

SECULARISM IN NEW PHASE IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

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ABSTRACT

India is a multi-religious, multi-lingual and multi-cultural society in the South Asia. Where peoples are belong to different faith like Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian. Thus they have different religious values, ethos and practices. The constitution of India is safeguarding religious practices through fundamental rights. In a Democratic country like India deep conflicts emerged on religious concerns especially on matters related to religious equality in last years. However the preamble of Indian constitution declares and prohibits discrimination against members of particular religion, sex, color, caste or place of birth. The word secular was inserted in to the preamble by the 42nd Amendment of Indian Constitution for maintaining equality among the Indians. Hence, secular values of discrimination on the basis of religion, caste etc. were used in mere contextual basis in India. The Secularism in India is prevailing for the sake of vote bank purposes, When ModI government came in power in May 2014, after that many communal riots occurred in entire India. Thus, secularism is in new critical phase in this era.

KEYWORDS- *Critical phase, Secularism, fundamental rights*

INTRODUCTION

India is having multi-dimensional aspects of political processes starting from different religions and ethnic ethos to modern positive secularism. However, the religiosity of Indian society comes across different facets of Secular. Especially in India from the emergence of the metaphysical society to present materialistic norms aspects of society the religion was misinterpreted at various levels by different peoples, actually they interpreted according to their interests. The ideology of secularism is facing severe criticism due to the pseudo secularist nature of Indian polity. Religious fundamentalism has resulted in the weakening of Democratic and human rights values, no one has come forward to combat pseudo- secularism in Indian polity. On the other hand, in the Globalization era, it is also affected cultural and religious diversities in the 21st century.

ORIGIN OF THE WORD SECULARISM

Secularism has its origin in western countries and it is related to the separation of the church from the state, which gives the state a position of neutrality between different religions, while at the same time, it guarantees all citizens right to adhere any religion. Other hand, there are no existence of church like structure either with in Hindu or Islam in India. Thus it has different origin of

Secularism in Indian context. Thus, G.H. Holyoake has been regarded as the originator of the concept of secularism, because of his important work such as principles of secularism and 'the origin and Nature of Secularism'. A secular state as defined scientifically, means a state which recognizes every citizen as equal and does not recognize any social or religious stratification for any political benefit. But what is generally projected as secularism is tolerance of all religions with special emphasis on the protection of minorities and preservation of communal harmony. However, in the Words of Rizvi,(2005)the essence of secularism rests on two basic principles-

(1)Separation of religion from politics.

(2) Acceptance of religion as purely and strictly private affairs of individuals having nothing to do with the state.

Sometimes, the word secular has different meanings thus it contrast with the word religious, which lead people to believe that secularism is opposed to religion. But in reality rather than remaining opposed to religion, secularism takes a dispassionate view in running the affairs of the state. In the context of India, it basically cannotes treatment of all religions on a footing of equality and ruling out any discrimination. Hence, secularism means separation of state, politics and non-religious areas of life from religions and religions being treated as a purely personal matter. So when India is said to be secular state, it only means that the state will not identify itself with any particular religious faith and that no person shall suffer any disability or discrimination on the basis of religion.

SECULARISM IN INDIA – HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

India is following the secularism policy since an ancient time. At least we can traced back to Ashoka's period, he said that state would not prosecute any religious sect. in his 12th Rock Edit, Ashoka made an appeal not only for the toleration of all religion sects but also to develop a spirit of great respect toward them. He pleaded for restrain of criticism of other religious sects. After that many rulers of India whether, Akbar or Jahangir and many more followed the secularism notion.

The spirit of secularism was strengthened and enriched through the Indian freedom Movement too. In the initial part of the Indian freedom movement, the liberals like Sir Feroz Shah Mehta, Govind Ranade, Gopal krishan Gokhale by large pursued a secular approach to politics. The Brahma Samaj started by Sri Raja Ram Mohan Roy and the Arya Samaj led by Swami Dayanand Saraswati never treated other religious faiths with any anti-pathy. On the other hand, they tried to purify the wrong traditions which had gradually sapped the vitality of Hindu religion.

