critique of the BJP's understanding.

I

While one is discussing different conceptions of secularism in India, one has to begin with the Nehruvian understanding. The Nehruvian idea of secularism is essentially a liberal-democratic one. However, the left has, on this point of secularism, supported the Nehruvian model and it has not developed its own conception of secularism. "In fact, one of the problems for Marxists is that their view of secularism has rarely been adequately distinguished from that of the progressive bourgeois liberal."[1] Further, "those left elements", says Manoranjan Mohanty, "had become staunch allies of the ruling forces in the crusade for secularism. Often this was seen as a part of the package along with socialism and non-alignment."[2]

However, before we proceed in our discussion, a note on the Gandhian idea of secularism needs mentioning. Though Gandhi never called himself secular, his is an essentially broad view of religion, religion as a value system and not

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1.   S. Khan, <u>Towards a Marxist Understanding of Secularism,</u> EPW 22 (10), March 7, 1987, pp.405-09.

2.   Manoranjan Mohanty, <u>Secularism : Democratic and hegemonic,</u> EPW, June 3, 1989, p.1219-20.

this or that religion, or any particular religion. He emphasized the in separability of religion and politics and the superiority of the former over the latter. "For me", he said, "every, the tiniest, activity is governed by what I consider to be my religion."[1] Further, "those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means."[2] The Gandhian idea hase been put in the following way by Madan : "For Gandhi religion was the source of absolute value and hence constitutive of social life; politics were the arena of public interest; without the former the latter would be debased. While it was the obligation of the state to ensure that every religion was free to develop according to its own genius, no religion which depended upon state support deserved to survive. In other words, the inseparability of religion and politics in the Indian context, and generally, was for Gandhi fundamentally a distinct issue from the separation of the state from the church in Christendom. When he did advocate that 'religion and state should be separate', he clarified that this was to limit the role of the state to 'secular welfare' and to allow no admittance into the religious life of the people."[3] Thus, the Gandhian idea was a limited role for the state leaving the religious of the people undisturbed.

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1. M.K. Gandhi quoted in Madan, Secularism in its Place, The Journal of Asian Studies, Vol.46, No.4, Nov. 1987, pp.752.

2. Gandhi quoted in Madan, ibid, pp.752.

3. Madan, ibid, pp.752.

His idea of secularism did not form an ideology as his idea
of religion also did not.

Nehru's understanding of religion runs completely in
the opposite direction than that of Gandhi. He argues with
G.K. Chesterton's comparison of religion with that of a
fossil, "which is the form of an animal or organism from
which all its own organic substance has entirely disap-
peared, but which has kept its shape, because it has been
filled up by some totally different substance."[1] He further
adds that "The word 'religion' has lost all precise signifi-
cance (if it ever had) and only causes confusion and gives
rise to interminable debate and argument, when often enough
entirely different meanings are attached to it. It would be
far better if it was dropped from use altogether and other
words with more limited meanings were used instead....".[2]
Thus, he prefers words like theology, philosophy, morals,
ethics, spirituality, metaphysics, duty, ceremonials etc.
because these words, though vague enough, are more limited
in range than religion. What is more important is that
these words have not yet attached themselves, to the same
extent, the passions and emotion that surround and envelop
the word religion.

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1. Nehru, <u>Selected Readings : Years of Struggle,</u> Compiled by
   Arjun Dev, (NBT; 1989), p.175

2. ibid., p.177.

Hence, Nehru's understanding, considering his western education and upbringing, is from the point of view of an agnostic. He considers religion as a hindrance to the tendency to change and progress inherent in human society. He admitted rather candidly that religion did not attract him as it is against science and scientific thinking. But, then, he did not worry too much about religion or its political expression, namely communalism, because, he passionately believed that these epiphenomena would vanish at the touch of reality. Thus, quoting him : "The real thing to my mind is the economic factor. If we lay stress on this and divert public attention to it we shall find automatically that religious differences recede into the background and a common bond unites different groups. The economic bond is stronger than the national one."[1]

So, "the coldly reasoned Nehru looked to both industrialisation and mass education of the type that would dissolve dogma and dogmatic mentality.[2] To him, poverty was the main issue which had to be tackled first. G. Parthasarathy sums up Nehru's approach to secularism :, "It was through education and through economic and social change that the disadvantaged masses could be rescued from vulnerability to the exploitation of religious sentiments by vested interests. The Five Year Plans initiated by Nehru were

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1.   Nehru quoted in Madan op.cit.p.755

2.   S. Gopal, Nehru and Minorities, EPW, Special No., Nov. 1988.

designed to bring about comprehensive changes: a restructur-
ing of socio-economic relations through land reforms and
through industrialisation with its concomitant social mobil-
ity. The new India was to be built on the three pillars of
democracy, socialism and science." [1]

Hence, Nehru's understanding of religion and communal-
ism, Marxist in tone, actually undermined their influence in
Indian society. He failed to give much attention to this
problem and concentrated on economic development which he
thought would modernize people. However, during his later
years he realized his mistake and wrote just before his
death : "We talk about a secular state in India. It is
perhaps not very easy to find a good word in Hindi for
'secular'. Some people think it means something opposed to
religion. That obviously is not correct .... It is a state
which honors all faiths equally and gives them equal oppor-
tunities."[2]

To Nehru [3], the political and economic aspect of the
Hindu-Muslim question was like this: the rising and economi-
cally better equipped middle-class (Hindu) was resisted and

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1. G. Parthasarathy in Nehru and India's quest for a Secular
   identity by G. Parthasarathy and S. Gopal, Occasional papers
   on History and Society, NMML, Teen Murti, p.5.

2. Nehru, quoted in Madan, op.cit. pp.756.

3. Nehru on communalism, Nehru's Speeches edited by N.C. Gupta,
   (Sampradayikata Virodhi Committee, New Delhi; 1965), p.37.

checked to some extent by part of the feudal landlord class (Muslim). The Hindu landlords were often closely connected with their bourgeoisie, and thus remained neutral or even sympathetic to the middle-class demands which were often influenced by them. The British, as always sided with the feudal elements. The masses and the lower middle classes on either side were not in the picture at all. His understanding of communalism, then, was that "groups of upper class people try to cover up their own class interests by making it appear that they stand for the communal demands of religious minorities or majorities. A critical examination of the various communal demands put forward on behalf of Hindus, Muslims or others reveal that they have nothing to do with the masses. At the most they deal with some jobs for a few of the unemployed intellectuals."[1] So far the masses are concerned there is absolutely no reference to them or to their wants in the numerous demands put forward by communal organistions. "But our communal friends", adds Nehru, "take good care to avoid these real issues, for a solution of them might affect their own interests, and they try to divert people's attention to entirely unreal and, from the mass point of view, trivial matters."[2] Though the Aligarh college did fine work by producing a large number of competent men and changed the whole tone of Muslim intelligentsia but still it could not wholly get out of the framework in which

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1.   ibid, p.25.

2.   ibid, p.26.

it was built - "a feudal spirit reigned over it, and the goal of the average student's ambition was governmental service."[1]

Nehru was highly critical of the communal organistions, especially the Hindu Mahasabha. He did not find any difference between the two types of communalism. "The Hindu Mahasabha is always laying stress on its own irreproachable nationalism when it criticises Muslim communalism. That the Muslim organisations have shown themselves to be quite extraordinarily communal has been patent to everybody. The Mahasabha's communalism has not been so obvious, as it masquerades under a nationalist cloak."[2] To him, both types of communalism are not opposed to each other, " .... for however much Hindu and Muslim communalists attack each other in public, they cooperate in the Assembly and elsewhere in helping the Government to pass reactionary measures".[3]

But he was convinced "that the real remedy lies in a diversion of interest from the myths that have been fostered and have grown up round the communal question to the realities of today."[4] The talks about Muslim and Hindu cultures

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1.   ibid, p.38.

2.   ibid., p.41.

3.   ibid, p.43

4.   ibid, p.25.

were, he believed, figments of a few imaginations only. The time would come, he felt, when not only this division of Hindu and Muslim cultures would be obliterated but the whole concept of national cultures would have no meaning. "The day of even national cultures is rapidly passing and the world is becoming one cultural unit. Nations may retain, and will retain for a long time much that is peculiar to them - language, habits, , ways of though, etc. - but the machine age and science, with swift travel, constant supply of world news, radio, cinema etc., will make them more and more uniform. No one can fight against this inevitable tendency, and only a world catastrophe which shatters modern civilization can really check it. There are certainly many differences between the traditional Hindu and Muslim philosophies of life. But these differences are hardly noticeable when both of them are compared to the modern scientific and industrial outlook of life, for between this latter and the former two there is a wide gulf. The real struggle in India is not between Hindu culture and Muslim culture, but between these two and the conquering scientific culture of modern civilisation."[1]

While Nehru's understanding was essentially on Marxist lines, unlike Lenin and Ataruk, he did not resort to force or coercive powers in hastening the process. Nor did he use his undoubted hold over the nation to bring this problem

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1.   ibid, p.45.

under control. "I think he was also too optimistic about the decline of the hold of religion on the minds of people."[1]   Nehru's legacy was toed down by his successors, particularly by Mrs. Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi.   In sharp contrast to Nehru, the later prime ministers actively took part in religious ceremonies and advertised it on national media.   Even during Nehru's days, not all of his colleagues were successful in dissociating themselves from religious ceremonies, as he did. K.M. Munshi, for example, a member of his cabinet, was the chief patron and promoter in rebuilding the Somnath temple. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the then President, attended the inauguration ceremony of the temple not paying any heed to Nehru's repeated requests.

Nehru had his drawbacks too.   Despite his towering personality, he could not influence upon policy making as far as this question of religion was concerned.   As Gopal has pointed out, on the issues of banning of communal political parties and banning of cow slaughter, he supported, but failed to implement; in case of monogamy, he restricted it to Hindu men only and the grant of the right of divorce and inheritance only to Hindu women.   "In his keenness to win the confidence of the Muslim community", says Gopal, "he failed to ensure the equality before law of all Indians and enact a common civil code."[2]

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1.   Madan op.cit. p.757.

2.   Gopal, op.cit.

The next attempt is the study of various constitutional provisions which deal with religious communities and secularism. Before we proceed, it must be mentioned here that the purpose here is not to defend or criticize the constitution of India, but to point out certain anomalies.

If we look at the various constitutional provisions (see appendix), the impression is that of a liberal democratic state, recognizing the rights of minority groups to exist, profess and propagate their beliefs, tries to keep away from or rather neutral in religious matters. In this respect, the form of Indian secularism, in fact, looks more secular than that of any other country. There is every realization on the part of the constitution of the diversity of India and the necessity of a secular state.

