

# 5

## Secular state and Religion

### 1. Introduction

A secular state is a modern phenomenon. A century or two back there was no secular state. An institution or an organisation--social, economic, political or religious--worth the name holds explicitly or implicitly a philosophy of life and its existence is an assertion of it in its pristine or perverted form. Secularism and Religion provide alternative world-views and values and a secular state and a theocratic state reflect and assert their respective ideologies.

Secularism is not only reflected in state polity, but also in all cultural activities like art and literature, painting and sculpture, drama and poetry and music and dance, no less in religion, especially Christianity. If we compare the medieval art, literature and religion with the modern art, literature and religion, we will see the inter-penetration of secularism in all spheres of culture and common life.

All the above statements require explanation and justification. Logically presented the questions are:

1. What is secularism? How has it evolved in modern time?
2. How does secularism differ from religion?
3. How does a secular state function in a society divided into antagonistic religious communities?

4. What part can social agencies play in converting a multi religious society into a secular society?

5. What role can religion play in a secular society? We will answer the first two questions from the history of the West, where the idea of secularism had its birth, development and maturity. We will answer the third, the fourth and the fifth questions through the example of our own country, but the reasoning is relevant for all states which are opting for secular state.

## **2. The Need of Secular State**

India is a 'secular state in a pluralistic religious society. On the very morrow of Independence, the Prime Minister Shri Jawaharlal Nehru said in a press conference at New Delhi on October 12, 1947, "So far India is concerned we have very clearly stated both as Government and otherwise that we cannot think of any state which might be called a communal or a Religious state. We can only think of a secular non communal democratic state, in which every individual, to whatever religion he may belong, has equal rights and opportunities." The Indian Constituent Assembly built the entire edifice of its Constitution on the principles of secularism. Now what was it that inspired the founding fathers of the Indian Constitution to opt for a secular state?

They had personal bitter experience of how Jinnah's two nation theory based on the medieval concept of a religious group constituting a political community, had led to the holocaust of the Partition uprooting thousands of families from their ancestral homes, causing migration on a scale unprecedented in human history, involving above all killing, mutilation and rape of

uncounted thousands.' It was a ghastly testimony to the polity based on communal principles. The experience was too tragic to allow the founding fathers to ground the national polity on religion.

The founding fathers felt committed to see that every citizen enjoyed freedom of religion. They had fought for freedom from foreign rule. Freedom was for them as inseparable as breath from life. They knew that if there has been any history and culture of freedom in India it has been in the field of religion. The culture of Hindu community has been generally characterised by freedom in religion and has resisted denial of religious freedom. Naturally the founding fathers wanted to see cultural continuity of freedom in religion. Such a freedom is possible only in a secular state. When a state is based on is biased against all other faiths and hostile even to sects of its own religion. For example, Pakistan is an Islamic state. Qadianis or Ahmadi sect is an Islamic sect. Its disciples adhere to the teachings of Quran. They are covered by the Shariat and Hadith in civil law. They observe the Muslim customs and conventions, dress and above all are saturated in Muslim culture. They are more strict or fanatic Muslims than Muslims of other sects. Yet these strict Muslims are declared non-Muslims in the Islamic state of Pakistan for they have also faith in their guru. Sir Zaffarullah pleaded for the partition of the country on the ground that in a united India Muslims would not enjoy the same religious freedom as Hindus. He knew to his bitter cost how he ignored the witness of history that a theocratic state cannot tolerate freedom of religion. He was a Qadiani and he that whereas his co-religionists in India enjoyed all the political and civil rights and opportunities similar to Hindus and Christians,

he was denied civil rights in Pakistan in whose building he had played a prominent part. religion it

Take another example, Shias and Sunnies are the two pillars of Islamic religion. Iran is a Shia state. We know how Sunnies are humiliated, humbled and denied equal rights by the Iranian Government. During Khomeini's time they were put in concentration camps like Jews in Germany. Their mosques were razed to the ground. They were denied civil rights identical with Shias.

One should not fall in the error to think that such discrimination in theocratic states is an eastern phenomenon. We all know that the persons who first migrated to America were those who were persecuted in their European homeland. So European theocratic states did not tolerate persons of different sects of the same Christian religion. In America the different states, before they came to constitute United States of America, repeated the same discrimination. To quote D.E.Smith: "The Calvinist congregationists (Puritans) who came to Massachusetts Bay in 1628 established a theocratic type of polity not dissimilar to Calvin's Geneva. Although they came to the New World seeking religious liberty for themselves, they were not prepared to extend it to others. Both Quakers and Catholics were forbidden to enter the colony; banishment was decreed for the first offence and death for the second. Four Quakers were actually executed. In Virginia and other southern colonies... Quakers and other Protestant dissenters were subjected to varying degree of legal disabilities."

It is in-built in the character of a theocratic state to be

discriminatory against and persecutor of members of the same religion if they belong to a different sect, for each sect, in imitation of its original founder, holds that it alone has the truth and the other sects lack it. Since religion appeals primarily to emotion, there is nothing but hatred for each other.

There is no major religion which does not have different sects. So a theocratic state founded on one of the sects becomes oppressive to other sects of even their own religion. Political power brutalizes the religious sect in power to deny the decencies of political rights and opportunities to their brother sects - this is history.

The founding fathers of Indian Constitution, knowing fully well the fact that Indian society is adherent to religious style of life, went in for a secular state, for it could alone guarantee religious freedom.

Thirdly, every non-Hindu religious organisation- - Muslim, Christian, Jain and Buddhist - pleaded for secular state. These religious minorities knew that if Indian polity was based on religion it would be a Hindu theocratic state. As such Hindu religion will have far more economic, political and social and propaganda advantages over the religious minorities. But if the state was secular, religious minorities would enjoy at par with Hindus, their freedoms and rights. The founding fathers were responsive to the apprehensions of their religious minorities of being at disadvantage in their religious and political life in a theocratic state. They felt it desirable to assure all religious minorities full rights and opportunities with Hinduism.

The founding fathers did not only want to establish a secular state but a democratic state too. A state can be secular without being democratic. Mustafa Kemal Pasha made Turkey a secular state, abolishing Caliphate, oath on Quran and substituted civil law in place of Shariat (Islamic law) under his dictatorship. The founding fathers of the Indian Constitution desired democratic set up too. Democracy ensures that every individual whatever be his political, religious and social beliefs, has a right to the highest position in the state. We know how in our secular state there have been Presidents of India belonging to different communities. It may be said that a President of India does not enjoy actual power to do things. But ministers enjoy effective power. In our cabinet four portfolios have top priority: Home, External Affairs, Finance and Defence. Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Atheists have been ministers of these four portfolios. These ministers are in rank next to the Prime Minister.

But in a state based on religion, this is not possible. In England, the King/Queen does not enjoy freedom of religion. He/she has to be a Protestant. If he/she decides to opt for Catholicism, he/she is to give up his/her kingship. In Pakistan no Quadiani has the right to aspire to be the President or Prime Minister or a judge or hold any rank of importance. The founding fathers of the Indian Constitution were too committed to democratic system of Government to think of theocratic state.