The constitution drafted by Pandit Moti Lal Nehru as the chairman of the Historic Nehru committee in 1928, had the following provision on secularism as, "there shall be no state religion for the commonwealth of India for any province in the commonwealth, nor shall the state, either directly or

indirectly, endow any religion any preference or impose any disability on account of religious beliefs or religious status.

The principal advocates of secular ideology in Modern India were Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru. Gandhi's secularism was based on a commitment to the brotherhood of religious communities based on their respect for and pursuit of truth. Whereas, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru's secularism was based on a commitment to scientific humanism tinged with a progressive view of historical change. Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru has been a leading champion of the concept of the secular state. The creation of India as a secular state has been accepted as one of his greatest achievements. Moreover he was especially concerned with transforming India from a caste ridden society in which communalism constitutes a major threat to all the values that he cherished to a national interest which includes people of all religions and shades of opinion and is essentially secular as a state.

SECULARISM IN THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

Constitution of India is a tool of social justice. Thus, it has adopted a system of political philosophy that allow all forms of religious faith and worship are of equal status and has accepted the view that public education and other matters of public policy should be conducted without the introduction of religious and ethnic sentiments. Indian constitution has elaborated the principle of secularism in great detail. It specified that the state should refrain from either penalized or favoring any of its people on religious considerations. In fact, India adopted secularism to facilitate the promotion of religious tolerance and cultural co-existence in all religions, sects and communities.

It is true that the word 'secular' did not first occurs either in Article 25 or 26 or in any other article or preamble of the constitution. The constitution was amended in 1976 by the 42nd Constitution amendment act of 1976 by Indira Gandhi led government and the Words "socialist" secular and integrity and to promote among them all fraternity were added . Although she amended the constitution and added the word " secular" Indira Gandhi did not implement a "Uniform Civil code," Since then India becomes a sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic republic country . The constitution says that, there shall be no 'state religion' in India. The state will neither establish a religion of its own or confer any special patronage upon any particular religion. It follows from this that; although it gives some specific subsidy to Amar Nath yatra and Hazz pilgrimage.

The state will not compel any citizen to pay any taxes for the promotion or maintenance of any particular religion or religious institution(Article 27).

No religious instruction shall be provided in any educational institution wholly provided by state funds article.28(1)

According to Article 28, every person is guaranteed the freedom of conscience and the freedom to profess, practice and propagate his own religion, subject only (a) to restrictions imposed by the state

in the interests of public order, morality and health, (b) to regulations or restrictions made by state relating to any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice, but do not open really appertain to the freedom of conscience, (c) to measures of social reform and for throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus. Subject to Above limitations , a person in India shall have the right not only to entertain any religious belief but also to practice the observance dictated by such belief.(Article 25)

At present scenario, in the context of Indian, the separation of religion from the state Constitutes the core of the philosophy of secularism. The expression 'secular' has also a special significance in the context of the historical development of Indian polity. It is of pivotal Importance in the context of political realities on the ground as they exist now. In India, the word secular is identified with tolerance among the different religions such as- Hindu, Islam, Sikh and Christian. In a secular state, no one enjoys any special privilege in national life or in any type of conduct for international relations. No group of citizens arrogates to itself the rights and privileges which it denies to others. No person suffers from any form of disability or discrimination because of this religion but all alike to be free to share the fullest degree of freedom in his the common life.

Explaining the notion of Secularism in India, D.E.smith writes that, " The secular state guarantees individual and corporate freedom of religion deals with the individual as a citizen irrespective of his religion. It is not constitutionally connected to a particular religion nor does it seek to either promote or interfere with any religion. " on the other hand, Rizvi, (2005), also commented on a close analysis of the secular state in India. it involves three distinct but inter-related sets of relationships concerning the state, religion and individual. These are (1) Religion and the Individual (2) the state and the individual , and (3) the state and the religion.

