

INDIAN SECULARISM OR SECULAR INDIA.

Ever since the beginning of the Society, Its affairs were regulated not by the Laws of State but by customary rules known as *Dharma'. Dharm is what holds together (Dhri.e. to hold), or a code of duties for the harmonious functioning of the various divisions of society. Dharm Sastra or Smritis laid down rules for every caste and vocation, for every relation in society -King and subject, husband and wife, father and son, Teacher and pupil. These rules were not rigid and were revised from time to time to meet out the new developments. Some times the law givers and the priestly class introduced their own ideas and laid down strictures and Taboos. It was the common belief that the vice, not punished in this life, has surely to be accounted for thereafter. From three Century A.D. life became more and more mechanical under the regulation of the Sastras, The caste and sub castes were rigidly separated. Inter caste contracts were prohibited. The general decline of Society is manifest in the caste rules which cramped originalities and Initiatives In the humiliation of outcastes, in the degradation of woman and in the disintegration of corporate bodies like Gama, Sarni and Sangha (oilgar Chloal states, craft guilds and monastic order India has lost the enlivening contact with the outside world and retired into Its shell.

In some passages of the Rigveda, the Mahabharat and the Pali canon, there are references to a casteless millennium of equality, plenty and piety -This was supposed to have existed in some remote, unrecorded Antiquity, At the beginning two vocations of the Yajnas (Caste system) were not strictly hereditary, when the Gupta Empire fell and invasions of the Huns followed, there was sore dabbling and Philosophy, The Vedic Brahmaavidya with its highly pragmatic content was alternated into a system of philosophy massed in logic and words without the shape of life Dharm losing its 'vital elasticity, became a chain of bondage eternal and immutable (Sanatana) Hence the entire Indian concept of Dharma. Indian Philosophy which has a distinctive character of its own,originated in the speculation of Vedic sages and reached its final fruition, in the Advaita Vedant of Sankaracharya and his followers. Social life after the fall of Gupta dynasty, in any given period during Muslim and British ruler is shaped by the administrative set up, economic development and contemporary religious trends of the King Emperor. Except Moghal and British period, no changes took place and the position changed from good to worst causing mass poverty and illiteracy and stagnation in the growth of life. Welfare of society was not the consideration at all. The Moghal and British period attempted to bring the Hindus and Muslims together and to evolve a

common way of living. Complete fusion between caste conscious Hindus and Ruling Class Muslims was not a practical proposition, for many things separated them but there were many others that brought them together and the two contradictory forces continued to operate throughout. Its glimpses can still be seen in India causing one of the most important hurdles to the establishment of Secularism and Secular State in India.

The idea of secularism has been imported from the West where it represented revolt against the theocratic control of secular affairs. It was the outcome of a struggle between the Church & State. There the Church was separated from the State and while the religious rituals were allowed to be governed by the Church. The State was allowed to regulate the secular affairs.

In India a strong barrier between State and Religion can not be framed because India is the cradle of religions. Some of the religions, even, govern entire way of life of their followers. It is for this reason that it is not possible the shape of life has lost its vital elasticity, became a chain of bondage eternal and immutable (Sanatana). Hence the entire Indian concept of life. Indian Philosophy which has a distinctive character of its own, originated in the speculation of Vedic sages and reached its final fruition, in the Advaita Vedanta of Sankaracharya and his followers. Social life after the fall of Gupta dynasty, in any given period during Muslim and British rule is shaped by the administrative set up, economic development and contemporary religious trends of the King Emperor. Except Moghal and British period, no changes took place. The position changed from good to worst causing mass poverty and illiteracy and stagnation in the growth of life. Welfare of society was not the consideration at all. The Moghal and British period attempted to bring the Hindus and Muslims together and to evolve a common way of living. Complete fusion between caste conscious Hindus and Ruling Class Muslims was not a practical proposition, for many things separated them but there were many others that brought them together and the two contradictory forces continued to operate throughout. Its glimpses can still be seen in India causing one of the most important hurdles to the establishment of Secularism and Secular State in India.