The fifth consideration which weighed with the founding fathers in building a secular constitution and a secular state was that they did not want India to be considered among countries in its political system. They wanted Indian state to backward be in the

vanguard of modern states. The idea of a secular state as a modern form of polity, is well stated thus in words of Nehru: "Do we believe in a national state which includes people of all religions and shades of opinion and is essentially secular as a state or do we believe in the religious, theocratic conception of a state which considers people of other faiths as something beyond the pale? That is an odd question to ask for the idea of a religious or theocratic state was given up by the world some centuries ago and has no place in the mind of the modern man. And yet the question has to be put in India today, for many of us have tried to jump back to a past 2 age, For Nehru the secular state is the sine qua non of modern state. So our founding fathers went in for a secular state.

The sixth consideration which our founding fathers had for building a secular state was their intense concern to build a common civil community in the country. Today we stand divided into communal groups. We think in terms of being Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs or Christians. We are anxious to maintain our separate identity than to find our identity as Indians. If a Hindu boy marries a muslim girl, eye-brows are raised or sinister communal feeling is satisfied that a Muslim girl is added to Hindu fold. If a Hindu girl marries a Muslim boy, it may be said by the educated that she was free to make her choice, but in heart of hearts, it is felt that it would have been better if she had married a Hindu boy. A Khalsa college was built in a university campus. I praised its building, staff and discipline to a colleague of mine. His response was indifferent or even cold to my praise. After sometime he said, "There is a large number of Hindu girls who

study in the Khalsa College. Some of the girls marry Sikh boys and those Sikh boys cease to be keshadhari!" We are all bitten by the communal bug. Unless religion becomes a personal and private matter and we develop common social life, we cannot become a common civil community. If we do not become a common civil community, we cannot become a well-knit nation.

A theocratic state asserts separate communal identities of its citizens. A secular state by its separation from religion favours obliterating communal demarcations and making possible a civil community. It helps the growth of nationalism or national self-identity.

To sum up: Our founding fathers opted for a secular state to avoid the possibility of further division of the country, to give each citizen religious freedom, to assure religious minorities full security of rights and opportunities, to build democracy in political, social and familial life, to raise India to a modern state and provide conditions for the growth of single civic community and nationalism. All secular states are based on some or all of these six considerations or justifications.

### **3. Misleading Interpretation of Secularism**

However, for the development and maturity of a secular state, it is imperative to be clear about what is secularism. If we are ambiguous in our interpretation of secularism, the development of our secular state will be haphazard. It was because of the lack of unanimity over the interpretation of the concept of secularism



that the word 'secular' was not added in the Preamble to the Indian Constitution. Even some members wanted to make place for God in the Constitution. So the word 'secularism' was not added in the Preamble when it was first made public on the 19th November 1949. It is by 42nd Amendment, made after 26 years that is, on the 1st April, 1976, that India was declared in its Preamble as a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic. Even during discussion of the bill for the 42nd Amendment no attempt was made to spell out the concept of secularism either by the government or the opposition.

We find different misinterpretations of the concept of secularism. Dr. Radhakrishnan, in his *Recovery of Faith* published when he was the Vice-President of India, remarks: "The religious impartiality of the Indian state is not to be confused with secularism or atheism. Secularism as here defined is in accordance with the ancient religious tradition of India. It tries to build up a fellowship of believers, not by subordinating individual qualities to the group mind but by bringing them into harmony with each other. This fellowship is built on the principle of diversity in unity which alone has the quality of creativeness." 3 Again, in his Foreword to Dr. Abid Hussain's book, *The National Culture of India*, he says "Secularism does not mean irreligion or atheism or even stress on material comforts. It proclaims that it lays stress on the universality of spiritual values which may be attained by a variety of ways."

It is against the whole history of the development of the concept of secularism to identify it as a new form of ancient Indian tradition and vedantic religion. To quote K.M.Panikkar: "Clearly,

our new democratic, egalitarian and secular state is not built upon the foundation of ancient India's or of Hindu thought" .To further this point, we quote Dr. V.K. Sinha: "The State in ancient India was committed not merely to the protection of Hindu religion but to its active as well."6

Again, "The Hindu state possessed one feature which was complete denial of secular ideal. This is the Hindu system of justice. Rule of law was unknown to ancient India. The whole basis of Hindu justice was hierarchical; punishment or penalties did not merely depend on the nature of the crime committed but the caste of the criminal and that of the victim." " "In regard to murder, the highest penalty is for killing a Brahmin. If one murders a Sudra, no more is required than if one were guilty of killing 'a cat, an ichneumon, a bluejay, a frog, a dog, an iguana, an ant, a crow.'" 8

"It is an exercise in futility to attempt to discover strong roots for Indian secularism in her past. A tradition-bound, caste ridden and authoritarian society, un-willing to make a break with the past does not provide a nourishing soil for secularism to strike roots."9

Further, it is abuse of the idea of secularism to interpret it to mean universality of spiritual values. If distinction between spiritual values and humanistic values is valid, secularism is exclusive of spiritual values.

Let us quote some views on secularism which do not lean on the past. To quote Dr. Radhkrishnan again: "We hold that no one religion should be given preferential status or unique distinction; that no one religion should be accorded special privileges in

national life or international relations, for that would be a violation of the basic principles of democracy and contrary to the best interest of religion and government. No person shall suffer any form of disability or discrimination because of his religion but all alike should be free to share to the fullest degree in the common life. This is the basic principle involved in the separation of Church and State."<sup>10</sup>

Similar is Gandhiji's view that all religions are equally true and therefore there is no place or situation of discrimination in social and political life. Mrs. Indira Gandhi frequently stated that the Hindi rendering of secularism as 'dharma nirapekshata (literally religious neutrality or religious non-alignment) is inaccurate. Indian secularism, she affirms, is equal alignment with each religion.

Not to give special position, status or vintage point to any particular religion is being democratic and just, but such views can give rise to non-communal state and not to a secular state. All these views miss the differentia of secularism of which secular state is an expression.

Again, these views falsely identify religions as they exist with mere faith in supersensible being or worship or prayers in religious places. It is forgotten that religion covers all aspects of life, not only the sphere of belief and worship. It embraces social ethics, law, practices and customs also. If we recognise these facts of the situation it is true to say, in the words of P.C. Chatterjee that "the very conception of the secular state does violence to the major religions of India". Secularism in some

respect is anti-religious in its nature and principles as we will show hereafter.

All these views which try to convert secularism to religious neutrality or equality or to good will or justice for all religions, reflect how our intellectual elite in polity are too tied to religious consciousness to boldly assert the true significance of secularism.

#### **4. History of the Development of the Concept of Secularism**

It is in the interest of clear thinking and development our secular state that we study the history of the development of the concept of secularism. It had its birth and growth in the West. So let us have a look at the Western history.

The Medieval Period - The period from the 5th century to the 15th century is called the medieval period. During these centuries Christian religion became dominant influence on the minds and hearts of the European people. It became their life. The Christian world view is that the universe and man are created by God. The universe has no value of its own. It is a sacrament, a visible sign of the invisible reality of God just as bread and wine are visible signs of blood and bones of Christ. Man has no value in himself. He has value as a reflection of God. He exists to add to the glory of God. The values of the world are insignificant as they are transitory. What is real and good is God and human soul. The only purpose of man is to get to the right relation with God. The universe is false, the social relations are false. The relation between God and human soul is the only truth of existence.

However tragic may be personal disaster or death, it left the medieval man unwavering in his faith in God for he regarded life on earth as rather a transitory phenomenon, an ephemeral phase towards his eternal existence with God.