PRACTICE OF SECULARISM IN INDIA

After a long struggle against British's colonial rule, when the Indian subcontinent gets a status of independent and sovereign country, then it becomes a pluralistic notion and welcomed religious and cultural diversity in new era. According to Ram Babu(2006) at the time of the partition it was estimated that there were 361 million people living with in India's borders; of these people 315 million were Hindus, 32 million Muslims, 7 millions Christians, 6 million Sikhs, one million Buddhists, 100000 Persians and a small minority of Jews. Therefore it was the need of the hour to save this multi-ethnicity of India, for which later on hour constitution have opted the way of secularism.

In India, there are many secular persons played an important role in the developments of Indian secularism. Government of India always tried to follow a secular path, although it had some setbacks from time to time. In our country, we had as many as four non-Hindu Presidents, three Muslims namely, Dr. Zakir Hussain, Fakhruddin ali Ahmed, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul kalam and a sikh

Gyani Zail singh, Supreme Court of India has had Muslims as chief Justices, one of them M.Hidaytullah, was also Vice-President for a term, Presently Dr. Hamid Ansari, A Muslim is at the position of Vice-President of India. Air chief Marshall I.H. Lateef was a Muslim. Several others have reached very high positions in Air force and Navy. There have been many Muslim Ministers at the centre and in the most of the states. Similarly governors, Vice-chancellors, leaders in the field of science and technology, and a number of ambassadors are from different religious communities. There fore, in general the Indian government has not been indifferent to religion but has attempt to treat and foster each religion in the country equally .

In a secular state, the relationship between religion and individual is an Independent variable in the sense that each and every citizen is free to chose his or own religion even refuse to adhere any one of them. The state has no business to disturb in the right to conscience and not to right to transfer the religion. The relationship between the state and the individual is also another independent variable in the sense that it is dispassionately decided under some constitutional guidelines. Thus religion has practically no role to intervene in such a social relationship. The state and the religion both are independent to decide their course of action about their own norms, Indian constitution arranges that both keep a respectable distance between each other. Yet in case, of any clash of interests among different religions, the state has every right to mediate and even regulate their activities.

The Minority communities in India are well represented in the top cadres of the armed forces. Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and the other minorities have given the country some outstanding civil servants, artists and sports persons in sixty eight years since Independence, at present too. The general non-discriminatory climate in the country ensure that ability and performance should be given due weight age and nobody should be held back because of his/her religion.

CHALLENGES OF SECULARISM IN INDIA

India is known for its cultural heterogeneity with respect to language and religion. Hindus constitute the majority, while the Muslims constitute the largest minority. The Animosity between the Hindus and Muslims was largely the creation of the British rulers. They wanted the long time rule or In order to keep themselves in power. Thus, They adopted a policy of ‘divide and rule’ and tried to promote feelings of hostility among the members of the these two communities , right now Modi government also followed the same policy in India . After a long history of Independence, at present too, the lack of proper adjustment between them has often resulted in violent outbursts and communal riots, which unfortunately becomes a serious Challenges to the secular identity of our country.

On the other hand, very often the political parties, including the national parties such as- Indian National congress and Bhartiya Janata Party and other regional parties , too sometimes, do not allow secularism to take precedence over their political interests. The electorate in India, guided by

tradition, tends to responsive to appeals based on caste, religion, sex, ethnicity and language. By announcing various schemes favoring a particular community, political parties, openly violate the idea of secularism they claim to stand for. While distributing tickets during elections, nearly all political parties take religion of a candidate in to consideration. Such a practices in India poses the greatest threat to secularism.