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In India a strong Barrier between State and Religion can not be framed because India is the cradle of religions. Some of the religions, even, govern entire way of life of their followers . It is for this reason that it Is not possible to import the western idea of secularism to India where religion has been given no place to the affairs of the State.

There is a demand from some quarters that Irish model should be adopted in India. Irish Constitution forbids the State endowment of religion and guarantee freedom of religion to all, but gives special protection & recognition to the Catholic Church as a guardian of the faith of great majority of citizens. The majority should not be punished because they are majority in the nation. The term * Secular* has not been defined in Indian Constitution. Its clear concept is necessitated to be understood now to put off the present crisis due to Ayodhya Turmoil, When the Western idea of secularism is not suited to us, let us consider our own Indian ideas of secularism.

The policy of live and let live and concept of 'Vaeuder Kutumb' is the basic foundation of Indian concept of secularism and culture. Great poet Kabir was the great secularist, who denounced all religions but also respected them in form of Love & Affection to humanity. Qreat poets Rahim and Raskhan are another set of great secularistic approach of Indian sense.

Jawahar Lai Nehru described secularism, 'We call our State a secular one. The word secular, perhaps, is not very happy one and yet, for want of a better we have used it. It does not mean a State where religion as such is discouraged. It means freedom of religion and conscience, including freedom for those who may have no religion. It free means . play for all religions, subject only to their not interfering with each other or with the Basic conceptions of our State. Dr. B.S. Ambedkar considered the concept of secular State la the fom where Parliament shall not be competen to Impose any particular religion upon the rest of the people.

Dr. S. Radha Krishnan described , when India is said to be a secular State, it does not mean that we reject the reality of an unseen spirit or the relevance of religion to life or that we exalt irreligion .It does not mean that secularism itself becomes positive religion or that the State assumes Divine prerogative, though faith in the Supreme Almighty power is the basic principle of the Indian tradition the Indian State will not identify itself with or be controlled by any particular religion. We hold that no one religion should be given preferential status or unique distinction, that no religion should be accorded special privileges in national life or international relations for that would be violation of the basic principles of democracy and contrary to the best interests of religion and Govt."

It is not correct to say that Secularism in India means Godlessness, atheism, anti-religious or irreligious. It is a theory of ideology of public life as against one provided by a religion in personal or religious matters strictly for a man. It recognizes the fact that religion serve a useful purpose in personal human life of a man . But it subscribes to the fundamental principles of Hindu culture that all religions have element of truth and no religion can claim the monopoly of truth. All religions Lead to God. Unlike some other religions, Hinduism has never put forth the claim that it alone is the true religion. Actually speaking, this spirit of tolerance is the foundation of the concept of secularism. It therefore, treats all the religions like and does not believe that one religion is better than other. Hence state shall not make any discrimination, whatsoever, on the ground of religion or community against any person or group or sect etc. and no religion shall get patronage whatsoever from state. in other words , briefly speaking, in the affairs of the State, the profession of any particular religion will not be taken into consider action at all, thus State shall be neutral in religious matter Every one must stop thinking in term of his religion . Every one must give his whole hearted devotion to the affairs of the State irrespective of his religious belief.

The Constitution of India has accepted the Doctrine of secularism in preamble & fundamental rights. These provisions accept religious tolerance subject to the certain Laws of Society. The Secularism, in negative sense shall mean to prevent the followers of different religions from putting to harm each other and in positive sense, it shall mean an active instrument for invoking a individual to develop his personal life (inner life) In his own way up to the fullness is far as possible to him or them. Hence State's duty is two fold. Firstly it has to take all possible steps to assure the peaceful co-existence of different faiths without discrimination among them or preferential treatment to one .

Secondly its affirmative duty is to look upon each individual, group, sect or

religion as a normal person in his own way for its or his welfare or development without any discrimination or preferential treatment. Various articles from 14 to 50 of institution in Chapter of Fundamental Rights guaranteed equality, prohibit discrimination assure freedom, allow Liberty Liberty titles and exploitation, provide enjoyment to all their own religion's belief and faith irrespective of any religion, race, creed, place or any thing repugnant to the concept of secularism.

