

Secularism In India And Its Challenges

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Abstracts:

India is a land of Religion, languages and custom. Mainly religion are flourishing here since long back, which have their own traditions and believes . Therefore india is a multi religious and multicultural from its known history. Secularism means separation of religion from political, economy social and cultural aspects of life. Religion being treated as purely personal matters.It emphasizes dissociation of the state from religion and full freedom to all religions and tolerance of all religions . India was never mono-religious and mono-cultural . The numbers of invasion and incursions from Aryans to Mughals added to religious , cultural and linguistic pluralism . British colonialism also contributed to its cultural and religious multiplicity. Thus with every invasion and incursion Indian society becomes more and more complex and rich. Perhaps no other society in the world is as multicultural and multi-religious as Indian society. It is right said that here the aryaans , the non Ariyaans, The Dravidians , and the chinese ,the tribe of Scythians and huns, The Afghans and The Mughals all have merged into one body. Secularism is and important aspect of Indian society for which it is also well known in the world. The present paper will put emphasis on secularism , its concept , history and challenges in the context of india.

Key-words: Religion, Secularism Challenge, History, Constitution.

Introduction: According to modern literature secularism has its origin in western countries and it is related to the separation of the church from the state, which gives the state a position of neutrality between different religions while at the same time it guarantees all citizens the right to adhere to any religion. A secular state as defined scientifically, means a state which recognised every citizen as equals and does not recognize any social or religious stratification for any political benefit. But what is generally projected as secularism is tolerance of all religion with special emphasis on the protection of minority and preservation of communal harmony. However in the word of Rizvi –(2005) the essence of secularism rest on two basic principle-

- (i) Separation of religions and politics.
- (ii) Acceptance of religion as purely and strictly private affairs of individuals having nothing to do with the state.

With the 42nd amendment of the constitution of India enacted in 1976, the preamble of the constitution asserted that India is a secular state, meaning there are no any state religion in India.

Objectives:

- (i) To understand the concept of secularism.
- (ii) To explain the historical perspective of secularism in india.
- (iii) To understand secularism in the constitution of india
- (iv) To identify major challenges faced by secularism in India

Methodology: This present paper is descriptive study based on the secondary data collected from the published and unpublished records, reports etc. The secondary sources are journals, books, websites, newspapers, magazines, wikipedia etc.

Review of related literature

The crisis of secularism in India (Duke University press,2007), edited by Anuradha D.N and Rajeswari S.R, in this book, describes some theoretical issues such as the relationship between secularism and democracy and the shortcomings of the categories of majority and minority. This book addressed two of the most politically charged sites of crisis: personal law and the right to practice and encourage religious conversion. This book also analyzes the shortcomings and uncertain future of secularism in the world Today. Reimagining Indian secularism (Rajeev Bhargava), in this book author argues that secularism in India doesn't demand that the state is against to religion but rather than it combat institutionalized religious domination both between and within religions

Secularism and Indian constitution: An overview (2014),Lalu Dyavappa and Rathod P. B, in this study describe India as basically a secularist state therefore, all religion is treated equally. They concluded that India has been declared a secular nation by its Indian constitution and it is every citizen of India's responsibility to believe in this declaration. On the basis of the above literature review, this study attempts to analyze various challenges to secularism in India and some further actions which are needed for secularism in India.

Concept or meaning of secularism:

Secularism is most commonly defined as the separation of religion from civil affairs and the state , and may be broadened to a similar position seeking to remove or to minimize the role of religion in any public sphere . The terms secularism has a broad range of meanings , and in to the most segmatic , may encapsulate any stance that promote the secular in any given context. There are distinct tradition of secularism in the west , like the French, Benelux-German, Turkey and Americans models and beyond as in india where the emphasis is more on equality before law and state neutrality rather than blanket separation. The purpose and arguments in support of secularism vary widely, ranging from assertions that is a crucial element of modernization or that religion and traditional values are backward and divisive to the claim that is the only guarantor

of free religious exercise. The preamble of the constitution of India reflect the philosophy of the constitution starts with the word, " we are the people of India having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN, SOCIALIST, SECULAR, DEMOCRATIC, REPUBLIC and to secure to all its citizens **justice** : Social, economic, And Political,

Liberty: of thought expression, belief , Faith and Worship.

Equality: of status and of opportunity to promote among them all.

Fraternity: assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nations.

Secularism in the of history in india:

Secularism traditions are very deep rooted in the history of India . Indian culture is a composite one which is based on the blending of various spiritual traditions and social movements. In ancient India the Sanatan Dharma (Hinduism) was basically allowed to develop as a holistic religion by welcoming different spiritual traditions and trying to integrate them into a common mainstream . The development for Vedas and various interpretations of the Upanisads and the Puranas clearly highlight the religious plurality of Hinduism.

