

INDIAN SECULARISM: VALUE & PRACTICE**Prof. Sanjay A. Kale***Department of Political Sciences
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Secularism is the principle of the separation of government, institution and persons mandated to represent the state from religious institutions and religious dignitaries. Secularism has intellectual roots from Greek and Roman philosophers such as Marcus Aurelius and Epicurus and some thinkers such as John Locke, Voltaire, James Madison, Denis Diderot, Thomas Jefferson, Baruch Spinoza and Thomas Paine, recent atheists and freethinkers, A. A. Robertson and Bertrand Russell.

Secularism has many opinions, purpose and argument. In Europe we see that secularism is a movement toward modernization which is away from traditional, religious values. On social and philosophical level secularism occurred while maintaining an official state church or other state support of religion. In the United States, state secularism has protested religion and the religious from governmental interference; it is on a social level less prevalent.

Secularism, in political terms is a kind of movement which is separation of religion and government. This can refer to reducing ties between a government and a state religion, which replaces laws which is based on scripture with civil laws and eliminating discrimination on the basis of religion. It is said that secularism is added to democracy for protecting the rights of religious minorities.

Secularism has the significance for the plural society of India which is independent. Secularism means according to acceptance of the Indian concept of “sarva dharma sambhava” or equal regard for all religions. According to western concepts absolute separation of state and religion means secularism. Thus secularism is fundamental tenets of the constitution. In India secularism came into force as a secular state only the enactment of the forty second amendment of the constitution (1976) so, now the preamble proclaims India as a secular state. There is no state nor does it create any category of preferred citizens in our constitution. Indian citizens get fundamental rights regardless of religion, caste, creed, race or sex. Besides this Indian constitution guarantees individual and collective freedom of religion which consists of the freedom of practice, profess and propagate religion and permits religious dominations to establish and to maintain institutions for charitable and religious purposes with the freedom to manage their own affairs in matters of religion.

In India there are no special taxes taken for the promotion of any particular religion. There is no right for any religious institution for imparting of religion in state-run educational institution. There is also not compulsory to attend any religious instruction or religious worship in educational institution who receives state aids.

In Indian constitution, it was assumed that secularism could promote national integration, elimination of castes and religion as factors in political life, destruction of inequalities based on caste and religion, egalitarian treatment of all religious groups and developing of the lot of depressed

classes. According to justice Shelat, secularism in India is a recent development arising out of Indian problems and setting but yet India has not managed to attain the goal of a secular state. His conclusions which put were forward by him are based on historical settings, judicial decisions and constitutional provisions. Mohammad Ghose has been studying the concept of secularism and its problems and prospects against a backdrop of communalism and communal riots, the tactics and commitments of political parties Castesism and the attitude of Muslims and Hindus to secularism. He studies the content and religious freedom and the judicial process employed in the cases of freedom. He also made comparison between Indian and American rules of decision. He concluded by the study that the constitution cherishes the ideal of secularism.

Secularism in India is political than philosophical or personal phenomenon. The Indian National Congress adopted secularism as not a worldly philosophy but as a political arrangement among varied religious communities. Thus India has become or remained politically secular while Indian people continue to be deeply religious, this means Indian secularism is a political doctrine .All candidates and political parties filling nomination papers for declaring their acceptance of Indian secularism is needed by the national election commition.

India is a secular country. From our past, we have had peaceful existence though there are several problems in practice. Demolition of Babri Masjid was a major blow to Indian secularism towards the end of the last century. So Babri Masjid became as a test and symbol of Indian secularism. From several thousands of years, India has been religiously, linguistically and culturally pluralist for several thousands of years. Pluralism of religion and culture survived thanks to tolerance of our people. Throughout medieval period, we do not have communal compete but in modern period communalism and communal violence became a problem which is a product of colonial period.

The colonial period watch conflict for power between the elites of two communities and the implored religion for mobilizing masses from respective communities, so religious identifications became a powerful weapon for political elites of the two communities to utilize. Thus communal strife is not religious strife though it appears to be one.

After independence the BJP in 1980 used Hindu religion to get Hindu votes in state and parliamentary elections. Mr. L. K. Advani laid the ramjanmabhumi movement. In late 20th century, it resulted in sharp polarization of Hindus and Muslims which continues now. This was a communal rhetoric of the BJP which was the result of Gujarat carnage of 2002 in which more than 2000 innocent were dead and hundreds of women were raped and killed. Religion is basically for spiritual guidance of the people and can be a major source for peace and social justice. It is a powerful option for the weaker sections of the society.

From several thousands of years, India has been religiously, linguistically and culturally pluralist for several thousands of years. Pluralism of religion and culture survived thanks to tolerance of our people.

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