The most frequently attacked provisions relate to minority rights. It is argued that the constitution, by allowing the minorities to enjoy these rights (Art. 29-30), actually encourages communalism. The feeling runs that by not permitting the majority community the same right, the constitution discriminates against it. However, a serious look at these articles would reveal that the original design was to protect minority cultures so as to make them not vulnerable enough to be swept away by the dominant culture of the majority. The same argument is given against the

minority commission. "Injustice can be done to individuals or groups, whether Hindu or Muslim. Why should there be a minority commission? Why not a Human Rights Commission, as in Canada, to redress the legitimate of grievances of all aggrieved parties, whether Hindu or Muslim?"[1] While this is a welcome proposal, one should not, at the same time, undermine the relevance of a minority commission. Such provisions do provide a feeling of security to the minorities and without this feeling, there could be no secular democratic polity. A secular state is one where the majority community is duty bound to be respectful to the sensitivities of minority communities.

Another provision that is attacked quite often is Art. 370 relating to the special status of Jammu and Kashmir. The critics feel that such a special status, because of Muslim majority in the state, breeds separatism and communalism,. The argument is a naive one. The historical necessity of such a provision should not be ignored. It is important to keep in mind that this article is the only legal window through which the Republic of India may maintain its territorial link with the state and extend its jurisdiction. To scrap this special provision would mean reverting to the Instruments of Accession of October 1947. And a return to this Instrument would merely offer an opportunity to the secessionists to demand a plebiscite.
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1.   K.R. Malkani, Conduct Dialogue with Open Mind, Mainstream, Nov. 24, 1990, vol.XXIX, no.5.

This is altogether a different debate. However, it is true that, despite its special status, the state of Jammu and Kashimir cannot legally secede from India. "No bill or amendment seeking to make any change in the provisions relating to the relationship of the state with the Union of India, the extent of executive and legislative powers of the state or the provisions of the constitution of India as applicable in relation to the state shall be introduced or moved in either house of the legislature."[1] All the same, it is simplistic to look for the causes of this ongoing crisis in the constitution - it is a political problem and is a part of the same general trend of secessionism, not only in India but also all through out the world.

Till the 42nd (Amendment), 1947, the constitution of India nowhere declared itself to be a secular state. The term secular was included, along with the term socialist, only with the 42nd. Amendment. However, this was added to the Preamble and as our knowledge goes, the Preamble is not justiceable. Secondly, two important and controversial provisions, i.e. Art. 44 and Art. 48 relating to a uniform civil code and banning caw-slaughter are included in the section of Directive Principles of State Policy. These two are controversial on which we will briefly highlight in the following pages. And finally, an essential ingredient of

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1. D.D. Basu, Introduction to the Constitution of India, (Princeton Hall, New Delhi, 1990), p.250.

secularism, that is, to develop the 'scientific temper', 'humanism' which has been included (added after the 42nd. Amendment) in Art.51A i.e. in the fundamental duties.

Indian secularism, as appears from the constitution, is not a secular state in the sense the United States is. In case of the United States, the State neither has its own religion nor does it promote or obstruct any religion. The Indian state treats all religions with equal respect, though it does not have any official religion. The difference is that the Indian state is essentially interventionist in religious matters. It is, in fact, both interventionist as well as non-interventionist. It is interventionist to protect the individual from religion and non-interventionist to allow the religion as well as the individual to be free. "The constitution of India, therefore, assigns two seemingly contradictory roles to the state, of intervention and non-intervention and it is such contradiction which has produced many dilemmas for Indian secularism." [1] The example is Art. 25. Unlike other articles which guarantee fundamental rights, article 25 starts not with the announcement of the right but with the restrictions to which freedom of religion is subject. Freedom of religion is "subject to public order, morality and health" and to "other provisions of Part III". One cannot, therefore, claim to have a right to take a procession of Ganapati or Muharram as a matter of reli-

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1. V.P. Sathe, <u>Secularism : Law and the Constitution of India</u>, New Quest, 78, Nov-Dec.

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gious freedom since such a right is subject to public order and the Police Commissioner may regulate its route, timing or even not allow it if it is likely to inflame communal riots. One cannot, thus, claim human sacrifice as a matter of religious freedom or dedication of girls to God as devdasis in the name of religion. The most significant interventionary power of the state is contained in Clause (b) of article 25 (2), which enables it to reform and the throwing open of Hindu temples to all sections of Hindus. The elaborate nature of article 25 is due to the anxiety of the constitution-makers to provide for State intervention in religion with a view to making religious practice conform to the equalitarian and libertarian philosophy of the Indian Constitution.

There is an ambiguity, however. If article 26 is treated as separate and uncontrolled by article 25, a curious result follows : whereas right to freedom of religion guaranteed by article 25 will be subject to the state's power of throwing open Hindu religious temples to all sections of Hindus, under the right of the religious denominations to manage its affairs in matters of religion, such denominations could claim power to exclude such sections from temple entry. The drafting of article 26 is defective and the courts have held that article 25 and 26 have to be harmoniously constructed so that, whereas a harijan may become entitled to enter a temple by virtue of a law made by the state in pursuance of its power under article 25, a reli-

gious denomination may lay down that only persons belonging to a particular caste would be entitled to come near the deity (Venkataraman Devaru V. Mysore. AIR. 1958 SC 255). "The supreme Court has given such extensive interpretation to this clause that a religious denomination can under the guise of managing the affairs in matters of religion violate other fundamental rights."[1]

The question that arises is: why does the Indian Constitution envisages such an extensive intervention in religious affairs? B.R. Ambedkar [2] in the Constituent Assembly had observed this phenomenon. Hinduism and Islam, two major religions in India, do not confine themselves to spiritual or otherworldly matters, rather cover within their fold the entire social behavior and if any secularism has to exist, it will not be possible until some line is drawn between what was religious and what was temporal. Again, a look at Art 28 would show that there is not total exclusion of religion from state-aided or recognized educational institutions. "The reason for such departure from the American model of secular state lie in Indian history, tradition and close connection between religion and tradition/culture in Indian life."[3] Thus, unlike in America, where a state aided educational institution cannot impart any religious instruc-

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1.   ibid., p.334.

2.   ibid, p.328-29.

3.   ibid., p.330.

tion, in India, such institutions can impart religious instruction, the only caveat being that they should not impose such instruction on an unwilling student.

Further, Art. 27 also does not prescribe total separation between the state and the religious establishments, because a good deal of money is spent by the state for protecting or regulating the religious institutions. Tax exemptions are guaranteed to religious and charitable causes. Special travel concessions are given to pilgrims for attending religious congregation such as Haj and Kumbh-mela.

There is another provision of the constitution, the most maligned one, is the existence of various personal laws and lack of a common civil code. There is uniform law for all matters other than marriage, divorce, adoption, maintenance, inheritance etc. In respect to these matters, the different religious communities are governed by their personal laws. Most of these traditional laws are based on religion and contain unfavorable provisions for women. Women subordination is considered as an essential aspect of the distinct identity of the indigenous groups and every effort is made to preserve it. The Muslim personal law permits a man to marry four wives and to divorce his wife by unilateral oral declaration (Talaq). Neither Hindu woman nor Muslim woman gets inheritance equal to that of her brother. The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, the Hindu Adoption

and Maintenance Act, 1956 were passed by the Parliament inspite of stiff opposition from orthodox Hindus thus in its attempt to modernize and secularize the Hindu personal law. But even such modernized laws are not devoid of religious elements . For example, ceremonies (Solemnization) for a valid Hindu marriage are religious rituals and conformity with them is an essential condition for the validity of a marriage. Under the adoption Act only a Hindu child can be adopted by a Hindu. Although the Hindu succession act gave inheritance rights to a daughter, her share even today is not equal to that of a son.

However, this is a controversial debate and I don't feel competent enough to enter it. Those who support the continuance of status quo are equally firm on their ground. For example, as Iqbal A Ansari argues, "The legitimacy of the case for uniform family laws deriving from a monolithic view of nation state with not only a single polity but also a single culture is questionable. It undermines, rather repudiates the pluralist model of a liberal democratic state where cultural autonomy is ensured to all religious, ethnic and other groups of people constituting the Indian society. The assumption of uniformity of family laws as a sine qua non of nationhood can also be questioned empirically from the example of the US where multiplicity of family laws, especially on divorce, and even criminal laws varying from state to state do not come in the way of the cohesiveness of

the state as a single political union." [1] True, the identity of different cultures should be protected and should not be disturbed. But as we have just pointed out, if such traditions which have their root in deep antiquity are exploitative in nature (as we see the case of women in every religious tradition), then it is something to be worried about. In the name of culture, we cannot go on exploitating a section of society. If our parliament has to modify personal laws for various religious communities, it has to depend upon the clergies of these communities. This makes the words "Sovereign, secular" myths only. In the context of the Shah Bano case, Dr. Zoya Hassan says that the Muslim fundamentalists "cannot appropriate the right to represent the Muslims ... and the bill failed to provide remedial measures for the socio and economic backwardness of Muslim women." [2] Such a phenomenon, as Iqbal A. Ansari argues, is a question of one's right to culture. But right to culture cannot predominate over individual rights for, a cultural group is an aggregate of individual members. In case of conflict, the right of the individual should come first. [3]

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1.   Iqbal A. Ansari, Muslim Women's Rights, EPW, Apr.27, 1991.

2.   Zoya Hassan, Changing Orientation of the State and the Emergence of Majoritariansim in the 1980s Social Scientist, vol.18, Nos. 8-9, Aug-Sept, 1990, p.31.

3.   For a detailed discussion on this theme, please see : Rajiv Bhargava, "The Right to Culture", Mainstream Vol.XXIX, No.25, April 13, 1991 and Veena Das, "Cultural Rights and the definition community", in IDPAD Seminar, ICSSR, LMWOO and NMML, New Delhi, 5-9 March, 1990.

Of late, the Bharatiya Janata Party has become the most vocal of all critics of the secularism as it is understood and practised today in India. It represents the extreme end of the spectrum, directly opposite to that of the left-liberal-Nehruvian idea of secularism. In this part, an attempt will be made at a theoretical understanding of its conceptions of secularism and Hindutva. An effort will also be made at providing a critique of its ideology.

The BJP's concept of secularism is a nostalgic view of the remote past of India with a seemingly naive yet sinister assertion of a pride, through an appeal that is militant in character, of being the oldest surviving civilization in the world. For it, secularism as it is practised today is pseudo and should better be called minorytism for the policy of appeasement of a particular community (the Muslim). "What passes as secularism today, however, is only an euphemism for the policy of Muslim appeasement. It is neither nationalism nor secularism but only a compromise with communalism which demands a high price even for its lip-loyalty to this country."[1] Thus, the attempt is to Indianise the Muslims in India and bring them into the fold of Hindutva. "Secularism is not a one-way street to which it has been reduced in India today. It does not mean perpetual pander-

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1. BJS, Manifesto and Programme, adopted in Bangalore Session, 1955, p.2.

ing to the whims and fancies of a section of people who have set their face against every Indian value and tradition and are in fact committed to destroy them".[1] Secularism could not mean de-Hinduisation.