Emperor Asoka was the first great emperor to announce , as early as third century B.C that the state wouldn't prosecute any religious sect. In his 12 Rock edit , Asoka made an Appeal not only for the toleration of all religion sects but also to develop a sprit of great respect towards them. The pleaded for restrain of criticism of others religious sect. In medieval India the Sufi and Bhakti movements bond people of various community together with love and peace. The leading lights of this movements were Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti, Baba Farid , Sant. Kabir Das , Guru Nanak Dev, Sant Tukarama and Meera Bai. They contributed to the development of a composite culture in such a manner that nobody dares to challenge. Them the remarks of Guru Nanak , when he says that "there is no Hindu and no Musolman, as there is no destination between man and man give support to the roots of secularism".

The Mughal emperor the great Akbar also to a great extent promoted the policy of toleration of different religions; his propagation of Din- E -Elahi(Divine faith) sulh-E-kul (peace with all)was highly inspired by the spirit of secularism. The spirit of secularism was strengthened and enriched through the Indian freedom movement too. In the initial part of the Indian freedom movement, The Liberal like Sri-Feroz Shah Mehta, Govind Ranade, Gopalkrishna Gokhale by and large pursued a secular approach to politics. The Constitution drafted by Pandit Moti Lal Nehru as the chairman of the historic Nehru Committee in 1928, had the following provision of secularism as “There shall be no state religion for the Commonwealth of India or for any province in the Commonwealth, nor shall the state, either directly or indirectly, endow any religion any preference or impose any disability on account of religious belief or religious Status”.

The principal advocates of secular ideology in modern India were Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Gandhiji's secularism was based on a commitment to the brotherhood of religious communities based on their respect for and pursuit of truth. Whereas Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's secularism was based on a commitment to scientific humanism tinged with a progressive view of historical changes. Pandit Nehru Has been a leading champion of the concept secular State. The Creation of India as a secular state has been accepted as one of his greatest achievements .

At present scenario in the context of India, the separation of religion from the state constitutes the core of the philosophy of secularism. The expression ‘Secular’ has also a special significance in the context of the historical development of Indian polity. In India, The World secular is identified with tolerance among the different religions. In a secular state, no one enjoys any special privilege in national life or in any type of conduct for international relations. No group of citizens arrogates to itself the right and privileges which are denied to others.

In a secular State, the relationship between religion and individuality is an independent variable in the sense that each and every citizen is free to choose his or her own

religion or even refuse to adhere to any one of them. The State has no business to disturb in the right to conscience.

Secularism in the constitution of India:

The constitution of India has adopted a system of political philosophy that all forms of the religious faith and worship are of equal status and has accepted the view that public education and other matters of public policy should be conducted without the introduction of religious sentiments. The Indian constitution has elaborated the principle of secularism in great detail. It specifies that the state should refrain from either penalizing or favoring any of its people on religious considerations. In fact, India adopted secularism to facilitate the promotion of religious tolerance and cultural Co-existence.

It is true that the word "Secular" did not first occur either in article 25 or 26 or in any other article of preamble of the constitution. By the 42nd constitutional amendment Act of 1976, the preamble was Amended. Since then India became a sovereign, socialist secular democratic and republic. The constitution says that, 'there shall be no State religion in India'. The State will neither establish a religion of its own nor confer any special patronage upon any particular religion. It follows from this that:

- a. The state will not compel any citizen to pay any taxes for the promotion or maintenance of any particular religion or religious institution (Article -27).
- b. No religious instruction shall be provided to any educational institution wholly provided by state funds (Article 28 (1)).

According to Article 28 of Indian constitution, every person is guaranteed the freedom of conscience and the freedom to profess, practice and propagate his own religion, subject only

- (i) To restriction imposed by the State in the Interests of public order, morality and health,

(ii) To regulation or restriction made by the state relating to any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practices, but do not really apply to the freedom of conscience.

(iii) To measure social reforms and to throw open of Hindu religion, constitution of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus. Subjected to above limitation a person in India shall have the right not only to entertain any religious belief but also to practice the observance dictated by such belief article-(25) .

Challenges of Secularism in India:-

No doubt we are moving from religiosity to a secular way of life. However, evidence shows that religious beliefs have not fully declined in our society. Communalism, fundamentalism and Sikhism in India suggest that no necessary connection exists between modernization and secularization. Supernatural elements are being revived and revitalized. Thus India is trending towards desecularization .