If you hear sermons of theistic religions, you will find that preachers plead with the audience for contemplation on God as the first thing in the morning and last thing in the night. One needs to remember God in every act of one's life for in it lies one's happiness and salvation.

As for knowledge, Christianity and for that matter theistic religions hold the view that it is worthless to employ one's intellect to understand the universe. Universe is not worth knowing. The true source of knowledge is the revealed Bible or scriptures. The best use of intellect is to understand and develop faith in that revealed knowledge. Nothing is worth knowing except the nature and will of God as revealed in the scriptures. The sanction of all conduct and ultimate criterion of knowledge is not concern of human reason but the revealed text.

Under this Christian or theistic outlook the western man developed for the values of knowledge of the universe and for the values of social institutions and interpersonal relationships. He came to despise human interests. All love except the love of God became sinful. No wonder the medieval man came to consider himself shot through with sin for his healthy instincts compelled him to seek satisfaction in social and natural world. He could not get rid of his bodily inclinations and so lived with sense of guilt. He felt himself powerless to meet his ideal of exclusive love of

God to win his salvation So he lost faith in himself, in his capacity to solve even his earthly problems and like Augustine felt the need of God even in the most trivial acts of daily life. He thought his future was not in his hands but in the hands of God. It is not for him but for God to determine his wealth, well-being and salvation Without the grace of God nothing avails. All efforts and all achievements are doomed to dust.

Since the medieval man attributed God as the cause of all events, he failed to understand them. If there was epidemic of typhoid he attributed it to God. God had sent the epidemic as punishment for the sin of neglecting to remember Him. If there was good harvest, he attributed it to God's grace. If a woman got a son, she sang praise of God for this blessing. If she failed to get a child she prayed to God to forgive her sins and bless her with motherhood. We can see that such interpretation of events offered no understanding of them. To say that God is the cause of an epidemic of typhoid, gives no understanding of the conditions under which the epidemic occurs, how to avoid it in the future, how to cure the cases of typhoid. To say that it is God's will to give motherhood to a woman, does not give understanding as to under what conditions pregnancy takes place and of the conditions under which pregnancy does not take place and how to remove conditions which prevent pregnancy. make God as the cause of an event is to remain ignorant about the nature and cause of the event. God's causalit explains nothing. It leaves the individual as ignorant and To helpless as an animal. My professor at London University once said in the class: "When a philosopher introduces God in his philosophy catch him for that is his weakest

point." Since the medieval man confined himself to attributing God as the cause of events, the medieval period is called the dark age of Europe.

This withdrawal from life's healthy interests, intellectual, social and cultural, of this earth was a dark night of western mind. This did not continue after the 14th century.

**Renaissance Period** - In the fifteenth century, the European mind gradually returned to the interests of the earth. In the first place the world became better known to its inhabitants. The Portuguese prince Henry discovered Africa. Vasco da Gama discovered a shorter sea route to India. Columbus in his sea explorations to discover India, discovered America. The sea explorations from the days of Marco Polo to Captain Cook and the astronomical discoveries of different planets reflected and increased interest in the wonders of the universe, in its unimaginable vastness. The vision of physical expansion expanded the mental horizon of the western mind.

But the greatest discovery of the 15th century was not physical but cultural. More than the navigators and astronomers, the humanist changed the outlook and interest of the western mind. The Greek classics had been buried and lost to the western mind under the overwhelming other-worldly influence of Christianity. The classical humanists discovered the Greek literature. They studied it as piece of literature and linguistics. But it is not possible to avoid in such studies the influence of the point of view of the authors. The view of Greek classics and philosophy is secular. It holds the universe to be self-explanatory. It holds that

man has come from the animal world. It defines man as rational animal. Its ideal for man is the all-round development of the various aspects of his personality, and active intercourse with society. Its ideal man is not the solitary saint but the philosopher king whose destiny is to guide the good of his fellow human beings. It holds that human problems are problems of this world and man is intellectually and emotionally competent to solve them. His problems are ethical and political and not theological. The Greek classical literature represents man as self-sufficient to fashion his good life without the aid or assistance of God. In the study of the ancient Greek literature purged of its Christian supernaturalism, the educated people of the West re-discovered a healthy conscience instead of the guilty conscience of Christianity. They could take pride in their accomplishment and regard themselves with admiration.

This period of the 15th century is called the period of Renaissance. It is a period of recovery of the secular point of view on the universe and life through Greek classical literature. A new light and life came to the Renaissance man denied by the theistic religion of Christianity. However, the Renaissance man did not reject the presence of God but he did disengage himself sufficiently from him to take interest in the universe and to become worthy of respect in his own eye. He still thought of himself as made in the image of God. Since he was image of God, he took into himself the attribute of divinity and creativity. The association of Socrates with Christ implied in Erasmus' writings shows an attempt to study Socrates as well as the Gospel in the Platonic spirit. The intellectuals of Renaissance defined Greek



classical view point as pagan, whereas it regarded Biblical culture as spiritual and maintained that the two supplement each other.

The Renaissance period left religion untouched, though it brought to focus an alternative interpretation of the universe and man.

**Reformation** In the 16th century, i.e. the period of Reformation, religion came to be attacked. It first exposed the evils of the absolute authority of the Church and the corrupt life of Popes and Bishops. There was great degradation in the life and practices of the dignitaries of the Church. To take an instance or two: Pope Leo X (1513-1521), inherited the extravagant ideas and excellent tastes of his father. His values were essentially pagan. He had a concern, naturally for the prosperity and the influence of his family, but his primary concern lay in the enjoyment of life. But Leo's epicureanism does not represent the lowest depth to which papacy sank during this period. For more serious was the corruption of Pope Alexander VI (1492-1503). He was certainly not the first, nor the last Pope to use the papacy as an instrument for promoting personal ambitions of his 'nephews' (as the illegitimate sons of the Pope had come to be called) but none was so open, so cynical, so totally unscrupulous in setting about to accomplish the end. Religion had ceased to be a way of life for the priests were no better or different from worldly men in their style of life. There were attempts to check all this deterioration. The Council movement tried to impress that the supreme authority is the Council, not the Pope for the Pope as man, is as much subject to error. This was in vain. The Pope refused the advice. The Christian Humanists, like Erasmus tried to expose the abuses of the Church. The German mystics, like 'the Brethren of

the Common Life', 'the Brethren of the Free Spirit' and 'the Friends of God', advocated a return to the simple life of primitive Christianity, abandonment of the worldliness and corruption of the Church. These pleas of 'sweet reasonableness' did not avail.

What precipitated protest into revolt was the practice of indulgence. In the primitive Church a Christian who felt repentance for his sins, confessed his misdeeds before the congregation. He was given some punishment, in the way of fasting or lashes or contribution to charity. This exercise assured that the penitent person was sincere in heart to cure himself of his sin and the punishment undergone for it was thought to please God. Unfortunately, as the moral standards declined, the Popes went into large-scale business of selling insurance policies against punishment in the next life. In this state when moral and religious life of the Pope and the Church had touched the depth of degradation, a German priest, Luther by name, rose to protest and gave rise to the Protestant movement. He declared that there was no need for the Pope and the Church to interpret the word of God for human salvation. The Bible is the direct authority for a believing Christian. The individual is himself the authority for the interpretation of the Bible. Every one is a priest for himself.