The BJP's conception, on the contrary, is a positive one; positive because it aims not only at religious tolerance but also at the distillation of common moral values which are to be found in the age old traditions of Hindu culture. Hinduism is projected as a secular and tolerant philosophy since it embraces within its fold different cults and sects, but all swearing by the common Hindu divinities. "It (positive secularism) envisages the coming together of all religious communities bound by a uniform code of conduct, rights and responsibilities .... The distinct identity of other minorities, whether religious or cultural, is bound to be submerged in the longer, hegemonistic code determined by the majority community."[2]

The ideology of the BJP can be examined from three standpoints : first, its understanding of communalism in India; second, the concept of Hindutva and third, its idea of a future secular state. The present thesis will proceed by examining each of the points and then provide critiques wherever needed.

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1. V.P. Bhatia, Editorial, Organiser, June 7, 1987.

2. Sumanta Banerjee, Hindutva : Ideology and Social Psychology, EPW, Jan. 19, 1991.

The ideology of the BJP bases itself on the earnest belief that a Hindu cannot be communal since Hinduism is no religion and the word Hindu does not signify a community. Hinduism is a life-style, a culture. For them, Hindus are a nation, Hindus are a civilization, and it is insulting that such a great civilization should be called a community. It is a Muslim or a Christian who is communal. "Communalism in India is as old as Islam itself. Islam is a monolithic religion which got mixed up with politics from its very inception .... He (Mohammed) became the 'Imam' and 'Khalifa' of Islam at the same time".[1]

However, the thread that knits all their arguments together is the concept of Hindutva. "Hindutva", says Savarkar, "is not a word but a history. Not only the spiritual or religious history of our people as at times it is mistaken to be by being confounded with other cognate term Hinduism, but a history in full. Hinduism is only a derivative, a faction, a part of Hindutva".[2] Unlike an 'ism', Hindutva is not a theory or a code more or less based on spiritual or religious dogma or system. The term Hinduness, Savarkar feels, is a near parallel to Hindutva than Hinduism is. "Hindutva embraces all the departments of thought and

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1.   Balraj Madhok, Indianisation, (S. Chand & CO, New Delhi), p.73.

2.   V. D. Savarkar, Hindutva, (Date, Poona;1942),p.3.

activity of the whole being of a Hindu race."[1]

Thus, a Hindu is a person who regards this land of Bharata Varsha, from the Indus to the Seas as his Father-land as well as 'his Holy-land, and which is the cradle of his religion. There are three fundamental criteria for being a Hindu; first, attachment to the geographical region; second, the social bond or the bond of blood or jati. "No people in the world can more justly claim to get recognized as a social unit than Hindus and perhaps the Jews."[2] The third criterion is culture or Samskriti, "We Hindus are not only a rashtra, a jati, but as a consequence of being both, own a common Samskriti, expressed chiefly and originally through Sanskrit, the real mother tongue of our own race. Everyone who is a Hindu inherits this Samskriti and owes his spiritual being to it as truly as he owes his physical one to the land and blood of his forefathers."[3]

The BJP's idea of a secular state is what it calls a Dharma Rajya. The word Dharma is different from religion. It is derived from the word "Dhr" which means to support or to hold together - Dharayate iti Dharma - that which sustains is Dharma. It holds the society together by enjoining upon everyone to do his duty out of which are born the rights. It is the repository of the nation's soul. Thus,

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1.   ibid., pp.4.

2.   ibid., pp.72-73.

3.   ibid., pp.81.

there is no word about religion in Dharma. It indicates neither a Nidharmi State nor Dharma Nirapekhsata. "For a state can neither be without Dharma nor can it be indifferent to it ..... If the state is Nidharmi, it will be a lawless state, and where is the question of existence of any state?" [1]

The BJP's ideas heavily draw upon the works of the Orientalists. In the writings of the Orientalists, the ancient India is frequently referred to as Hindu India. The argument that communalism in India is only as old as Islam itself is a false reading of history.[2] It is wrong to assume that there was no conflict in ancient India and all the conflicts only originated during the medieval period which is frequently referred to as the Muslim India. If there was any conflict between Hindus and Muslims in medieval India, it was among the ruling upper class and not at the mass level. Such a conflict, moreover, was political rather than religious. "When, therefore, the contemporary historians (i.e. historians of the medieval period) advocate the annihilation of the Hindus, they desire the annihilation of this section of the Hindu community rather than the entire community including the peasantry, the taxes paid by

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1.   Deen Dayal Upadhyay, Integral Humanism, (Navchetan, Delhi; 1965), p.55.

2.   For detail, please see Communalism and the writing of Indian History, by Thapar, Mukhia and Chandra, (People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1987).

whom sustained the historians themselves along with the Hindu rajas and Muslim iqtadars in their luxurious life ..... These conflicts within the ruling class are not reflections of conflicts at the social level."[1]

The definition of Hindu and Hindutva given by Savarkar is exclusive and inclusive as well; it excludes the tribal people from any claim to the territory of India as the real, original inhabitants and at the same time, it tries to bring them into the fold of Hindutva by defining them as Hindus. It aims at expanding the fold of Hinduism to include other separate religions as sects of Hinduism. It is, therefore, a hegemonic concept. By defining Hindus as a social unit and inheritors of a single culture, manifested in Sanskrit language, it even excludes those lower castes which never spoke Sanskrit. Sanskrit has always been the language of the elites, while the lower castes and women spoke Prakrit; later on, Sanskrit was replaced by Persian and then by English. Thus, the concept of Hindutva is the result of a false reading of history and underlines the ideological character of Hinduism which we will discuss later.

The word Dharma has been used in a dual sense; Dharma as law and Dharma as religion. The word Dharma is 'roughly' being used to denote religion since there is no equivalent word for religion in any of the Indian languages. Dharma Nirapekhsata and ..~~ ~~ _Nidharmi_ ~ never mean indifference to

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1. Mukhia, ibid., pp.27

ᴏ̴ᴇ̴ law—ᴃ or lawlessness. This, in short, is a conceptual deception. ·

The concept of Dharma is regarded as supreme; it is the sovereign. "Neither the people, nor the legislature is sovereign. They do not have the right to act against Dharma." [1] The essential characteristics of Dharma is that it is above any public opinion and the majority is not necessarily aware of it. "Of the forty-five million people in India, even if all but one opt for something which is against Dharma, even then this does not become truth. On the other hand, even if a person stands for something which is according Dharma, that constitutes truth because truth resides with Dharma. It is the duty of this one person that he tread the path of truth and change them." [2]

No further argument is needed for the above paragraph is self expressive of the fascistic basis of the BJP's ideology. "It is a radical programme, but a radicalism of the extreme right, offering a totalitarian answer to the crisis of state legitimacy". [3] D.E. Smith [4] sums up the startling similarities between the ideology of fascism and the ideology of the BJP - the leader principle, the doctrine

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1. Upadhyay, op. cit, p.55.

2. ibid., p.58.

3. Dilip Simeon, Whither India, Mainstream, November 10, 1990.

4. D.E. Smith, op. cit, p.468.

of racial cultural superiority, ultra-nationalism infused with religious idealism, the use of symbol of past greatness, the emphasis on national solidarity, the exclusion of religious or ethnic minorities from the nation-concept - these are highly reminiscent of fascist movement.

The similarity with fascism becomes even more obvious when one studies Hitler and the character of the fascist movement. Hitler believed that the German empire "could be saved only if the master race, the Germans reasserted their old absolute authority."[1]   In this context, one is reminded of Hitler writing in Mein Kampf : "All the great civilizations of the past became decadent because the originally creative race died out, as a result of contamination of the blood."[2]   Further, "whenever Aryans have mingled their blood with that of an inferior race the result has been the down fall the people who were the standard-bearers of a higher culture."[3] Shirer characterizes the approach of the National Socialist German Worker's Party : " inflammatory oratory and a radical, catchcall programme, important as they were for a fledgling party out to attract attention and recruit mass support .... a few simple ideas, that is, that he (Hitler) could ceaselessly hammer through their (the people's) skulls - symbols that could win their faith ... and acts of

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1.   William L. Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, (Fawcett Crest, New York; 1989), p.42.

2.   Adolf Hitler, Mein Kanpf, (Jaico, Bombay; 1988), p.242.

3.   ibid., p.240.

violence and terror, which if successful, would attract adherents and give them a sense of power over the weak.[1] The social bases of both the parties are the middle-class; both try to project the majority community as being side-lined and the minority as traitors; both aim at mobilizing the people by sparking off a hysteria.

Such a glorification of the ancient past of India, Prof. Romila Thapar points out, is rooted in a false perception of history which started by the Orientalists and Indologists as a reaction against the British utilitarians. The utilitarians represented by James Mill, were convinced that the coming of the British to India was a god-send as British administration and legislation would end the backwardness in India. Mill was severely critical of Hindu culture and described it as being backward, inimical to progress and irrational. But the most significant aspect of Mill's "History of British India" was that in a sense it laid the foundation of Indian history and thus provided the historical justification for the two-nation theory. He was, in fact, the first historian to develop the thesis of dividing Indian history into three periods which he called Hindu civilization, Muslim civilization and British civilization.

The Orientalists, alienated from their own society and suspicious of the changes going on in Europe as a result of

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1. Shiver, op.cit, p.69-70

industrialisation, searched for utopias elsewhere, and for many those were in the ancient cultures of the Orient. An important representative of this school was Max Muller. "The writings of such Orientalists influenced not only Indian Circles in as much as many of the religious and social reform movements of the nineteenth century laid stress on vedic culture as the root of the Indian tradition and made it the ideal, for example, the Araya Samaji; some aspects of European thinking were also influenced as is evident from movements as diverse as the Romantic movement in European literature and racist doctrines of nineteenth - century Europe. The racist philosopher par excellence, Gobineau, evolved many of his ideas on the basis of the 'Aryan race' and his understanding of the caste system in India. The ultimate culmination of such thinking was the rise of fascism in Germany in the twentieth century."[1]

Contrasting Hindutva with Hinduism Ashis Nandy says, "Speaking pessimistically, Hindutva will be the end of Hinduism. Hinduism is the faith by which a majority of Indians still live. Hindutva is the ideology of a part of the upper-caste, lower-middle class Indian, though it has now spread to large parts of the urban middle classes. The ideology is an attack on Hinduism and an attempt to protect the flanks of a minority consciousness which the democratic

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1.   Thapar, op. cit. p.3-4.

process is threatening to corner."[1] Such a contrast is a natural consequence of Nandy's earlier contrast between religion as a faith and religion as an ideology.[2] It is the religion as an ideology that breeds communalism. Hindutva is Hinduism in its ideological form and not Hinduism as a faith. "Hindutva is an ideology for those whose Hinduism has worn off. Hindutva is built on the nineteenth century reformed Hinduism."[3]

Nandy is also equally pessimistic about the spread of this ideology of Hindutva. It cannot spread easily beyond the boundaries of urban, semi-westernized Indian. It cannot penetrate southern India where Hinduism is more resilient, where it is more difficult to project on to the Muslim the feared and unacceptable parts of one's own self. Hindutva cannot survive for long even in rural north India where Hinduism is more self-confident and the citizens have not been brain-washed by the media to speak only the language of the state. Nor can it survive where Hindus are willing to be themselves-proudly backward, superstitious, sanatanis, rooted firmly in their svadharma and svabhava.