Critics have alleged that the Indian polity has not been able to develop alone. True secular lines and it suffers from serious shortcomings. Some of the important factors which have impeded the growth of normal secularism in India are follows :-

1. Problem of uniform civil code : A problem of universal civil code is essential in the direction of bringing about national identity and the integration of members of all religious communities into one bond of common citizenship. Following Independence it was hoped that this step would be taken to usher in secular society. But unfortunately till now no progress has been made in the evolution of uniform civil code and today its adoption appears to be more problematic than it was at the time when the constitution was framed. Thus the Muslim minority Compelled the Government, in 1986, to enact Legislation concerning maintenance of divorced women which it felt was closer to its personal law and therefore, religiously more acceptable. Modern Secular considerations and, opinion of those Muslim who took a secular position, were given no

cognizance by the government. Similarly other minorities like Christian and Sikhs, too, have given some indications that would render the formulation and enforcement of a uniform civil code impossibility. Such Limitations indicate that the path leading to truly Secular society in India is strewn with numerous hurdles.

2. Politics and Religion: The political parties in India have tended to use religion and cast factors for the promotion of their political interests and thus greatly undermined the Secular values. The growing communalism has also greatly hampered the growth of genuine secularism in India. Despite abandonment of communal electorates and a ban on the use of religion for soliciting votes, the various political parties and groups have frequently made use of communal factors to get into power.

3. Failure of the Govt. in Evolving a Just Economic order: The failure of the government to evolve a just economic order and eliminate poverty also gave a serious set back to Secularism. The common masses suffering from deprivation and grinding poverty could not develop any faith in the polity which failed to provide them basic necessities and consequently did- not attach importance to secular values.

4.Cultural Symbols and secularism: Many Cultural rituals and ceremonials like Bhoomi puja, breaking of coconuts on inaugural or auspicious occasions, performing of aarti and applying to 'tilak' to distinguished guests are perceived by Hindus as Cultural or nationalistic expressions, but to no Hindus these are manifestations of Hindu culture. Such rituals are performed even on state functioning and therefore, Create unnecessary misgiving about the neutrality of the state.

5. Minority Group perceptions:-Apart from education and Job, prejudice and discrimination are Perceived as operating in the matter of intergroup violence and conflict. There is now ample evidence to show that at times the administrative machinery of the state does not operate impartially at the time of communal riots, those responsible for ensuring law and order act in a non-secular way and tend to victimise members of minority groups. The minorities are

in fear of the gaint majority. Which has the brute Strength to overpower them and divests them of their distinctive characteristics. Furthermore,loyalties continue to be particularistic rather than Universalistic.

6.The Defective Educational System :- the defective educational system which has encouraged the people to think in terms of groups and communities, has also failed to inculcate secular ideas in the minds of young students and promote feelings of mutual give and take.

7. The Distortion of the Constitutional and Democratic Institutions :- The distortion of constitutional and democratic institutions has also contributed to the weakening of secularism in India. The constitutions and the political institutions have not worked the way they were envisaged by the farmers of the constitution. For example, though use of religion is not permitted for soliciting votes yet certain religious political parties have made free use of factors like religion, casts etc. to Secure votes. All this has hampered the growth of a true secular polity in the country.

Need for further Action :

- Since Secularism has been declared as part of the basic Structure of the constitution, the government must be made accountable for implementing it.
- Define the word “ minority”. The concept of secularism is based on recognition and protection of minorities. These two cannot be separated.
- Setting up of a commission on secularism for ensuring adherence to the constitutional mandate on secularism.
- Separation of religion from politics is of such urgency that no time should be wasted in bringing this about.
- It is the duty of the secular and democratic forces to rally behind those political forces. That really professes and practices secularism.
- In a secular state religion is expected to be a purely personal and private matter and is not supposed to have anything to do with the governance of the country.

Conclusion:

After a long history of Communal incident in India, still now secularism is seen as the only possible option that would be able to provide harmonious and peaceful survival for the different religious and casts of Indian society.

It is important to note that we need a proper educational plan too, to Slightly redesign our existing curriculum in schools and colleges. The text books presenting distorted historical facts have to be changed and secular ideas will have to be inculcated in the innocent mindset of our young generation. The sacrifices and hardships of all religious communities and their contribution towards freedom and development of the country need to be focused in the books of history at school and college level. Importance of various cultures and traditions of different religions in the peculiarity of the country should have to be discussed properly. At last, since India has been declared a secular state by its written constitutions, therefore it is the responsibility of every Indian to stand by and believe in this declaration. Then only in future India will become a pure secular state in the world.

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