The Protestant movement gathered strength in the priestly class and it spread like fire in jungle in different states of Europe. The various European states were anxious to get rid of the absolute authority of the Pope. National sentiment was growing in the European states and they wanted freedom from the authority of the Church in Italy. Again, the European states had to pay for the finances of the huge church machinery which they resented.

However, the kings and princes as the temporal power could not revolt against the spiritual power. But when there was division within the spiritual power, the kings and princes took advantage of it and supported and strengthened the Protestant movement by joining it for they still remained as good or better Christians.

In this period called the period of Reformation, there was challenge to the absolute authority of the Pope and the Church. There was attempt to get rid of the external authority of the Pope and the Church in matters religious. The Christian conscience was made free to think for itself whatever related to its spiritual welfare. The Protestant movement helped the individual to throw overboard the crushing weight of religious authority. In fact, it is rise of individualism or urge for individual freedom in Europe that helped the revolt against the absolute dominance of the Church. "While Luther honestly thought he was resting his case on the authority of the Bible as contrasted with false claim of the Church, what he really opposed to Catholic Church..was the voice of his own conscience. Here we have one of the primary motifs of the new world that was dawning: individualism in all activities of life-art, literature, morals and religion" <sup>13</sup>.

The forces of individualism let loose by Reformation were strong and they overflowed into thousand channels of heresy. Soon the people of Christiandom were divided into numerous sects professing different faiths mutually antagonistic. The state could no more base itself on any one of the sects of Christianity and thus there emerged separation of the state and religion in the West. However, today there are more positive reasons for the need of secular state.

Whereas the 16th century Reformation movement challenged the institutional aspect of religion, it left Bible untouched. The institutional or ecclesiastical order with the hierarchical cadre of organizers from the Pope to the priest, from the Caliph to the maulvi, is not essential and integral to religion. Hinduism is not an institutional religion and it is as good a religion as any other or better, for it has no history of tyranny and bloodshed among its sects, However, Christianity could flourish and dominate the Western mind without the ecclesiastical order. The real danger to Christianity came from the rise of science in the 17th century. The science challenged the beliefs of the Bible. It showed that the beliefs of the Bible were not worthy of belief. Renaissance and Reformation had created in the Western mind interest in the values of the natural world and given man his emotional maturity to depend on his reason in understanding the universe and the problems of his welfare by himself. In his attempt to understand the connection of events and how to control them, the western man invented the scientific method. The scientific method is a method in which reason and experience join hands to understand events. Galileo thought that given mathematics and telescope he could understand the universe. The scientific speculative thought becomes scientific knowledge only when it is verified by facts or can be falsified by facts. A scientific knowledge has its evidence in the facts which support it and facts may come to light which may falsify it. The science of astronomy discovered that it is the earth which goes round the sun. The Bible said that it is the sun which goes round the earth. Science had evidence for its claim. The Bible had no evidence except that it is the word of God. A

number of sciences joined hands to show that the earth, the plant life, the animal life and the human life have taken billions of years to evolve. The Bible says that God created the world in seven days. Sciences could provide innumerable evidences for its assertion. The Bible had nothing to say except that God had said so. The biological sciences further hold that man has evolved from a species of apes and each human child is product of coalescence of sperm and ovum of human species. The Bible says that God made man in his own image and it is His will that gives birth to each human child. Such discoveries of science made Bible unworthy of belief and discredited the omniscience of God. Science finds the cause of an event in other events.

It does not find God operative in any event under study. So the world of events, which is our universe, offers no evidence for belief in God. This is one of the grounds used by Humanists, Naturalists and Athiests to deny the existence of God and assert the autonomy of the world and values. To quote: "New scientific interests and theories of the rationalism and scepticism of the Enlightenment, anti-clericalism, the industrial revolution, human istic liberalism, Marxism and democratic socialistic theories and pragmatism have all helped to produce an outlook on life that is fundamentally non-religious and this secularism has led to a much diminished role for religion in Government and public affairs as in private life." It was George Jacob Holyoak (1817 1906) who crystallized all those factors and forces leading to non-religious view under the name of Secularism. He held the view that morality should be based on regard for the welfare of mankind in the present life, to the exclusion of consid eration

drawn from belief in God or future state. To him, just as Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry are secular sciences, so it is possible to establish a secular theory of conduct and welfare of life.

Once it is held that values do not have source, sanction and authority in God, morality becomes autonomous of God. Further, God cannot be either promulgator of morality for he has given conflicting commands in different revealed scriptures. So theistic religion became redundant for man's quest for ideal life.

## **5. Essentials of Secularism**

We may now pinpoint the essentials of secularism for our own clarity. Positive secularism is Humanism. What does Secular Humanism hold?

Secular Humanism holds that the universe and man are not created. The world is not sacramental in nature and character. It is real in its own right and has values of its own.

Man has intrinsic value in himself and his glory is his own image. He has intrinsic value in himself for he has capacity in him to understand and discover truth. The existence of educational institutions and scientific research centres is evidence of it. Man has intrinsic value for he can appreciate beauty and create beauty. All literature and fine arts are witness to this capacity in man. Man has intrinsic value to form society, to discover moral principles and to observe them to some extent. Man is the centre of values and the criterion of the values of all institutions. Any institution is good to the extent it respects the rights of the individual,

guarantees his freedom of thought and expression and provides conditions for his self-development. Pitted against institutions man is superior to institutions.

For Secular Humanism the ideal for man is to develop the feelings of justice, equality, liberty and fraternity in all inter personal and inter-institutional relationships.

The Preamble of the Indian Constitution enshrines the values of Secular Humanism. They read as under:

Justice, Social, Economic and Political; Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; Equality of status and of opportunity; and to promote among all

Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation.

The development of all such virtues as justice and fraternity leads to involvement with life, not detachment from life. Secularism puts premium on all those virtues that deepen human relationships with fellow human beings and other non-human existents of the world.

Besides social virtues of justice, equality, liberty and fraternity, of love and compassion; there are virtues of self-culture, like temperance, courage, self-control and contentment etc., intellectual culture in the form of science and philosophy; aesthetic culture in the form of love of the beautiful, appreciation and creation of sensuous beauty and to seek beauty as an aspect of all moral virtues.

For Secular Humanism the scientific method is the true method for knowledge of what exists. It rejects revelation as knowledge, for there is no being or world other than the world of embodied existences, which sciences study.

If we have followed the history of the rise of secularism, we can understand how theistic religion and secularism are two alternative or better, opposed views of life and the universe.

## **6. Difference between Secular Humanism & Religion**

The points of difference are as under:

Secularism holds that the universe of embodied existents is real and the only reality worthy of study and participation. Theistic religion holds that this universe is an inferior world, worthy to be avoided and sacrificed at the altar of God.

Secularism holds that man is of primary value in himself. He is of intrinsic value, for he is the bearer of the values of knowledge, beauty and moral principles. To quote Marx: "The criticism of religion ends with the doctrine that man is the supreme being for man. It ends, therefore with the categorical imperative to overthrow all those conditions in which man is an abased, enslaved, abandoned, contemptible being." 15 Religion holds man to be 'crooked, sordid, bespotted and ulcerous' in itself, impotent to stand up to the challenge of evil in him. Secularism holds that religion unnecessarily exaggerates evil in the average decent man. In spite of man's limited psychology man can stand to God in his highest excellences.