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1.   Ashis Nandy, Hinduism versus Hindutva, The Times of India, February 18, 1991.

2.   Ashis Nandy, The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance, in Veena Das ed. Mirrors of violence, (Oxford, Delhi; 1990), p.70.

3.   Nandy, op.cit.

Giving an analysis from the point of view of a psycho-analyst and using Adorno's characterisation of an authoritarian personality and Eric Fromm's escape from freedom, Nandy tries to explain the phenomenon of India fascism.[1] The socially uprooted western man after the industrial revolution, panicked at his own new-found freedom and loss of old-style faith, and reacted with what Fromm has called escape from freedom, seeking a new security in authoritarian systems. "What technology and science did to the West, political and social change is now doing to India. It has severed a large number of people from their social roots and shaken their faith in the traditional system without offering them new values which may help contain their economic, social and psychological marginality., This psychologically uprooted, floating population is looking for inner and outer authorities with whom it could identify to negate its sense of insignificance and anomie." [2] Thus, he feels, the ultra-Hindu groups are aiming at improving the Hindus socially, morally, and psychologically and this improvement is invariably defined according to the values thrown up by the experience of the 'Hindu defeat' in the hands of the non-Hindus. The glorification of affectlessness and emotional withdrawal in the greater Sanskriti culture provides the importance of duty and performance and the dispassionate

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1.   See Ashis Nandy, <u>At the Edge of Psychology</u>. (Oxford, New Delhi; 1980).

2.   Nandy, ibid, p.104.

ruthlessness of 'Mahabharata' and 'Arthashastra' provides a paradigm of action. Further, in the glorification of the 'motherland, mother and mother-tongue', Nandy finds the Oedipus complex of the Indian fascist.

The votaries of Hindutva use Hinduism and Hindu culture to legitimise their propaganda. They project Hindu culture as a tolerant, pluralistic and democratic one. This is mystifying the past, which, as we have noticed in Thapar, began in the nineteenth century writings of history. Hinduism, though philosophically open, is socially closed. It is a well-known fact that the Hindu social order is the most inegalitarian and grossly unfair to those at the bottom of hierarchy. Even to D.E. Smith who finds the pluralist Indian culture a fertile ground for the growth of secularism, there are principles which go against secularism. Thus, to quote him: "The principle of equality of all before the law finds no support in ancient Indian thought and practice. This part of the Hindu tradition is a complete negation of secular principles."[1]

One should not go by the fact that there are different sects in Hinduism which leads to a seemingly genuine acceptance of differences - of different paths of attaining the spiritual goal and the Indian psyche is open to differences and is not shocked by it. "The Indian ethos has the advan-

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1.   D.E. Smith, op.cit, p.61.

tage of allowing protest movements to settle down as distinctive caste or community groups without major social and philosophical schisms, but they do not lead to the creation of a world of shared goals. The oft repeated claim to religious tolerance as a unique characteristic of the Indian ethos is at least partly a myth, a benevolent myth, but a myth all the same."[1] The brahmanical tradition of social integration was well established. It operated through the varna ideology. The alien and marginal peoples were incorporated into the network of castes without doing any damage to their internal kin-structure, customs,belief systems, etc., and they attained a status commensurate with their socio-economic condition. Thus the brahmanical paradigm of social integration was flexible enough to allow the absorption of influential chieftainly or priestly lineages tribal origins into kshatriya and brahmana castes, but the majority of the tribal groups being economically and culturally backward inflated the rank of the sudras and in early medieval times the disparities in certain regions were so steep that the concept of a Panchama (fifth) varna or varnstaras (outcastes) who were lower than the sudras were floated.[2]

A very much similar argument is also presented by Sudipta Kaviraj. The pluralism in Indian culture, he feels,

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1. M.S. Gore, Seculaism and Equal regard for all religious in Chakravarty ed. op. cit. p.160.

2. Suvira Jaiswal, Semitising Hinduism : Chanding Paradigms of Brahmanical Integration, Social Scientist, vol.19, No.12, December 1991, p.25.

represents a powerless intolerance. Thus, he says, " ....
outsider groups could be accommodated into this structure by
making room - in most cases very unwillingly and grudgingly
for a circle of their own. Groups with other religious
beliefs, like Muslims or Christians were incorporated into
the structure this way : so that it is true that the Hindu
and Muslim (or other religious groups) lived in neighbourli-
ness for long periods, but the implication that they re-
velled in social intermixing is unwarranted."[1] Moreover,
tolerance is a negative word. There is every doubt about a
positive attitude of respect in Indian culture. One toler-
ates because one cannot help the existence of something.

Culture is not something static, rather it is like a
flow of river that acquires in its journey, elements from
other cultures . The attempt of the BJP is to ignore the
immediate history of India thus ignoring the contributions
of the Moguls, the Turks, the Greeks to the Indian art and
architecture which have only enriched the latter. The
ideologues of the BJP often also give the example of Indo-
nesia which, despite being an Islamic country, respects the
symbols like Rama. But one wonders how such symbols went
to Indonesia - through cultural 'interaction, course.
Similarly, many elements of the ancient Hindu culture have
migrated to far east. This should serve as a point for the

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1. Sudipta Kaviraj, On the Discourse of Secularism, in Chakra-
   varty ed. op. cit., p.189.

BJP's intellectuals to accept the elements of Muslim culture which have migrated to India in a very much similar fashion. If Indonesia could respect Rama, why could not India respect Mohammed?

Finally, we will end up with what Balraj Madhok says - indianising the Muslims. Thus, he doubts the patriotism of Muslims. "Indianisation, therefore, is nothing but the inculcation of a strong sense of nationalism in all Indians."[1] Or to quote L.K. Advani, "........ if there is an Arya Samaji Hindu, a Sanatani Hindu, a Jain Hindu, why cannot there be a Mohammadi Hindu or a Christian Hindu ?"[2] But what about those who look up to the west as the land of salvation, praise the western culture and downgrade Indian culture? Perhaps, this way of arguing is not flawless. Let us argue from the opposite angle: What is Patriotism? Does the poor, illiterate peasant in the countryside, whether a Hindu or a Muslim, know anything about nation, nationalism and patriotism? Are we calling these people traitors? Their world is limited to their village or at best, to the city nearest to their village, and they do not understand a word of patriotism or nationalism. Does patriotism requires certificates from political and religious leaders? Patriot- ism, stripped of rhetoric is what a citizen does for his

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1. Madhok, op. cit, p.18.

2. L.K. Advani, quoted in Singhal, Some Thoughts for Sardesai and Malkani, <u>Mainstream</u>, October 6, 1990, p.18.

country. Any citizen who lives and dies in this country and works and spends his earnings in this country needs no certificate about his patriotic credentials. Moreover, the BJP identifies patriotism with Hindu nationalism. One has to repudiate its idea of patriotism and nationalism altogether before arguing if the Muslims in India are patriots or not. By identifying Hindu-Psyche with Indian nationalism, they believe that only the Hindus - and that also the upper castes - had sacrificed during the freedom movement. This again bolsters up their claim to superiority over others. "The history of the Sikh wars against the British, the Muslim Wahabi revolts and the succession of tribal insurgences against colonial rule in the 19th century are conveniently ignored."[1]

To conclude the BJP's understanding and explanation do not go beyond the commonsense understanding we discussed at the beginning of the second chapter. It only makes a selective use of history to support its arguments for purely political gain. But a serious thought to it is necessary keeping in view the rapidity with which it has gained ground in Indian political scenario recently.

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1. Sumenta Banerjee, op. cit.

CHAPTER FOUR

EXPLAINING THE CRISIS

In the preceding chapter, we have discussed the be Nehruvian idea of secularism, the constitutional provisions regarding secularism and the Bharatiya Janata Party's conception of secularism and Hindutva which has been, of late, an ardent critic of the official secularism as it is practised in India. We have also attempted at providing a critique of the BJP's critique.

The purpose in the present chapter is to attempt at a critique of the secularism in India in relation to state policies. We will begin with the question: Has secularism failed in India? and then proceed on taking up the issues of modernization,, culture and cultural policy of the India sate, the issue of language etc. This chapter will primarily be a review of literature though an effort will be made to provide a critique of the existing literature.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The part one deals with the question of crisis of secularism in India, whether it has failed and, if it has the reasons for its failure. The second part deals with the cultural policy of the Indian state which has been responsible for the failure of secularism and the promotion of hegemony by one group over another.

The first question to begin with, thus, is that whether secularism in India has been a success or a failure. This is, in fact, a relative issue; secularism has succeeded in some fields while in some others, it has not. It is difficult to have a precise measure of the impact 'secularization' has in any society. In their manners and dresses, people may appear more secular not observing, for example, the minute details like not shaving on a the particular day of a week, not making journey on a particular day etc. as a result of the pressure set up by urban life, but at the same time, they may be more communal and more intolerant in their outlook. There are certain phenomena which were once considered to be religious affairs but which today are valued for their artistic qualities and it is a matter of debate whether these should be called secular or not. We can take the example of Odissi dance which was once used to be performed in temples and which, in fact, still retains a religious theme. But this dance form is today valued more for the finesse with which it is performed than for its' religious theme. We also can take the example of oath-taking by the witnesses in the courts by touching religious scriptures. This is an instance of religious activity since the court banks upon the witnesses' religious faith to speak the truth. But, today, such an activity is performed more as a formality and in fact, the witnesses are known to lie even after touching

the sacred texts. Thus, the survival of the religious theme in Odissi and this act of oath-taking are institutionalized and no more imply any religious activity.

Nevertheless, the general feeling runs that secularism has not been able to break much ice in India. Looking at the frequently recurring riots, " one-and-a half riots a day"[1], one wonders, if secularism in India could be said to have succeeded. But this question could be put in another way: Has secularism succeeded anywhere in the world, especially in the West which we, in India, consider to be the most secular of all societies? In fact, the recent racial riots in the United sates of America forces one to rethink the whole notion of the secular West. " In the post-colonial societies, when religion in polities or politics is discussed, there is an invisible reference point. The reference point is the Western man. Not the Western Man in reality or the Western Man of history, but the Western Man as the defeated civilizations in this part of the world have constructed him."[2]

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1. Ashis Nandy, in the seminar on secularism, Cross Fire India Today, May 15,1991,p.121.

2. Ashis Nandy, The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance, in Veena Das ed. Mirrors of Violence. p. 81.