India is a country which is a host to all conceivable religion and ways of life, India has followed a principle of “ Unity in Diversity.” This unity is based on democracy, federalism, tolerance and secular character of the state. Although, Many societies have sought to hide their diversities and refuse to accept their heterogeneity and have paid a high price. The Post-cold war world has seen the disintegration of some states which were, though federal in appearance, non-democratic to the core. India’s succeed as a federal democracy is the based on the recognition of its diversities. Acceptance of all religions and different ways of life is the cornerstone of the Indian Culture, heritage and polity. But the nature of secular mode in Indian polity has been declining day by day due to many reasons. Such as- hate speech and discriminatory actions taken by Government of India in last few years..

India plurality alone can be our valuable asset and religious response has to be based on tolerance, respect and compassion for others. Although, there are many incidents happened those created religious intolerance and created a gap between different religions. Thus, Religious leaders of India Must come together and resolve to promote religious values. If we reflect sincerely there are many values, which are common to our respective religious traditions. One can easily identify eight values which are central to all religious traditions. These values are as under-(1)Justice, (2) peace,(3) Equality,(4) love, (5) compassion ,(6) Non-violence , (7) Truth,(8) human rights.

The people of religion should make it clear to their followers that those who promote hatred and intolerance could not champion of the cause of religious community but their own. All religious people and particularly religious leaders who do not have narrow sectarian interests At heart should come forward and boldly take stand against violence and untruth being promoted in the name of religion by politicians. As We seen that All religious leaders also promoted hatred ideology and created tensions in the society. We should suggest that all religious leaders, whose created tension between societies should be banned.

However,Secularism is one of the most abused words in Indian politics. Secularism in a political and social context is a belief in the separation of the state(government and government agencies) and religious beliefs of the people. To many Indians a secular state also means a state that guarantees their right to practice the religion of their choice. It also means that decisions are made by the government based on evidence and are not influenced by any particular religious relief.

MISUSE OF SECULARISM IN INDIA

In a democratic state like India secularism was misused by political parties by timely. Whether the Left or Central parties for their party gain, who themselves proclaimed to be guardians of secularism but they provoke the religious sentiments and betrayal for political gains. But in reality the communitarian approach leads to predominantly fundamentalist approach. However the use of secularism by politicians are imminent, thus India ensured that state would not be religious or anti-religious, the principles of neutrality towards all religions was adopted. But religious harmony is not maintained through pseudo-seculars for religious matters. Especially the concept of religious harmony as secularism was not sufficiently inclusive to realize the possibility.

Fundamentalist forces brand Indian Secularism as 'pseudo-secularism'. They argue that the Indian constitution, while holding on to universal citizenship rights, unnecessarily tampers with these rights by entertaining concessions for minority religionists and amounts to violation of the universal rights of the citizen. These concessions are seen by such forces as the appeasement to minorities.

Those who refer to Indian Secularism as pseudo-secularism do not approve of structures (eg. Personal law, minority rights) to ensure that minorities are not discriminated against because of culture, language, religion etc. however, in 1950 after much discussion the constituent assembly decided that minority rights should be factored in the constitutional guarantees to make possible a level playing field for Indian Citizens. Constitution of India provides different rights for, minorities, they would enjoy freedom of conscience, human dignity and the opportunity to be educated and pursue careers like the others.

The case of Indian society being pluralist has already been noted. Greater awareness has come about regarding the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-religious nature of society. Indian Secularism respects such diversity because of the importance is attachés to the freedom of conscience and choosing one's religion. In addition, the practice of Dharma could make for an ideal serving the interests of the common good. However, Dharma has a covert referral to a hierarchical social system, and its proponents present it as a universal Ideal in a historical contingency.

The people of religion should make it clear to their followers that those, who promote hatred and tolerance can not champion of the cause of religious community but their own. All religious people, particularly religious leaders who do not have narrow sectarian interests at heart should come forward and boldly take stand against violence and untruth being promoted in the name of religion by politicians. Basically religion is for spiritual guidance of the people and hence can be a major resource for peace and social justice. It can become, as liberation theology indicates a powerful option for the weaker sections of the society. Instead religion has more often been used by powerful vested interests of which religious functionaries become a part. Worse, religion functionaries and

priests themselves create powerful establishments and join hands with politicians to protect their establishments.