Secularism holds that man is competent to decipher the nature of



the universe by his rational power. He is not dependent on a supernatural power for deliverance from ignorance about his life and the universe. To quote Kant: "Enlightenment is the emancipation of man from a state of self-imposed tutelage. This state is due to his incapacity to use his own guidance. Such a state of tutelage I call self-imposed (or culpable) if it is due not to lack of intelligence but lack of courage or determination to use his intelligence. Dare to use intelligence without your intelligence". This is the battle cry of the Enlightenment.

Religion holds that man cannot solve the mystery of life and universe without the help of God. Revealed knowledge alone can light the way to truth of existence and revealed knowledge is imparted by God. Man is dependent on God for his illumination and salvation. Science has discredited much of the beliefs of revealed scriptures about existence and values and the secular Humanist asserts man's independence in his knowledge about existence and values.

For secular Humanism human ideal is in inter-personal and inter-institutional relationships. It is life of love, understanding, service and joy to all existences in human, animal, plant and physical world in which he stands related. Man is a conditioned being and in refining and cultivating relationship with conditions of his existence he defines his destiny and fulfils himself. His ideal is not to circle round God, but build altruistic relation with the four orders of existences.

Religion considers that man's essence is soul which is independent of all cosmic conditions except God's pleasure. So

his concern with fellow beings, the animal world, the plant world and the physical world is peripheral. The primary and exclusive good of his soul is in his love of God. So he needs to eschew all virtues like love in married life, compassion and justice in social life. He needs to emphasise values of detachment from the sensuous and the social worlds.

For secular Humanism, this universe is his first and last home in which his fulfilment and destiny lie. His salvation is in right relations of justice and love with all existences here on earth. For Religion this universe is a wayfare terrain for journey to the abode of God.

Jawaharlal Nehru thus spells out the two parts of secular Humanism: "We have therefore to function in line with the highest ideals of the age we live in....Those ideals may be classified under two heads: Humanism and Scientific Spirit. "16 This can well constitute the definition of secularism: Humanism and scientific spirit. It is clear that to interpret secularism as religious neutrality, religious equality, 'Sarva-Dharma sad bhava' is travesty of truth. Why to interpret the word secularism which in history and spirit is opposed to religion in its fundamental view about life? Secularism and Religion are different in their methodology of knowledge, in their understanding of human personality, in their values and ideal for human life. There is nothing common between the supersensible interpretation of the universe and life and the scientific this worldly interpretation of life and universe. They are poles apart. It is less true to say that the North Pole and the South Pole are the same than to say that the supersensible and the empirical worlds are the same, disembodied existences and

embodied existences are the same, revelation and the scientific method are the same, infallibility of belief and falsification of belief are the same.

It is true that a democratic state is neutral between religions and gives all religions equal freedom. But this is not a privileged position for religion. A secular democratic state gives all organisations, and not only religious organisations, equal rights of freedom of thought and expression. The organisations of games have the same rights to organise their activities as all religious organisations have. The secular state interferes in the activities of religion or games, if they violate the fundamental rights of human beings or involve cruelty in its practices. The practice of Duel is prohibited by law, though it has nothing to do with religion. 'Devdasi' practice is prohibited by law even if it has religious sanction. Religions have no special status with a secular state. To say that secularism means religious neutrality, religious equality, 'Sarva-Dharma sad-bhava', is confusing democratic impartiality of freedom with secularism. What freedom the secular democratic state gives to religion is common to all organizations. It is impartial between different organizations in respecting their rights and opportunities, whatever be the sphere and contents of their activities so long they do not violate the humanistic principles of the Preamble.

It was unnecessary for the Preamble of a secular state like India, to have included under liberty, the liberty of belief, faith and worship, for it is covered under liberty of thought and expression. A non-religious organization like sports or yoga can also have its belief, faith and practices and secular state gives as much right to

its faith and practices as to religious rites and worship. A secular state which is also democratic, gives freedom of personal morality and style of life to the extent it does not interfere with the freedom of other citizens. The inclusion of faith and liberty in the Preamble is survival of a relic of theology, just as coccyx (tail bone) in our body is a relic of our animal ancestry.

## **7. Secularistic trends in Religion**

Secularism is a distinct philosophy of life and universe and claims to be a better alternative to super-sensible religion. So great is the impact of secular Humanism that there has been secularization of supernatural Christianity. To take an instance or two:

There has been demythologizing of New Testament by Prof. Rudolf Bultmann. He is Herr Professor of Theology - a very prestigious position at the University of Malburg. In his paper: 'Demythologizing of New Testament' he rejects the following beliefs as myths and therefore pleads for purging Christianity from them: (i) the belief that Christ is a divine being, as God incarnated; (ii) Christ performed miracles; (iii) Christ was resurrected. Christianity must reject this supernatural picture of the world of pre-existence, incarnation, descent and ascent, miracles, intervention and cosmic catastrophies.

His pupil W. Kamleh points out that since Bultmann makes Christian faith independent of occurrences of any supernatural events in Palestine in the first century, he cannot stop short of making it independent of the belief in the existence of supernatural being. Paul Van Buren, a clergyman who teaches at Temple University in Philadelphia holds in his book *The Secular*

Meaning of the Gospel that we could and must present the Christian message without reference to God. The Christian faith could and must be built on the personality of Christ and his commandments. He further holds that it is not only that the traditional God has died but the very word God has died. He condemns attempts to give some meaning to the word 'God' by calling it the ground of our being, a 'depth' or 'transcendent'. It amounts to coining new vocabulary to hide lingering traditional belief in God. What we need is not new interpretation of supernaturalism but in rejecting it. Bible could and must be interpreted in a naturalistic and humanistic terminology.

The widespread sweep of liberation theology shows how secularism has entered, willy nilly, the heart of religion as it has become triumphant in politics in the form of secular state.

Our Indian Constitution is secular as it is based on the values of Humanism and scientific temper. Modern states cover practically all aspects of individual's life from birth to death, as religion earlier covered all aspects of individual life from birth to death. So it is wrong to define a secular state as Prof. D.E. Smith does in his book India as a Secular State, as that which gives freedom to religions to function independent of State and gives individuals freedom to profess any religion or no religion without being deprived of any civil rights. This is to define a secular democratic state in negative terms, for such freedoms are given to all organizations, religious or non-religious. Prof. Smith holds that Kamal Pasha established a secular state in Turkey by setting up civil law independent of and opposed to Quran and modernized the life of the people. A secular state has a positive function and

is in a manner hostile to religious mode of life. It fosters and shapes a secular type of society.

Our Constitution in its Directive Principles enjoins every citizen to 'develop scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform'. Education is a state subject, so education in our secular state is oriented to develop in the young generation 'scientific temper and humanism'. To develop scientific temper is to reject the so-called infallible method of revelation. To be inspired with humanistic values is to devalue other-worldly values. So the secular education of a secular state does eliminate the authoritarianism in the knowledge of religion and negatives other-worldly or supernatural values of religion.

A secular state through its secular education fashions new models of human personality and human society. In fact the history of the development of secular state is also the history of the release of the hold of religion on the life of the people.