A liberal democracy like the United States left aside, one wonders if the Marxist understanding in any way helped the erstwhile communist societies to fight ethnic conflicts. The Soviet Union broke up and there is a full scale revival of Islam in the Muslim dominated republics of Central Asia. Even in England, the country which we have believed to be secular, is not free of such conflicts. Then, what is the difference between India and the West? One is sure that such a racial riot could not have taken place in the United States unless there existed a bitter racial feeling. Thus, the problem of ethnicity is common to every country, not only to India or South Asia, but also to the West. The difference that one can contemplate is that every country experiences conflicts peculiar to its own mode of social organization. If it is colour in the United States, it is the national ties in England, and it is religion in India. But conflicts are there based upon wrong and irrational perceptions of one another. Such divisions based on colour, religion, language and ethnicity indicate the search for the nearest identity, the simplest way of defining oneself and one's loyalty. The fact that the similarities between a poor Hindu and a poor Muslim is more than the similarities between a poor Hindu and a rich Hindu is ignored; the differences between two communities are over-emphasized and the similarities that are there, cutting across religious barriers, are undermined.

This is not, however, to avoid the issue, but to account for it. The fact that we have tried to be secular or have declared ourselves so, but failed , deserves an examination on its own right. The temptation to seek explanations is very obsessive, to point out at something concrete as the cause of such conflicts. But arriving at a conclusion is not easy. This temptation often leads us to softer options, to erronous conclusions. And we ignore the real undercurrent in the bargain. Therefore, the temptation to arrive at instant conclusions has to be resisted and the arguments have to be laid bare.

Elsewhere, we have argued that secularism in India is an ideology, an ideology of the Indian state as a result of both internal and external compulsions. Internally, it is a practical necessity in a multi-religious society and politically expedient for the ruling elite to gain legitimacy. Externally it is for the international image in relation to other newly independent countries in South Asia, Pakistan in particular. Thus, the Indian state has accepted this secular ideology to counter any allegation from within and without the country. Secularism is a necessary corollary of being democratic, though the necessity of formally including it in the constitution was felt quite late in the seventies.

There is an important trend in Social Science research on secularism in India, that is, the treatment of secularism as purely a western concept not suitable to

Indian realities. ".... secularism as an ideology has emerged from the dialectic of modern science and protestantism, not from a simple repudiation of religion and the rise of rationalism, Even the Enlightenment -its English and German versions in particular- was not against religion as such but against revealed religions or a transcendental justification of religion.....models of modernization, however, prescribe the transfer of secularism to non-western societies without regard for the character of their religious traditions or for the gifts that these might have to offer. Such transfers are themselves phenomena of the modern secularized world : In tradition or tradition-haunted societies they can only mean conversion and the loss of one's culture, and if you like, the loss of one's soul..... what is called for is translation; mere transfer will not do. " [1] Nandy also makes a very much similar contention when he says " secularism has little to say about cultures. It is definitely ethnophobic and frequently ethnocidal...."[2] He begins by making a distinction between religion as-a-faith by which the multitude lives and religion-as-an-ideology and says that the

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1.   T.N. Madan, Secularism in its Place, The Journal of Asian Studies, Vol,. 46, Number 4, Nov. 1987, p. 754.

2.   Nandy,op. cit. p. 71.

secular ideology is essentially intended to counter religion-as-an-ideology. But there is not much of a difference between the religious ideology and the secular ideology of the state with the citizens exposed to both equally without any protection. "Certainly in India, the idea of nation-building, scientific growth, security, modernization and development have become points of a left-handed technology with clear touch of religiosity-a modern technology of tantra with a built-in code of violence."[1] And the way out of this impasse, he says, ".....instead of trying to build religious tolerance on the good faith or conscience of a small group of de-ethnicized, middle-class politicians, bureaucrats and intellectuals, a far more serious venture would be to explore the philosophy of the symbolism and the theology of tolerance in the various faiths of the citizens and hope that the state systems in South Asia may learn something about religious tolerance from everyday Hindusims, Islam, Buddhism and /or Sikhism, rather than wish that ordinary Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and Sikhs will learn tolerance from the various fashionable secular theories of statecraft."[2]

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1.   Ibid, 80.

2.   Ibid, 86.

Both Nandy and Madan agree that secularism is a Western concept and therefore, not applicable in India. To Madan, the concept has to be translated : mere transfer will not do. To Nandy, the state systems could learn about religious tolerance from everyday Hinduism, Islam etc. But their theses leave a host of questions unanswered. The questions are : how are these internal value systems to be identified? How are the conflicts between different value systems to be resolved? How are different interpretations of internal values to be assessed ? We have examples of such attempts in our history like the Sufi movement. But this movement, in fact, failed to have any large-scale impact.

There is certainly an element of truth in Nandy's thesis. Secularism has to develop from below and should not be imposed form above. Nevertheless. it is not enough to discard secularism as a western concept. Even as imposed from above, the Indian state has not been able to do it properly. There is a startling lack of political will on the part of those who control the state apparatus. The political actors have deliberately disturbed the communal harmony for petty electoral gains. The explanation is as simple as that. For, a politician, who has the necessary resources, it is not very difficult on his part to spark off a riot for electoral purposes. A riot disturbs the harmony and the faith the various communities have on one another and for a long time, they continue to look upon

one another with suspicion. Where does, then, the question of western or indigenous concepts come in ? Let us forget the word 'secularism' itself and use the term 'harmony' instead. Now, what our indigenous culture has got to do with this situation, once that the riot has taken place and the harmony has been disturbed ? But what is more is that such politicians escape the clutch of law and continue to sit in the assembly ! Even more disgusting is the fact that our political parties, avowing democracy and secularism as their ideals, allow such politicians to contest elections ! In a country like India, where people are not free to express their political right of voting, we cannot expect something like secularism to succeed. Democratisation, therefore, has to accompany secularisation of the society. Secularism will remain an ideal if democratisation is not complete.

Secularism not only means a mode of living together, but also something opposed to obscurantism, supernatural and fideistic beliefs. We have already discussed this in the second chapter. But this needs mentioning again in the present context. What Nandy means by the everyday folks, are the poor, illiterate masses in the countryside. These people irrespective of their religion, share a similar world-view which is a bond stronger than the scriptural religion about which they have very little knowledge. Thus, though secularism as a mode of living together may be present as a practical necessity of interdependence and

proximity of their life conditions, their world-view is full of myths, supernatural beliefs .. Dissociating such beliefs is another task of secularism which we have already discussed in the second chapter. A person, whose child falls ill, goes to the village deity instead of going to a doctor. The reason is that there is no doctor; there is no medicine. Let us assume that there is a doctor who in capable of curing diseases. Then, slowly people's faith will be displaced from their deities to the doctor. Again, one wonders, where does the question of western concept enter? It is only a question of providing the people with their bare necessities and guaranteeing them a secured life free of diseases and calamities. The question of culture does not come here.

It is also wrong to think that secularism is an imported concept; it is wishful to seek explanation for the crisis of secularism in this way. Instead of saying that secularism has been imposed, we should rather say that we have been "influenced " (this should be noted) by the West. There is nothing unnatural or artificial in secularism. Our long association with the West during the days of colonialism has influenced our society.

Even before secularism was accepted as an ideal of independent India, there were already many movements aimed at reforming the society and secularizing it. Only the word secularism was not used (for , there is no equivalent term for it in any Indian language) yet the

character of such movements were undoubtedly secular. In this sense, secularism has not been imposed. The process of secularization has been going on accompanied by the process of desecularisation. Both the processes go on simultaneously. We have already discussed it in the second part of the first chapter. For example, while people may become more secular in their outlooks as far as religious belief is concerned, they may, on the contrary, become more communal and intolerant as far as perceptions about other communities are concerned. This latter phenomenon has nothing to do with a borrowed or an indigenous concept. It is only a competition for resources, both political and economic, where people come to form groups to fight for these resources.

Secularism has been accepted as the ideology of the state and there is nothing wrong in it. It is a practical necessity. The questions that should be raised are : whether there is a proper separation of state and religion; whether the constitution leaves enough scope for the state to interfere in religious affairs and for religions to interfere in state affairs. This has again nothing to do with a borrowed ideology.

But what is important is that whether the state ideology comes in conflict with the process of secularization that is going on independently. To put this question differently: does the state ideology and practice disturb the secularization process in the society? For one thing,

the state has not attempted at creating a scientific temper among the masses despite the fact that it has vast resources at its disposal (for example, the electronic media). The other-wordly beliefs of the people are left undisturbed, rather augmented by a lack of will to provide the masses with the equipments that would displace their faiths form supernatural deities to secular and this-worldly things (like medicine, doctor, etc.) On the other hand, the electoral politics of democracy, the individual politi- cal actors and political parties - all have helped to disturb this communal amity among the masses. This is where the state should be criticized. It is not the failure of an ideology; it is rather the failure of the state to have the courage and will to implement its meas- ures.

Social theory has to take cognizance of the necessity of providing a practical solution to a problem, instead of dwelling at the level of abstraction. Nandy's and also Madan's theses do not provide such a solution. In fact, the issue here is not at all of a borrowed concept or on indigenous concept. The issue here is the inculcation of a temper, scientific and rational, among the masses to the extent that it can make for a more meaningful life for the masses and not to seek wrong solutions for their predica- ments. This has to be done by demonstration : in the preceding paragraph we have pitted the doctor against the deities
dit . By demonstrating scientific phenomena, for example,

how natural calamities occur and providing the masses with the necessary measures to avoid loss of life and property, their beliefs can be rationalized thus purging such beliefs off the unwanted elements. Education and media, both have a great role to play in this respect. We should not aim at destroying the beliefs of the masses; such a thing will lead to alienating them. We should try to rationalize their beliefs so that they will not be dependent upon supernatural deities rather should try to change their own conditions by themselves. A serious effort and will is needed on the part of the government bureaucracy, politicians, social workers and even the intellectuals.

The tolerance in the mass culture that Nandy talks of is, in fact, devoid of any positive attitude of respect. It is difficult to assess what the situation was in the past. But the masses have certainly learnt to live together out of practical necessity. Tolerance is not the word to define secularism; one tolerates since one cannot help the existence of something. But tolerance does not indicate respect. The latter is a positive attitude while tolerance is a negative one. We can only examine the current situation in India. Every communal riot is an indication of lack of respect for one another among the communities and the break down of the bond of toleration. A riot is a situation when the communities decide no longer to tolerate one another. Again after the riot, the tolerance comes back and life goes on with all the suspicion, ready to take the form of hatred

and animosity at the slightest indication. A Hindu needs a Muslim's service and vice versa. So, they tolerate each other for, without this toleration, life would be difficult. Both Hindu and Muslim look upon each other as unwanted entities but, nevertheless, both have realized that neither can drive out the other from the locality. Yet, they share a similar world-view having similar supernatural beliefs which are the result of their economic condition, lack of education etc. Even if they speak the same dialect, there is a mutual suspicion running undercurrent; the Muslim, being conscious of his numerical minority after the partition and the Hindu being unable to forgive the Muslim for the partition.

We should not mistake the presence of secularism by the fact that (as Bookman's thesis shows) the masses share a common world-view. This common world-view has nothing to do with a riotous situation. Even after a riot, the masses irrespective of their religion continue to pray common deities. They have a faith on such deities; they pray and offer sacrifices for their own benefit, that is, for the benefit of their family and their cattle. Despite this fact, they still suspect each other.