A truly religion person should always be anti-establishments. Buddha, Christ, Muhammad, Guru Nanak, kabir and others all fought against establishments in their own times and transcend their period. Their followers and on the other hand, created huge establishments in their names and became came cause of conflict, rather than resource for peace. To create true religious spirit, one has to shed all vested interests. One should shun all temptations of power ,Much of the current tension in Indian society is on account of ‘secular’ politicians mollycoddling the two monotheisms and suppressing legitimate Hindu aspirations. While secularism in a Hindu context permits the existence of other faiths, it can not tolerate negation of Hindu identity and culture. Dharma demands that spiritual paths that refuse to coexist and seek actively to destroy others must be repelled.

SOME INCIDENTS OF SECULARISM IN INDIA

There were many incidents happened in India, such as- in October 2015, The lynching a death of a Muslim man in Dadri by a Hindu mob because he was suspected of having cow beef in his home. Another incident happened in October 2014, in Bangaluru, a well-known Anti-cow Slaughter activist was attacked and beaten by a Muslim Mob for merely distributing his book arguing against cow slaughter. In September 2014, In Bhopal, A group of female Muslim activists from the people for the ethical Treatment of Animals. Calling for a Bakra-Eid, were threatened with stoning and stripping by a mob of Muslim men, one of the activists was roughed up.

In Uttar Pradesh, the state is replete with incidents of communal violence over flashpoints such as- Music, procession, riots, rumor of cow slaughter, temple idols are the Quran being desecrated in 2014-15, so on. In each case, there is a spark which lights the tender, police are either inept or look the other way and local politicians who are leaders of different communities try to profit from the mayhem.

It's noteworthy that, after the Dadri incident, some of leaders of Bhartiya Janta Party, gave irresponsible statements and other hand, Modi's prolonged silence. But the commenting class has completely let the Samajvadi Party government in Uttar Pradesh off the hook. One is led to believe that some how Modi and the Central Government to blame for a law and order failed in U.P. Government. After the Dadri Incidents, Many Sahitya Academy Award Winners returned their awards, they claiming that communal violence is one of the hot issue in India.

In the name of tolerance, we should not allow Jihadi Terrorists, Communist fascists and Muslim fundamentalists to impose their intolerant ideology on our throat. It's time to start rethinking things from the ground up. It's time to realize the limits of tolerance and move away from moral paralysis.

The need of the hour for India is the recognition of the fact that India does not owe its great virtues of pluralism, diversity and tolerance to any western concept Or ideology, but to the influence over

India of Vedic culture and philosophy. And also to be understood is the fact that India's age-old virtues shall not be endangered by the questioning of the relevance of secularism to the world's oldest and most pluralistic civilization.

In India, there is more religious ethos, pseudo-secularism, religious cults and fanaticisms are paving the way for religious based hedonistic day today life to the people. These were severely damaging the secular mode of life in India. That's why for safeguarding secularist values they should be complementary to each other. Apart from that secularist tendency, humanitarian may envisage the better and amicable solution to tackle religious fundamentalism and throw away ill-forces and pseudo-secularism against the secularism and human rights in India and elsewhere.

However, Religion is a matter of faith. Though the critics might not agree it is indeed a fact that India and its people, have entered the globalized era, but still maintain the deep religious values at the core.

CONCLUSION

So much for claims about increase in communal violence in Modi's India. But what we can be sure that perennial flashpoints between communities such as Music, procession and so on will be spun as new and dangerous sources of conflicts with no basis in historical understanding. Modi governments should follow the preamble norms, that will give social harmony between multi-culture and Multi-religious country. Actually India does not follow an American Multi-culture model 'Melting pot'. It gives every citizen's religious freedom as well as given by Indian constitution.

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