## **8. Secular State and Communal Society**

True, our Indian Constitution is founded on the principles of secularism and India is a secular state by its Constitution. But that is not enough. History is replete with examples of ideal constitutions withering away in society not prepared for it. Indian State is enacted as secular by a dominant minority of inspired and enlightened elite under the charismatic leadership of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. So the future of secular state in India, as in other countries with conflicting religious communities, rests on how far the society is made secular. Unless the Indian society is secular there is every risk of disaster for secularism. We find

that the Indian secular state has already made many compromises with religions. The reason is obvious. Writes W.H. Morris Jones in his contribution entitled 'Indian Political Idioms' in the book, Caste and Politics in South Asia edited by C.H. Philips. "Every man is born into a particular communal or caste group and with it inherits a place and a station in society from which his whole behaviour and outlook may be said, in idea at least, to be derived; his occupation, the range from which his parents will choose to negotiate for his bride, his fairly precise standing in terms of privileges and his obligations to members of his own and other caste groups, his attitude towards them. For this reason, caste cannot easily be assimilated within the world of modern politics. It is seldom merely a group operating as a unit within a modern whole.... When it comes to politics, it comes not with a set of demands but with a way of life. "17

Since our way of life is communal, we are sometimes led by it in the modifications of our Constitution and formulation and enactment of laws in our Parliament.

**Personal Civil Code** We find many cases where our secular constitution compromises due to the presence of religious organizations. Take common civil code. It is one of the desiderata of secular State that the people be governed by common civil code based on humanistic values of justice and compassion.

According to Article 44 of the Directive Principles, it is stated that the State will endeavour to enact common civil code. What has stood in the way of the Parliament or Lok Sabha to enact the common civil code? It is our religious or communal way of life.

Neither Hindus nor Muslims nor Christians are prepared to change the traditional personal civil code hallowed by religious sentiments. Through the awe-inspiring charismatic authority of Nehru and socialist groups the Hindu civil law is modified in the form of the Hindu Marriage Act, the Hindu Succession Act, the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act and the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act. But the Muslim and the Christian personal laws have not undergone any modifications. We all know of Shah Bano divorce case in which the Supreme Court gave compensation to a divorced wife. There was a strong agitation in the Muslim community. The Lok Sabha had to yield to the fundamentalists of the Muslim community. The Muslim sentiment is well-expressed in Mohammed Ismail's words: "Their (Muslims') whole life is governed by their religion. Shariat or personal law is a vital part of their religion and they cannot conceive of the possibility of the abrogation of Shariat law on any account." The secular State of India yielded to this statement of Muslims to the detriment of its own secular character. Let us quote Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of Indian Constitution. Speaking against the clause to save personal law, he said that if such a saving clause was introduced within the Constitution, "it will disable the legislatures in India from enacting any social measure what soever. The religious conceptions are so vast that they cover every aspect of life from birth to death. There is nothing which is not religious and if personal law is to be saved, I am sure about it, that in social matters we shall come to a stand still. There is nothing extraordinary in saying that we ought to strive hereafter to limit the definition of religion in such a manner



that we shall not extend it beyond beliefs and rituals as may be connected with ceremonials which are essentially religious. It is not necessary that the sort of laws, for instance laws relating to tenancy, or laws relating to succession, should be governed by religion...I personally do not understand why any religion should be given this vast expansive jurisdiction. After all what are we having this liberty for? We are having this liberty to reform our social system which is so full of inequalities, discriminations and other things which conflict with our fundamental rights. It is therefore, quite impossible for anybody to conceive that the personal law (i.e. personal civil law) shall be excluded from the jurisdiction of the State."<sup>18</sup>

We quote K.M. Munshi on this issue of personal law. He says: "The point however is this, whether we are going to consolidate and unify our personal law in such a way that the way of life of the whole country may in course of time be unified and secular. We want to divorce religion from personal law, from what may be called social relations or from right of parties as regards inheritance or succession....We are in a stage where we must unify and consolidate the nation by every means without interfering with religious practices. If however, the religious practices in the past have been so construed as to cover the whole field of life, we have reached a point when we must put our foot down and say that those matters are not religion, they are purely matters for secular legislature"<sup>19</sup>.

Though K.M. Munshi made this statement on putting his foot down on personal law, but the personal law is operative today as it was operative hundreds of years back.

Secularism is hostile to religion in so far religion leaves no room for social and economic aspect of life to be determined on the principle of reason and experience or the welfare of man on earth. "The claim of religions to have ordained for all times a social and ethical code on the basis of revelation cannot be sustained on rational or ethical grounds." 20 What is therefore necessary if the secular state is exist, is to ask religions to limit themselves to their inner subjective experiences and speculative metaphysics and leave the sphere of social, economic and moral questions to be debated and decided by reason and humanistic values.

**Cow Protection** - Take cow protection. The 48th article of the Directive Principles lays down that the State should prohibit slaughter of cows. The debates in the Constituent Assembly on this issue indicate the firm determination of the orthodox Hindus to use the powerful machinery of the State to enforce their religious sentiment. Apparently the orthodox Hindus did not want to appear as non-secular. They tried economic arguments to further their religious sentiment.

Strictly from the view-point of agricultural economics, it would be impossible to justify a total ban on cow-slaughter. India has one fourth of the cattle population of the whole world and at least one-fourth of India's cows are uneconomical and many are diseased. The production of fodder in the country is sufficient to maintain no more than three-fourth of the present cattle population. Because of these facts other members of the Constituent Assembly called for the abandonment of the economic argument and a frank acknowledgement of the religious sentiment behind the proposal.

A Muslim member of the Constituent Assembly, Syed Muhammad Sa'adulla said, "I do not want to obstruct the framers of the Constitution, I mean the Constituent Assembly, if they come out in the open and say directly: "This is part of our religion. The cow should be protected from slaughter and therefore we want its provision either in the Fundamental Rights or in the Directive Principles. But those who put it on the economic facts do create suspicion in the minds of many that the ingrained Hindu feeling against cow slaughter is being satisfied by back door!"<sup>21</sup>

**Re-building of Somnath Temple** - Take the case of rebuilding of Somnath Temple. The construction of places of worship is a function of religious organizations. A secular government has no business to participate or encourage or aid it, for a secular state stands for humanistic values not spiritual values and rational and scientific approach to all beliefs, and not for dogmas of revelation. But we find that in the state of Uttar Pradesh, a system of indirect taxation was devised to pay for the restoration of the temple. <sup>4</sup> Muslim writer noted bitterly: 'And so indirectly all Hindus and non Hindus, mono-theists, poly-theists and atheists have been paying this religious levy in the twentieth century to the government of the secular state of India for the re-building of an ancient Indian shrine. In May 1951 elaborate Hindu ceremonies, with the chanting of Vedic hymns by Brahmin priests hailed the partial restoration of the temple. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of India, took a prominent part in the function by installing the 'jyotilinga' image in the temple. It seems clear that the whole inspiration of this project with which high government officials (but not Nehru) were so closely identified was very far indeed from the approach

which is expected of the secular state. The plea that the Deputy Prime Minister and the President were acting as individuals in their private capacities is not adequate justification for such activities; the influence and prestige of high office inevitably becomes associated with whatever they do in public."<sup>22</sup>

Instances can be multiplied where secularism of Indian State is compromised. Take Hindu rituals performed at the inauguration of a scientific laboratory. What a contrast between the magical rituals of religion and the scientific and rational approach to truth represented by a scientific laboratory! How would not the religious minorities feel discriminated against when government recognition is given to Hindu rituals! All rituals - Hindu, Muslim, Christian stand on the same footing for a secular state and it is compromising its secular stand when it prefers the rituals of one religion over others.