Here, it needs emphasizing again that the situation is different among the educated elite. The educated elites see themselves as inheritors of different civilizations altogether which the masses do not. This point has been already discussed in the second chapter and we need not go further.

More attention could be given to the cultural policy of the Indian State or to the policy of the Indian state that has affected the cultural identity of the people. Discussing the cultural policy in the new states, Mckim Marriot says, "The intricate civilization of India, its higher contents already undergoing widened dissemination to an enlarged elite, had now to be reshaped into a standard cultural package suitable for rapid distribution to each member of a massive electorate .... A high degree of selectivity had thus to be applied to the vast corpus of Indian culture. The most prominent, universal, and accessible, but not necessarily the most sacred or authoritative, items were often chosen for emphasis by political leaders, publishers and later by educators and officials. With established government and political competition focused as a single all-Indian centre and at the capitals of internally heterogeneous British Indian provinces, regional and local variants in all spheres of culture tended to be neglected in the search for the widest possible commonalities."[1]

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1. McKin Marriot, _Cultural Policy in the New States_, in Clifford Geertz ed. _Old Societies and New States_, p.32

The Indian state, thus, carefully selected the elements of Indian culture that have to be emphasised. The figures of Ashoka and Akbar were eulogized - the former stood for non-violence and the latter for communal harmony. The text-books on history for school children tell the story of Akbar who, despite being a Muslim, married a Hindu princess, had several Hindu colleagues in his court and professed a new religion by taking the best elements from different religious. Akbar stands out as a secular figure in the whole of medieval India. Such an approach has its negative consequences as well. For it divides the medieval Indian history to the era of Akbar , the era of secularism and the era of others, especially that of Aurongzab, the era of Islamic dominance. And in our understanding we look upon Aurangzeb as the bigot, who sacrificed politics to religion "The communal historian can also afford to shower praises on Akbar's liberalism, for having done that he would be free to condemn every other ruler with the charge of dogmatism. To eulogize Akbar as a 'secular' and 'national' ruler is firstly unhistorical, for the medieval Indian state (or any other medieval state, for that matter) could not be secular, for the concept of the secular state is a very modern concept; ...... secondly, such an approach defeats its own purpose by implying that barring the fifty years of Akbar's reign, the state during the other six-and-a-half centuries was nonsecular and hence theocratic and therefore Akbar's

reign was a more chance, an aberration."[1] Thus, "National-
ist historiography, the academic arm of this ideology,"
says Kaviraj, festered such misunderstanding by choosing
selective phases of history and truly remarkable but untypi-
cal individuals, they conveyed a false sense of something
like modern secularism having been achieved in the precolo-
nial past, disrupted only by the evil designs of the coloni-
al administration."[2]

In India, governmental support has been given gener-
ously to a major centre of Islamic studies at the Aligarh
University, to the restoration of the Hindu temple of Siva
at Somnath, and to dozens of other religiously oriented
projects. National and State calendars of holidays include
not only such secular occasions as Independence Day, Repub-
lic Day and Gandhi's Birthday, but also the birthdays of
Krishna, Siva, Buddha, Mohammed, Jesus and Guru Nanak. In
the name of "cultural education" school text books try to
incorporate materials on the beliefs and leading figures of
all the religions of India, just as cultural activity pro-
grammes at schools attempt to teach children of all faiths

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1.   Harbans Mukhia, Communalism and the writing on
     Indian History, by Thapar, Chandra and Mukhia, p.29.

2.   Kaviraj ,op. cit,. p. 194-95

the techniques of worship appropriate for the many religious festivals. The contents of many religions are incorporated into the new national civilization not because of their inherent spiritual authority, but because they are high parts of an existent national 'cultural' mosaic. "Thus, orthodoxy withers, while a kind of religious revival blossoms. In the eyes of the world, the Indian device of cultural pluralism, conceived internally as an agnostic policy and probably secularizing in the large-term effects, nevertheless preserves for India a distinctly spiritual aura."[1]

The cultural policy of the Indian state, feels Sudipta Kaviraj, has only helped the secular discourse to remain within the orbit of the English speaking elite and has completely ignored the necessity of the stratified nature of discourse formation. For example, the colonial policy of education was left undisturbed. "For the way the state apparatus and directive mechanisms are run, it appears that the right to speak in the name of the country belongs to this elite alone, the fraudulent inheritors of Nehru. As a result, the rationalist, liberal, universalist, secular, humanist view of the social world

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1. Marriot, op. cit, p. 37.

gets pronounced in wrong accents, in the wrong language ..... it goes without saying that the nationalist-modernist discourse cannot even argue in this context, let alone win it, unless it does so from within the same discursive space of the vernaculars, the spontaneous inheritance of the people."[1] Thus, he concludes, "secular forces should reenact a second, and different and vernacular discovery of India. "[2]

Clifford Geertz, on the other hand, explains the phenomenon by attributing the crisis to the effect of modernization. For him, modernization in initial periods quickens the primordial sentiments and loyalties of the people. "Thus, it is the very process of the formation of a sovereign civil state that, among other things, stimulates sentiments of parochialism, communalism, socialism, and so on, because it introduces into society a valuable new prize over which to fight and a frightening new force with which to contend."[3] So, to Geertz, it is the new prize introduced to

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1. Sudipta Kaviraj , On the Discourse of Secularism, in Bidyat Chakravarty ed. p. 202.

2. Ibid, P. 207.

3. Geertz, op. cit, p. 120.

the society through the process of modernization and demo-
cratisation over which these groups are fighting. Going
little away from what Geertz has contemplated, one could
explain the phenomenon in the following way: with independ-
ence and formation of a democratic political system, new
avenues have been opened for acquiring power. People, thus,
rally around their primordial loyalties to acquire this
political and economic power. The process of democratisa-
tion has, therefore, intensified these primordial sentiments
of the people. It is but natural that people would turn to
their immediate environment.

This phenomenon of primordial sentiments and ethnic
assertion could be analyzed from a different angle. This
also requires a rethinking of the whole idea of a multi-
ethnic nation-state. If looked from this point, such a
concept is fast losing importance. There are cultural
assertions of ethnic groups all over the world and the
nation-states are increasingly finding it difficult to
contain such movements. For one thing, the nation-state
system itself breeds this conflict. In India, the state has
allowed and in fact, encouraged the domination by a particu-
lar region, a particular culture and a particular language.
The effort of the state to pursue the policy of making Hindi
the national language is but naturally resisted by the South
Indian States. Tamil, for example has got a rich heritage
whose antiquity can be traced back to the days when Sanskrit
originated. "In pursuing the policy of promoting Hindi as

the national language the processes of exclusivism and expansionism are at work, in the process manufacturing outsiders and insiders in the socio-cultural context. Once again, the effort is to create a cultural mainstream constituted by the Hindi speaking populace."[1]

Such linguistic hegemony is to be found not only in case of Hindi in relation to other non-Hindi languages but also within the Hindi speaking areas as well as within the areas where other languages are being spoken. The administrative division of the country into linguistic states has resulted in the extinction or near extinction of many languages which have been named dialects. For example, the hegemony of Hindi is to be found over many north Indian languages like Maithili, Bhojpuri etc. The case of the tribals is even worse. They have been distributed in different states, especially those residing in the Chotnagpur area as a result of which they are forced to learn the official languages of different states. "Thus, a substantial number of Indians lose their linguistic-cultural identity. While others whose mother-tongue belongs to one of the official languages define and reinforce their identity in linguistic

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1.   T.K. Oommen, State and Society in India : Studies in Nation-Building , (Sage, New Delhi; 1990) , p. 59.

terms."[1] T.K. Oommen calls it 'culturocide' by which Hindi expansionism marginalises and even threatens the very existence of numerous languages which are defined as its dialects. This is true of the official languages of different states also where a sort of forcible cultural unification is taking place by representing the official language as the language of the culture of that state and marginalising what is called dialects. A case in point is the Sambalpuri dialect in Orissa which today faces the threat of extinction and in turn, has started resisting by a secessionist demand from Orissa. To put the phenomenon in points:

<u>Four types of linguistic – cultural hegemony</u> :

1. Hindi – Non-Hindi (including other official languages).

2. Hindi – the dialects of Hindi (e.g. maithili, Bhojpuri etc.)

3. Other official languages – their dialects (Oriya – Sambalpuri)

4. Other official languages – tribal languages.

The purpose of discussing the language issue is to expose how the state policy is encouraging domination and in consequence, ethnic-cultural assertion. The same issue, that is language, was an important reason for discontentment among the breakaway republics in the erstwhile Soviet union,

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1. Ibid, p. 59.

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especially among the Baltic Republics. In Sri Lanka, it is the Tamils who are involved in a secessionist movement. In Punjab, alongwith sceessianist attempts, there has been a reassertion of Punjabi language in Gurmukhi script and Hindi has been banned by the terrorist organisations. In Maharastra, there is a resurgence of Marathi language led by the Shiv Seva. In such a scenario, one wonders what is the need of a national language? The Indian state in its attempt to emphasise the unity in diversity (again an official ideology) has in fact, emphasised the aspect of unity more at the cost of diversity. While discussing these crises in India, one often forgets the fact that India is essentially a subcontinent, like that of Europe. Whereas in Europe the different nations owe the origin of their cultures to a single civilization (e.g. the Roman Script), they are different nations. In India, we are trying to rule a continent like Europe under the banner of a single nation. Its repercussion in the cultural millieus have to be accepted.

We can accept the fact than get terrified at such assertions. We can stop overemphasizing the unity while giving the diversity its due place. Even if we cannot, at this stage, imagine such diversities to form into separate nations as we find in Europe, but that may not be a remote possibility. "Given the fact that India is a multi-national State, it is but natural that the different nationalities would be eager to assert their cultural identity. But those identity assertions are often wrongly perceived as posing

threats, both by the state and by the cultural mainstream. Therefore, the usual tendency is to view these identity assertions with suspicion and stigmatize them as parochial, chauvinistic, regional, anti-national and secessionist. But the content of what is defined as anti-national itself is conditioned by immediate historical experience and collective memory."[1].

Thus, though we have accepted language as a legitimate basis for self assertion, we decry at religion. Of course, it is also not realistic to expect religious secularism to be tolerated by the state. But the state can stop creating a fear psychosis among the majority about possible secession while allowing the individual assertions space within the political system. The election propaganda which the Congress government began in the early eighties marked by rhetorics about challenges from possible secessionist movements and calling such assertions communal has only increased these tendencies while giving scope to the rightist parties like the BJP representing the cultural mainstream of Hindi, Hindu and Hindustan to manipulate this fear psychosis.

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1.   Ibid, p. 13.