Various examples of negative approach of secularism are always Visible in day to day life. Various preventive and penal provisions of laws are enforced to crush down, by way of stem actions and punishment, in case of communal turmoil or like kind of dispute. But few important examples of positive secularism are worthy of quotation here. The judgment of Apex Court of land and Allahabad High Court throwing open the gate of make shift temple at Ayodhya at disputed place and permitting the Barshan of Bam lalla, has half-lighted secularism, It reminds to State duty towards it. For the first time in Indian judicial and constitutional history, the sketch of lord Rama given in the original constitution has been used to define secularism. The Judges Shree H.N. Tilhari & A.N. Gupta have pointed out, The sketch of lord Kama in the Constitution, when it was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on November 26, 1949, the Lord became a constitutional entity and admittedly a reality of our national culture and fabric and not myth. The Judges held that through these illustrations, the constituent assembly expressed itself that these are the national and nationally recognized phases and features of our national life, our heritage, our culture and the source of inspiration for adopting the concept of secularism. The secularism of Western concept is not suited to India. The Indian secularism is stated as "Panth Nirpeksh" or non-sectarian and non-communal secular

Madras High Court also upheld (1991) the printing of 5000 official greeting cards with Gayatri Mantra does not violate the concept of secularism. Justice D. Raju went on to say that Gayatri Mantra is said to be key to Vedic wisdom which is said to belong to all man kind and not limited to any particular religion, race, caste and community. Judge elaborated that secularism did not mean being anti-religion. He declared that State should not identify itself with any religion but that it shall give equal treatment to all religions. He also pointed out that neither the founding fathers of constitution nor the constitutional provisions themselves could have done away with the philosophical and spiritual ideologies and values of life that form part of the core of Indian policy and culture. Kerala High Court similarly upheld the Ban on the entry of all women in the age group of 10 to 50 throughout the year as menstruating women we supposed to cause impurity and so Temple's sanctify would be defiled, This was contrary to the prevailing practice of

customary allowing woman to enter and worship in temple except for three specified periods.

Although critics point out that the use of religious figures, symbols, mantras and the Vedas, and God figures can not belong to all mankind due to diverse form of religious worship in India, I think critics ignored the positive sense of secularism, which might have permitted to carry all it in implementation. They have also failed to distinguish and divorce Indian culture and policy from religion. Indian culture figures and great personalities of policy are real identification of real Indianhood to the world at large without which we shall lose our identity and International figure of eastern cultural oriented philosophy, basic values of life and foundation of Indian continental system as illustration to the rest of world.

But one fact is very important that common people do not know about secularism. Rather he has confused state of mind about the idea of secularism. Henceforth majority of peoples are non-secular in public behavior due to illiteracy and ignorance. A secular State can only flourish in true sense only if the people, who are its constituents, are well educated and trained in the secular way of life. It might be one of the reasons for not incorporating secularism expressly in the inception of the Constitution. The basic aspect of Indian nation or secularization of nation in true sense did not come in implementation so far. Foreign rulers did not care for it and implemented their own system. How the India is free. We have to emerge as a true secular Indian. We have to develop our own system which is still forgotten by us. We have to establish stability in Indian life which rests on firm foundation of Dharma's understood in ancient period by us. The inculcation of the spirit of Dharma, shall provide high standards of ethics, clear cut codes of behavior and a wide spread acceptance of non-material values as of higher importance than possessions, have come to be the expression in ordinary society of true Indian culture. Swami Vivekananda probed deep into India's needs. He found the nation drained of vigor, not through the fault of Hindu religion, as Westernizing reformers were maintaining, but because of those, who having knowledge, and failed to share with the people. "I consider that, that the great national sin, he wrote, is the neglect of masses and that is one of the causes of our downfall. But the solution of India's misery and degradation, he believed, was not to bring down the higher, but to raise the lower." How in true Indian sense, In brief, a secular way of life teaches two distinct and separate capacities :-

(i) freely to dedicate the way to his God

(ii)freely to decide various issues in his capacity as a citizen of civilized and well ordered society.