**Radio and Doordarshan** Let us take Radio and - Doordarshan. Both are Government owned media. Both give religious programmes. Since Hindus dominate the country, the morning songs are generally addressed to Hindu gods or at least express Hindu sentiments, irritating or at least annoying the religious minorities. A secular state should keep out of all such programmes of religious sentiments to keep to its secularism. But since our leadership does not face the fact that secularism is not religious neutrality or religious equality or goodwill for all religions, it fumbles and founders in its attempt to develop secular society. It hardly realizes that equal aid or encouragement to all religions makes the society further communal. The leadership in the Indian Government and bureaucracy being

mainly Hindu, the Hindu religion gets better coverage in the media, intensifying communal feelings of religious minorities. It is complete exclusion of the religious programmes from the media of the secular state that provides a necessary condition for the growth of secular society.

It is clear that unless there is growth of secular society. Indian State will always be deviated from its principles of secularism.

To ally the discomfort of the minorities the President, the Prime Minister, Ministers, Chief Ministers and Governors of States, attend and participate in functions of all religions, How does such conduct encourage the development of secular society which alone can sustain secular state. For the President or the Prime Minister of India, to move about as prima donna in the religious festivities is to entrench the people in their religious prejudices.

Further, how does such conduct function to foster scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry which are among the fundamental duties of the citizen according to Article 56-A of the Indian Constitution! If we are serious about secular state, the government must avoid or eschew participation in any form of religion manifestation. It should completely sever its relation from religious festivities or activities. Not only that, it should create the impression that it stands committed only to the secular principle of the Preamble of the Constitution. It must keep a watch dog over all acts which violate humanistic values by any organizations irrespective of the fact whether they are religious organizations or non-religious organizations. Its conduct should make the people to believe that there is no special status in treatment for religions

and their conduct is as much subject to the secular laws as that of the other organizations.

**9. The Role of Social Agencies in Developing Secular State** We now ask the question how the social agencies, like education, economics and religion can play their part in stabilizing and strengthening the secular state by promoting the change of religious or communal society to secular society?

**The Role of the Teaching Community** - One of the basic values of secular society is its attitude to knowledge. Article 51A of the Indian Constitution, defining the fundamental duties of the citizen asserts that one of them is to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of enquiry. The Science Policy Resolution adopted by the Parliament in 1958, in which the moving spirit was Jawaharlal Nehru, aimed at making science an important part of Indian life. How far has there been cultivation of scientific temper in the countrymen after so many years? An answer is to be found in a statement issued by the Nehru Centre in Bombay on the 19th July, 1981. Mr. P.N. Hasker, formerly Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, as chairman of the Nehru Centre headed the list of signatories which comprised top Indian scientists, such as Raja Ramanna (Director, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre), M.G.K Menon (Member Planning Commission and formerly Secretary to Government in the Department of Atomic Energy), Satish Dhawan and a handful of historians and economists. The statement says: "No systematic and determined effort was made to work out specifically and concretely what was needed to be done to build a society which is animated by a spirit of inquiry rather than passivity and acceptance... There was failure to give mass

dimensions to scientific temper and specifically to incorporate it in the educational system.... The result of all this has been a cancerous growth of superstition at all levels. Rituals of the most bizarre kind are frequently performed often with official patronage. Obscurant social customs are followed even by those whose profession is the pursuit of scientific inquiry. "23

This report of the scientists is as damaging as it could be for the teaching community of India. There is no concern felt by the teacher to develop scientific temper, or spirit of questioning in the students of schools and colleges. Even the science teachers feel no obligation to grow scientific temper in students. They are interested in pass percentages or merits won by the students. That is the parochial vision of the teachers and the demand both of parents and the Directors of Education, There is no concern with the future of the nation except to sing patriot songs in the morning assembly or on certain festive occasions. It is thought enough of patriotic service to do this petty ceremonial. It is time that the teaching community should consider it part of their syllabus to educate children in scientific temper so that the new generation which takes our place is free from superstitions and is secular in its outlook and conduct. Secularism and democracy are indispensable for the integrity and progress of our multi-religious country. Both the teachers and the managements of educational institutions, if they are to serve education, must not be satisfied with the working of the school unless it strives as much for developing secular attitudes in students as it does for merit positions and pass percentages. The top schools do not worry so much for percentage and merit positions as developing various

aptitudes in the students. But they too ignore the development of the scientific temper and the secular outlook.

Another aspect of secularism is Humanism. There is some attempt through socially useful productive work to instil in the children the need to develop care and concern for the less fortunate countrymen in welfare institutions. But it is done in a perfunctory manner by the teachers and the students as necessary nuisance or wasteful appendix to the curriculum.

**The Role of Business Community** The economic development in the way of more production and just distribution can help to reduce communal riots. Communal riots take place in areas in which people are poor and uneducated. They do not take place among people of economically better-placed colonies. Here the business community as citizens of the country can help to conduct programmes which can reduce poverty in the which are exploited by communal bigots, who stay safe in the human carnage of riots. The teachers and the print media can help to secularize the understanding of the communal minded leaders and the business community reduce poverty to check the carnage of riots.

**The Role of Religious Community** -Today we are mainly concerned with the role of religion in building secular society. How can theistic religions discipline themselves to avoid interfering with or imposing themselves on the functioning of secular state. The theistic religions must separate the spiritual sphere of their religion from the secular sphere concerned with social, economic and moral injunctions and commandments. The



theistic religion must realize that it is not rational and ethical to stay put to social and ethical practices given centuries back in the revealed scriptures. We have to admit that social behaviour and ethical conduct are subject to growth and development. Once philosophy covered all sciences under its province. Today philosophy has given up its task to study Astronomy, Biology, Psychology. Today it limits itself to logical analysis and clarification of concepts. The theistic religions should do likewise and cease to cover all aspects of life. They must forget their old task of dictating both the secular and the spiritual aspects of life. They should completely surrender their function to determine social life and ethical code.

A citizen can help secular state if he considers religion as private matter with no function to determine social, ethical and economic welfare issues of the society. Let all secular organizations work to influence theistic religious organizations to shed religious approach towards the interests of temporal life. Let religion be for individual's own inner purity and peace of mind.

**The Emergence of Secular Religion** However, there is need for a completely secular religion. Such religion can make extraordinary contribution to the growth of secular society. We need not only secular constitution but also secular religion to buttress it. It is when the principles of secularism, Humanism and scientific temper govern all spheres of life, personal, social, economic and religious that we will have free individual and free society. M.N. Roy was a great intellectual of social and political thought and has formulated the philosophy of Radical Humanism. He says, "The desire for freedom in social and political life, being an

expression of the basic human urge for spiritual freedom, can be satisfied only by a world view which does away with the necessity of assuming a super-natural power or metaphysical sanctions."

24

What is needed according to him, is not just freedom to choose between different theistic religions but the freedom of the human spirit from the tyranny of all of them. A secular religion or secular way of life can alone deliver mankind from the bondage to supernaturalism. A religion is secular if it holds that the world as we know it is self-existent, self-moving and self-directing. It is the only reality. There is no supernatural world or disembodied God. There is no heaven or hell.

A religion is secular if it holds that man is evolute of this earth and his ideal and destiny are in this world. It holds that Humanistic values are the only true values of life. It asserts that the scientific method is alone true for discovering the truth of what exists. It accepts that all truths are under probation and that they lack infallibility.