To sum up the essential points discussed in this chapter, it is not enough to reject secularism as a western concept. If looked from a different angle, it is not much of a question of a borrowed or an indigenous concept. It is a question of political will and sincerity on the part of those who hold the state apparatus. While Nandy and Madam criticize the concept as a western are, thus explaining the crisis of secularism in India, others like Sudipta Kaviraj, Marriot and Geertz offer different explanations. To Sudipta Kaviraj, it is a question of vernacular discourse. Secularism, in order to be a reality, has to be translated into the vernacular discourse. Instead of remaining in the orbit of the English speaking elite, it should be intelligible to the masses. To Mckim Marriot, it is a question of cultural policy of the Indian State. The Indian state, after independence, in its effort to present a secular unified culture of India, has over-emphasized the commonalities while undermining the diversity. The selection of elements from the past has not been altogether successful and has opened up the gap for communal writers to criticize and manipulate as we have noticed in the example of Akbar given in this chapter. While for Marriot it is a failure of the cultural policy of the Indian State, to Geertz, it is the modernization process itself that creates such conflicts. His thesis is that modernization creates new values to fight for and this competition has resulted in such conflicts like communalism and ethnicity.

CONCLUSION :

TOWARDS DEVELOPING A THEORY OF SECULARISM

The entire discussion on secularism in India, long and ardous as it has been, would be pointless without an attempt at developing an alternative model - so the feeling remains as we draw to a close. The aim is to offer a pragmatist model for, the incessant desire to conclude something concrete which would be suggestive as well, is obsessive. The accompanying fears are there: the fear of falling into a conceptual snare, too complex a web to be intelligible on the one hand and, on the other, providing too simple an explanation to merit any serious consideration. With this dilemmatic fear, I will present my thesis trying to avoid with excessive radicalism as well as too much of a liberal approach.

I will proceed in my task by trying to refute certain arguments currently in use in social science research on secularism in India. It is an accepted fact that the concept of secularism evolved in the West under quite different circumstances, than that in India. But this does not make secularism an 'alien' concept for, our society too needs secularization of some kind though the conditions so essential to it are missing. Even so, the process of secularization had already begun and secular movements were already there in our history whenever religion had showed signs of sinking into obscurantism. These secular movements were peculiar to the Indian situation.

The first condition which led to the rise of secular state in Europe was the conflict between the church and the state. Such a conflict between the state on the one hand and, an 'organised' church on the other, is not to be found in India's past. But this does not mean that religion was completely dissociated from the state; only the conflict, to the extent we find in Europe, was missing. This again does not make the concept of a secular state in Indian unnecessary. Religious influence and interference in state affairs was something quite rational in those days. The rulers were not democratically elected and they were not people's choice. When Aurangzeb ruled, his legitimacy was not derived from popular will but from the support he enjoyed from his nobility. He owed his throne first to his inheritance and second, to his personal victory in the contest for the throne with his equally aspirant brothers. The ruler's attitude towards religion determined the state's attitude. Further religion used to provide soluctions to many of the complex problems.So it was natural that people and the ruler would turn to religion for solutions to their problems.But today, we are a democracy and it is the multitude which rules. Again many of the solutions that religion used to provide have been proved to be wrong today. Developments in natural science and as well as in social science have disproved many of the religious theses and code. We no more believe that the sun revolves round the earth. This has been disproved. The Shah Bano case exposed how a medieval concept of law may come into conflict

with our present concept of rights - rights of the individu-
al,rights of women.

But today. when the state is democratic, it must be-
secular. If today the military takes over power in India
through organising a coup and abolishes the constitution, we
will have no right to demand secularism from our new rulers.
Thus, our argument in favour of a secular state should run
like this: it is not merely because we have a large segment
of Muslim population, nor even because in India there are
different traditions, that India should be secular; it is
because we want to avoid certain religious prescriptions
which are inimical to our concept of rationality and our
being democratic. Even if there were no Muslims (or,for
that matter,no religious minority) in India, even if India
were not a diversity,nevertheless India had to be secular.We
have to reject the caste system no matter what social func-
tion it performed in the past.So,in that sense, the secular
state should not be defined as keeping equal distance from
all religions, religious as it is often done, rather it
should be defined as being based on rationality thus repudi-
ating the old concepts which have been disproved as
wrong.Our being seculr should not be from the point of view
of the existence of a large segment of minority; such an
argument is defeated easily. For example, it if often argued
that since Pakistan has been created for the Muslims,there
is no point why we should be secular even if the Muslims
stay back in India instead of going to Pakistan.We are

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secular for our own sake, to repudiate primordial beliefs and prescriptions which today obstruct our progress. So, our state becoming secular does not derive its origin from a conflict between the church and the state, but from a conflict between the old and the new concepts of rationality. If our concept of rationality changes, and it certainly will, a couple of centuries later we may discard secularism itself as an ideal.

Here one argument may be made against this: the concept of rationality differs from person to person. If, let's say, some people say that they feel it is rational that their women should remain behind purdah, this cannot be so. Their women may accept their husbands' wish but if given a chance, they may as well rebel against their husbands. We cannot ascertain rationality without treating each party on equal footing: the women have to be as free as their men if we want to know what is their concept of right and wrong. Similarly, a person's concept of right must not do harm to another person. If a son feels that it is right for him to kill himself, his father must interfere and prevent him from doing so because such an act on the part of the son would affect the father also. A person may feel that it is right for him to do something, but this does not mean that he has a right to that thing.

This is not to glorify either the past concept of rationality or the present concept of rationality; this is

to, in Foucaultian terms, underline the transitory character of the present system. The incidence of Sati was an assertion of the past concept of rationality which we today reject as irrational. But calling something irrational is not enough; we must put forward arguments, empirical as well as historical, to expose the irrationality of an action. The practice of Sati may have been rational when the wives of dead soldiers, in order to escape the torture at the hands of the enemy, used to immolate themselves. But a modern rational argument would be: since that fear is no more there, it is quite an irrational act to immolate oneself. Hearing the growing demand in different parts of the West to recognize the right to suicide, there is no wonder if a few centuries later the practice of Sati becomes rational. But such a rationality must back itself up by sufficient arguments about the necessity of such a practice.

There is another argument often offered to explain the crisis of secularism in India : even the so-called secular states are not secular. However, we should not bother ourselves too much with the fact that secularism has not succeeded anywhere in the world that, as Nandy puts it, the Western man we try to imitate is not Western man of reality. Whether such a secular weswtern man exists or not is altogether a different question; the fact that we have an ideal and we are falling short of this ideal deserves attention on its own right. We should not also dismiss the issue of secularism because the so-called secular states like England

and the United States are increasingly proving to be nonsecular. This would amount to limiting the connotation of secularism only to the mode of living together with harmony, tolerance and positive attitude of respect among different communities. This is just one way of defining secularism. The West has, no doubt, gone too far in displacing blind faith and submission from supernatural deities to more secular objects like science, medicine, doctors etc. It is again a matter of fact that in the West scientific creativity developed along with secularism, the former supporting the latter and the latter contributing towards the former while in India, scientific creativity never took root but secularism was sought to be achieved. Similarly, lack of scientific creativity in India could be explained by lack of secular ethos which made blind submission possible thereby obstructing an inquisitive mind and a spirit of inquiry. Hence, the necessity of an alternative model.

This, however, does not mean a complete repudiation of religion as such. As our experience goes, such a thing is not possible. Even in Europe, it never meant so. When Marx called religion as the "sigh of the oppressed, the soul of the soulless world," it was a particular function of religion in modern society he was underlining. For, as long as there is exploitation and suppression (and it seems there is never going to be any end to these), people would continue to seek solace and comfort in religion. The effort, therefore, should be directed at purging religion of obscurantism

and supernaturalism. For, a religion stripped off such beliefs is what we mean by culture. That is what has happened in Europe. People continue to participate in religious ceremonies as a matter of habit; as an occasion for social gathering as in Christmas, but the priestly monopoly over providing solution to people's predicament has ceased.

There is another task, a greater one, of containing religion in case of India, that is, to prevent religions from forming organisations and fighting elections or supporting political parties over issues that are purely religious. Of course, people, especially the minority, would continue to vote on communal lines for the protection or rather articulation of their interests but such interests should not be religious even if communal, but surely secular (like political and economic). For instance, an issue like Babri Masjid - Ramjanambhoomi should not figure. But issues like employment for the minorities, welfare programmes for their upliftment should not be considered as discriminations against the majority; the secular political parties should stop expressing dismay at such demands. There is another argument frequently put forward to explain the crisis of secularism in India, that is, secularism as an ideology does not succeed. While we accept that secularism as an attitude should develop from below, secularism as an ideology aimed at reorienting the people is not altogether a failure. In the third world countries, any social change has to be accompanied by the state's initiative. For example, the

demand for the abolition of child marriage and Sati in the nineteenth century had to be accompanied by the state's interference. The state cannot wait and watch in silence for the consciousness to develop. Though child marriage continued to be practised, Sati was more or less abolished. The reason why child marriage continue to be practised even today is a different one; such an abolition was not accompanied by the necessary economic upliftment of the masses. In a poor family, the birth of a girl child is considered a curse and the family tries to get rid of her so that the limited income could meet the bare requirements of the family. No criterion of medical opinion could convince such parents unless and until the girl child becomes a prospective earner. Thus, it is not so much of the ideology of secularism but imbalance modernisation, rather the mode of modernisation without any parallel between social legislation and economic legislation, and, of course, their effective implementation that causes such gap. To take another example, by abolishing the caste system, declaring it illegal and giving reservations to the Scheduled Castes in government jobs donot uplift them. These steps have to be accompanied by necessary economic legislation and their effective implementation. For example, a large section of the Scheduled Castes work as agricultural labourers. Measures like land reforms are essential to uplift them. But this economic legislation and its effective implementation did not accompany the social legislation.

However, the state can play a detrimental role in two ways; first, if there is any lacunae in its ideology (as we have seen in our discussion on the constitutional provisions) and secondly, if the state disturbs the process of social change going on at lower levels independent of its (i.e. the State's) control. The state can disturb it in three ways; first, by restraining itself from, rather ignoring the welfare measures which should necessarily accompany the process of social change (the above example would suffice to support this argument); secondly, by disturbing the communal harmony among the masses (e.g. politicians for electoral gains) and finally by deliberate policy of marginalising a particular community or a minority (e.g. the Colonial State marginalising Muslims after the 1857 mutiny).

We now move on to construct a theory of secularism and secularization. In the course of our discussion, (in the second chapter), we have noticed how the socialisation process goes on for the Indians as far as their perceptions about other communities are concerned. The seed of exclusiveness and suspicion is sowed in the child's mind at a very early phase of his life which is so deeply embedded that no education in his later phase of life finds it easy to erase. At school, a child from the majority community learns to look upon his mates from other communities as outcastes. For a child from the minority community, on the other hand, the school creates a serious pshychological hazard. The teachers, given their limited education, out-

look and also emoluments, do not have either the necessary insight or the commitment to reform the situation. Castcism is rampant at this level and children belonging to different linguistic communities, with a heavy, alien accent, are usually mocked at. The environment at schools is not conducive at all for proper psychological and personality development of children, especially for those belonging to minority communities. The children come to believe in stereotypes and gossips about other communities and these beliefs remain in their unconscious level for a long time.