The philosophy of secular Humanism found its way in the heart and mind of the religious genius of Devatma in India. He writes: "The canons of the scientific method of investigation which were essential in all such studies ['Vishwa-tattva' (Truths about the Universe) and 'Manush-tattva' (Truths about man)] acquired complete sway over my heart. The principles of experimental interrogation together with right logic captured my heart to such an extent that it became impossible for me to accept any statement of belief as true on the basis of speculation or blind

faith. How is it that some of the greatest thinkers and even some scientists are prone to accept several false and fictitious beliefs? It is because (i) either they consider religion to be a matter of blind faith and taboo every form of scientific investigation or test in regard to such matters of (ii) they distort the truths of science in order to support their accepted false beliefs. For a lover of truth both of these positions are intolerable. In his own light he considers both of them false and abhors them. As all the various constituents of the love of truth had evolved in me. I had arrived at the "stage of life where it was possible for me to accept anything, whether ancient or modern, matters religious, which could not stand the test of the cannons of the scientific method of investigation. I was anxious to accept all religious beliefs not on the basis of mere faith but as pieces of true and verifiable knowledge in conformity with scientific test."<sup>25</sup> No other Indian religious innovator has shown the moral courage to accept the scientific method in place of revelation or mystic intuition in the understanding of the matters related to human soul. They accepted the scientific method as beneficial in understanding temporal world and not the world of soul.

Devatma utilizes the findings of science and scientific philosophy of the eighteenth century in his reconstruction of his view on the universe, human soul, ethics and religion.

He came to reject the supernatural world of soul, God and angels, and asserted the natural world of embodied existences as the true and only reality. He says, "Nature (the world of embodied existences) which I had erroneously believed to be my secondary relation now became in the light of truth, my true relation. And

completely breaking away my relation with the imaginary creator and ruler of the world, I felt my true and real relation of all kinds with the true and real Nature.

"I saw the immense grandeur of Nature. It had never appeared to me as real and as true as it did now. I had never before discerned that close relationship with it which I felt now.

"I realized that betterment or degradation of life rested primarily on the nature of one's feelings or heart attractions for the various related existences in Nature. In spite of their belief in God, their worship, performance of sandhya or offering of nimaz, men in general became more and more degraded, because they were bound up in their various relations with low bonds (low-loves and low-hates). Even animals and vegetables which believe in no God (and offer no worship) became better by getting favourable environment and worse by uniting with unfavourable conditions. This wonderful knowledge of the law of relationship made me feel this Nature for myself and for other existences, such a true and close relative that I can hardly describe it in words.

The entire being of man-his body and soul-is part of Nature. It is an evolute in the process of the evolution of the animal world. It is as much under the laws of Nature, of the processes of evolution and devolution as other existences, like animals, plants and physical things." 26 Devatma regards man as psycho-physical organism and rejects any dichotomy between body and psyche or soul which demean the body. He holds them inter-dependent for their existence and function both in their actual and ideal states.

Since man has a conditioned existence, i.e. his life and death are in his relationship to the four orders of existences, physical, vegetable, animal and human, the quality of his life depends on the quality of his relationship with them. It is intellectual virtue in him if he engages himself to understand through scientific method the events and things and persons in Nature. It is aesthetic virtues in him if he appreciates the beauty of things about and around him and creates beauty through art and literature, poetry and drama, painting and sculpture, dance and music. It is moral virtues in him if he involves himself in the betterment of all existences of the physical, the vegetable, the animal and the human worlds in contact with him through altruistic love. To be good is to develop feelings of respect, affection, gratitude, service, wishing well, reparation and harmony in relation to other existences. Each of these feelings is cognitive as well as conative. The feeling of gratitude, for example is cognitive of the benefits received and involves an urge to serve the benefactors.

Devatma defines religion as freedom from those distortions of instincts, individual and social, which harm the individual and other existences and cultivation of these instincts and passions into right direction and sublime form.

He calls his philosophy of religion Dev Dharma. It is clear that Dev Dharma is a secular religion, for it denies not only God but all forms of supernaturalism and asserts the ultimate reality of the empirical world, or Nature or the world as studied by sciences. It regards human species a product of evolution and each individual human being both his body and soul as result of coalescence of

human sperm and ovum. It regards human psyche or soul, as much subject to the laws of life and death as other living organisms like plants and animals. It considers human ideal to be all-round development of cognitive, affective and conative powers in the welfare of the individual, society, and cosmos. It holds that infallibility in knowledge is not possible. It does not claim its teachings in The Dev Shastra to be infallible.

It regards knowledge, including the knowledge of human person, both psyche and body, possible through the scientific method. Dev Dharma is secular in its world view, its scientific methodology and its value system, individual, social and cosmic. So there can be no doubt that Dev Dharma can make extraordinary contribution towards evolving a secular society.

The substitute for theistic and supernatural religions is not religionlessness but secular religion, for there is cultural urge for religion in man as exhibited in Russia where the church bells rang after 70 years of Communistic dictatorship. Further, religion appeals mainly to the emotions. And so secular religion can be extraordinarily effective in producing secular attitude in society.

It will be final triumph of the principles of secularism and humanism and scientific temper in state polity, if secular state and secular religion walk hand-in-hand to strengthen each other.. Dev Dharma can play crucial role in this ideal and what could be a better service than to contribute to this ideal of a society of scientific temper, humanistic values of democracy, justice, liberty, equality and fraternity in all spheres of life - personal, social, religious, economic and political.

## Notes :

1. Smith, D.E. in India as a Secular State, p. 159
2. Nehru, Jawaharlal, Independence & After, p. 122
3. Radhakrishnan, S., Recovery of Faith, p. 202
4. Radhakrishnan, S., in Foreword to Hussain, Abid's book, The National Culture of India, p. 8
5. Panikkar, K.M., The State & The Citizen, p.28
6. Aiyar, S.P. & Srinivasa, R., Studies in Indian Democracy, "Secularism in Indian Democracy" by Sinha, V.K., p.60ff.
7. 1bid, p.72
8. Law of Manu' in The Sacred Books of the East : ed Max Muller, F., XXV, xi, p.32
9. 1bid, p.72
10. Radhakrishnan, S., Recovery of Faith, p. 152
11. Chatterjee, P.C., Secular Values for Secular India, p.11
12. Jones, W.T.A., A History of Western Philosophy, p.574
13. 1bid. p.582
14. Smith D.E., India as a Secular State, p.152
15. Pleamenatz in Marx's Philosophy of Man, p.52

- 16.Nehru, Jawharlal, The Discovery of India, p.16.
- 17.Philips, C.H., ed Caste & Politics in South Asia, Morris W.H.'s contribution, "Indian Political Idioms" pp.138-39
- 18.Constituent Assembly Debates, vol 7, p. 781
19. 1bid, p. 547
- 20.Chatterjee, P.C., Secular Values for Secular India, p.23
21. Constituent Assembly Debates, Vol 7, p.781
22. Smith, D.E., India as a Secular State, pp.386-87
- 23.Chatterjee, P.C., Secular Values for Secular India, pp.229-30  
Quoted for full statement see the Yojna Independence Day Issue, 1980
- 24.Roy, M.N., Reason, Romantician Revolution, II, p. 289
- 25.Agnihotri, S.N., Mujh Mein Dev Jiwan Ka Vikas, 1, 26. p. 182-83
26. 1bid.