The task, therefore, is to reform this situation. The question of school environment is as important as the question of text books. The school teachers need rigorous training in this respect. So far, our cultural policy have ignored this aspect. Instead of spending so much on higher education, the state should give more attention to the school environment.

Hindus in India perceive the Muslims as responsible for the partition. Their (i.e. Hindus') perception of Muslims, their hatred and animosity is conditioned by this collective memory and immediate historical experience. At the every utterance of the word partition, the Hindus' perception of Muslims as a mischievous community deepens further. Even the most secular writers decry partition. However, it is no longer a question of whether the partition could have been avoided or not rather it is now a matter of accepting a historical fact. There were many factors which led to the

partition,one important fctor being the rise of Hindu militnt groups and the influence of rightists like Tilak et al in the Congress. Therefore, historical writing must trivialize those aspects of partition which were insignificant and must highlight upon the real undercurrent, which have been ignored so far. It must accept the fact that partition was not a simple act of a demand by a minority for self-determination; it was the result of the conflict between two rightist militant groups, Hindu and Muslim,over which the secular forces had no control.

This inability to accept the historical fact guides our understanding as well as our inability to accept the rationality of secessionist movement in Jammu and Kashmir. Hence, any indication of a secession revokes the painful memory associated with the partition and the public opinion demands and supports a strong reply to such movements by the army without considering the necessity of such radical movements in these states. This reaction to secessionist demands in Jammu and Kashmir can be called neurotic : a mixture of anger, anxiety and fear. If Jammu and Kashmir today succeeds in its aspiration, this feeling of anger, anxiety and fear among the Hindus would be hightened. Because of their inability to accept the historical fact and forgive the Muslims, the memory of another partition would continue to haunt the Hindus in the posterity and any such demand on similar lines would be dealt with even more sternly by the army and the situation of the Muslims would become even

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worse. For the parties like the BJP, it would be easier to accuse the Muslims.

The threat to secularism or the problem of communalism so far has been from religious and caste communities. But there is a potential threat, not yet so obvious, from linguistic communities. We have already discussed this aspect at length in the fourth chapter. But in our effort towards developing a model of secularism, this needs mentioning again. If India is diverse, then what is the point in having a single national language? We have examples of the Soviet Union and East Pakistan (Bangladesh) before us to learn our lesson from. The arguments put forward in favour of a national language is that it would make communication among peoples from different parts of the country easier. But does Hindi promote communication among people in the Hindi speaking area itself? The people in our discussion is not the elite speaking chaste Hindi; it is the folks at the countryside speaking the so-called dialects. These dialects have more similarities with other dialects cutting across the lines of official languages. For examples, Maithili may have many things in common with Sambalpuri (a dialect of Orissa). By having a national language and official languages, the hegemony of these languages are being promoted and marginalisation, rather destruction of cultural identities of other languages are being pursued.

This model of secularism rejects the concept of a national language and official languages. The Education policy also needs thorough restructuring. The students at school and college levels should have an option to learn another Indian language, (not necessarily Hindi), apart from their mother tongue and English.

The role of media also needs mentioning here. The films, especially the Hindi films, portray a type of stereotypification which conditions our understanding as well as perception of other commodities. To take a few examples, a South Indian (usually called 'Madrasi') is an object of ridicule; a smuggler often carries a Christian name; a criminal is often a Muslim. Of late, a wave of movies about supposed Devis (goddesses) have come to dominate the film world. These movies create new cults which were never there or try to popularise cults which were hitherto quite insignificant. Regional cults are also nationalised through films. Such movies curb the progress of secularization by deepening the people's faith on supernatural deities. Though not an easy task, an effort should be made to censor such films propagating new cults.

The State has made effort in the direction of propagating communal harmony through television. But such obvious propagandas, in fact, do not help. People easily dismiss the message or do not take any interest at all. The quality of such propaganda also shows that those who are behind it are not serious in their effort. The message should be

hidden (not pronouncing Hindu-Muslim bhai bhai) and should come through serials that are popular. A serial like 'Ramayana' should not have been shown at all if the myths could not be dissociated from its contents. The phenomena like stones, touched by Lord Rama, float on the water or turn out to be beautiful women are against all science. For the illiterate masses, myths are the reality. They do not accept myths as mere imaginations.

Secularism cannot be successful if it remains in the orbit of the English speaking elite; it has to be translated into vernaculars. This is the task the intellectuals themselves have to carry out. But this should be presented to the people not in an academic form but through conducting plays (for example, the way Safdar Hasmi used to do), popular literature in vernaculars, etc.

Secularism has to be inculculated through symbols; it has to be translated into objects like medicine, doctor, modern and more effective equipments for agriculture etc. These should be available and effective; the effectiveness of these objects should be demonstrated. However, this may not mean that people would stop participating in religious ceremonies, or stop praying the deities; such activities will continue but the faith would be displaced to secular objects.

The phenomenon of communalism, on the other hand, will continue to pose problems as long as there is scarcity of resources. And resources are always going to be scarce. What, in fact, could be attempted at is a minimization of such violent outbursts in the form of riots, thus saving innocent lives who are victimized with no fault of theirs. This could be done by opening up other avenues for channelisation of the grievances of different groups. The task is to recognize the grievances and not to dismiss them as communal. The word 'communal' should be used carefully while colouring a particular act or demand.

Thus, to conclude, we have to accept the fact that in a muti-ethnic, multi-religious state, conflicts between different groups are quite natural. Instead of getting terrified at or expressing awe at the demands of different communities, the legitimacy and necessity of such demands should be considered. In a liberal democracy where elections decide the destiny, mobilisation along the lines of group loyalties will continue. But amidst all these, we should not forget that the secular India is only forty years old. No where in the West, secularism established itself within such a short period of time. Though, unlike in the West, secularism in India follows a path charted out for it, posterity may find in India a precedent to follow. Nowhere in the world has secularism run along identical paths.

PREAMBLE

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, Having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a [SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRACTIC REPUBLIC] and to secure to all its citizens :

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of though, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity;

and to promote among them all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individuals and the [unity and integrity of the Nation];

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, do HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.

The Constitution of India stnds for a secular State. The State has no official religion. Secularity pervades its provisions which give full opportunity to all persons to profress, practise and propagate any religion of their choice. The Constitution not oly guarantees a person's freedom of religion and conscience, but also ensures freedom for one who has no religion, and it scrupulously restrains the State from making any discrimination on grounds of religions. A single citizenship is assured to all persons irrespective of their religion consideration. The Preamble is a part of the Consitution. Keshvananda Bharati v. State of Kerala, (1973) 4.S.C.C. 225.

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

Article 15.   Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place or birth - (1) The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.

(2) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them, be subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to -

(a)   access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and places of plublic entertainment; or

(b)   the use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly out of State funds or dedicated to the use of the general public.

(3)   Nothing in his article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children.

(4)   Nothing in this article or in clause (2) of article 29 shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

Article 16. Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment:

(1) There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State.

(2) No citizen shall, on ground only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated agianst in respect of, any employment or office under the State.

(3) Nothing in this article shall prevent Parliament from making any law prescribing, in regard to a class or classes of employment or appointment to an office [under the Govenment of, or any local or other authority within, a state or Union territory, any requirement as to residence within that State or Union territory] prior to such employment or appointment .

(4) Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which, in the opoinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the state.

(5) Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any law which provides that the incumbent of an office in connection with the affairs of any religious or denominational institution or any member of the govern-

ing body thereof shall be a person professing a partic-
ular religion or belonging to a particular denomina-
tion.

Article 17. Abolition of Untouchability - "Untouchability"
is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The
enforcemnt of any disability arising out of "Untouchability"
shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.

Article 25. Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice a
propagation of religion -

(1) 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, practise and propagate religion.

(2). Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of
     any existing law or prevent the State from making any
     law -
     (a) regulating or restricting any economic, financial,
     political or other secular activity which may be asso-
     ciated with religious practice;
     (b) providing for social welfare and reform or the
     throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a
     public character to all classes and sections of Hindus.

Explanation I- The wearing and carrying of kirpans shall be deemed to be included in the profession of the Sikh religion.

Explanation II - In sub-clase (b) of clase (2), the reference to Hindus shall be construed as including a reference to persons professing the Sikh, Jaina or Buddhist religion, and the reference to Hindu religious institutions shall be construed accordingly.

Article 26. Freedom to manage religious affairs - Subject to public order, morality and health, every religious denomination or any section thereof shall have the right -

(a) to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes;

(b) to manage its own affairs in matters of religion;

(c) to own and acquire movable and immovable property; and

(d) to administer such property in accordance with law.

Article 27. Freedom as to payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion - No person shall be compelled to pay any taxes, the proceeds of which are specifically appropriated in payment of expenses for the promotion or maintenance of any particular religion or religious denomination.

Article 28. Freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in certain educational institutins -

(1) No religious instruction shall be provided in any educational institution wholly maintained out of State funds.

(2) Nothing in clause (1) shall apply to an educational institution which is administered by the State but has been established under any endowment or trust which requires that religious instruction shall be imparted in such institution.

(3) No person attending any educational institution recognised by the State or receiving aid out of state funds shall be required to take part in any religious instruction that may be imparted in such institution or to attend any religious worship that may be conducted in such institution or in any premises attached thereto unless such person or, if such person is a minor, his guardian has given his consent thereto.

Article 29. Protection of interests of minorities -

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

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

Article 30. Right of minorities to establish and administer
educational institutions -

(1)   All minorities, whether based on religion or language,
        shall have the right to establish and administer educa-
        tional institutions of their choice.

[(1A) In making any law providing for the complulsory acqui-
        sition of any property of an educational institution
        established and administered by a minority, referred to
        in clause (1), the State shall ensure that the amount
        fixed by or determined under such law for the acquisi-
        tion of such property is such as would not restrict or
        abrogate the right guaranteed under that clause].

(2)   The State shall not, in granting aid to educational
        institutions, discriminate against any educational
        institution on the ground that it is unde the
        management of a minority, whether based on religion or
        language.

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DIRECTIVE PRINCIPLES OF STATE POLICY

<u>Article</u> <u>44</u>. Uniform civil code for the citizens - The State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India.

<u>Article</u> <u>46</u>. Promotion of educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections - The Stae shall promote with special care the edcuational and economic interests of he weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

<u>Article</u> <u>48</u>. Organisation of agriculture and animal husband-ry - The State shall endeavour to organise agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines and shall, in particular, take steps for preserving and improv-ing the breeds, and prohibiting the slaughter, of cows and calves and other milch and draught cattle.

<u>Article</u> <u>51A</u>. Fundamental duties - It shall be the duty of every citizen of India -

(e) to plromote harmony and the spirit of common brother-
    hood amongst all the people of India transcending
    religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diver-
    sities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity
    of women;

(f) to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture;

(h) to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform.

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