

Chapter-5

Conclusion

After discussing in detail the nature of Indian secularism, the present dissertation tries to state the main points. It is a recognized fact that it is difficult to reconcile the ideology of *secularism* with Dharma. There is one aspect of religion that is diametrically opposed to *secularism*. It is the religion of law. It may govern well-established and powerful religious organizations like the *Christian Church* or may be embodied in the books of law written by the ancient constitution builders belonging to different religions. The *Smritis* and *Shariat* are such works of law. In the West, The *Roman Catholic Church* exerted its authority over the *European* states for a long time. Thus religion and politics came in direct conflict with each other. It came to an end only when the states in *Europe* freed themselves altogether from the powerful hold of Papal authority and the Church. The Western democratic states in principle do not interfere with the affairs of the Church and they do not allow the latter to probe into their own secular affairs. Thus *secularism* and *Christianity* have maintained their co-existence and have practically kept themselves apart from each other in the West in the modern era. The situation in the communist states has been entirely different. Religious freedom was defined clearly in a considerable measure in these states. But the Church was able to maintain its existence in some way or the other in the communist states in *Europe*. The two great ancient religions of *China* namely, *Taoism and Confucianism*, and *Buddhism* which reached there from India in the early centuries of the *Christian* era, have practically ceased to govern and illuminate the life of the masses of that ancient land after the advent of communism. The ancient civilization and culture of *China* has also lost its old glory and grandeur along with them. The secular democratic states of the *West* have shown a good deal of tolerance towards *Christianity*, though they have kept themselves aloof from it. So their peaceful co-existence has been possible there.

In *India*, the relation between religion or *Dharma* and *secularism* is still in a state of utter confusion. The secular democratic state of *India* like the *Western* democratic states has rightly kept itself aloof from the religion of the law. It has been a right step in a multi-religious country like India. But its retention of the *Muslim* Personal law governed by the *Shariat* has weakened it and deprived it of its moral authority. In a considerable measure, the state has allowed full freedom to individuals and different religious communities of the

country in respect of their religious beliefs and practices, modes of worship. So there is no cause of conflict between religion and secularism on this ground. People enjoy religious freedom in the secular state of *India* practically in the same way as they have enjoyed it before. Thus the secular state has not come in conflict with religion so far as its external aspect is concerned. It consists of religious beliefs, dogmas, religious practices. But it has certainly come in conflict with the internal or deeper aspect of religion or *Dharma* which shapes human mind and provides direction to the conduct and behavior of the individuals and the communities. This deeper or higher aspect of *Dharma* has been called true religion by the celebrated philosophers and saints in India of the present century. It mainly consists of the perennial truths and values that sustain human life and enrich its quality in all possible ways. It is these values that establish moral order in society which elevate man morally and spiritually and make him a social and cultural being. It was due to this reason that the ancient seers and philosophers of India put *Dharma* at the centre of the entire range of human life, spiritual as well as secular. *Artha* and *Kāma*, wealth and pleasure respectively, were not given an independent status in the empirical life of man. They were linked with *Dharma*. *Dharma* provided a norm which was supposed to guide man in all his secular affairs and activities both at the time of peace as well as of war. Thus *Dharma* has constituted the foundation of the life of the individual and the community in India from the very beginning. It has given a definite shape and sustenance to Indian culture and has maintained its continuity through all the ups and downs of history up to this day.

Secularism in India has come into direct clash with this aspect of *Dharma* called true religion. The state has not given any place to this deeper or higher universal *Dharma* in its secular scheme of life. It has compartmentalized the life of the individual and the community into the religious and secular. The ethical or value aspect of religion or *Dharma* has ceased to govern man's conduct and behavior in the different spheres of his secular life and activities. *Dharma* that provides values or norms does not teach man how he can attain prosperity, success, fame in the different spheres of secular life. But it does teach man how he has to maintain his character, honesty, integrity, sense of duty and discipline in his personal and professional life and in all his activities. In this way it conditions and directs human conduct and behavior. The laws of the state alone cannot make men moral. People who commit wrong acts, find out ways and means to escape punishment even after breaking the laws. These laws fail to mould and develop the character of the people. This function has been performed by *Dharma* throughout the ages.

All the higher religions have, in different ways, laid great emphasis on this ethical aspect of *Dharma*. But the secular state of India has given no place to this ethical and spiritual religion in its constitution. It has not taken any steps to make people conscious of its importance and relevance for their earthly existence, for their welfare, happiness, peace, and security. So, India today is faced with the most serious crisis of its history. It is the crisis of values.

The universal and spiritual *Dharma* sustains life and promotes its welfare in every respect of our life. But the democratic state of India has taken every possible step to make people secular, *dharma-nirpekshata*. *Dharma-nirpekshata is men's life in his* now conceived as the supreme value. *Dharma*, according to the secularist view, is something absolutely other worldly. So, it could not be given any place in the empirical life and secular affairs of the people. In this respect, *Indian secularism* has fully imitated and adopted the pattern of *secularism* of the *Western* democratic states. One hardly finds any difference between the Indian and Western secularist approach to *Dharma* or religion. The non-religious and anti-religious ideologies that have been developed in the West in the modern era are unanimous in denying the relevance and necessity of religion for earthly existence¹

The secular state of India has accepted the non-religious philosophy of life for itself and for the people. The secular states not only keep politics apart from religion, but they take great care in keeping education apart from religion. Indian state has followed the West in this respect. Thus the democratic state has not only imported *secularism* from the West, but it has followed the Western model in respect of the application of secular ideology to the various spheres of life, specially education. The teachers of India, throughout the ages paid great attention to build the character of students by inculcating to them respect and regard for the higher moral and spiritual values of life, which constitute the real meaning and essence of *Dharma*. But the system of education in the post-independence era has ignored this most important aspect of life altogether. It has attained phenomenal success in making education absolutely secular, *dharma-nirpekshata*. But confusion arises between *dharma-nirpekshata* and *sarvadharmasamabhava* they cannot be treated as equivalents. It is *sarvadharmasamabhava* which has constituted an essential feature of *Hinduism* and of Indian culture as a whole and not *dharma-nirpekshata* which is utterly foreign to it. If the secular state of India has adopted the policy of *sarvadharmasamabhava*, its credit does not go to secular ideology. It is simply the continuation of the policy adopted by the *Hindu*

kings and rulers of India down the ages. The political leaders and rulers of the secular state of India have created a good deal of confusion in the mind of the people by identifying the concept of *dharma-nirpekshata* with the policy of *sarvadharmasamabhava*. The ideology of *dharma-nirpekshata* which constitutes the essential meaning of *secularism* now needs a critical examination and evaluation in the multi religious country like India. The question whether *secularism* and *Dharma* can be reconciled or not. The religion of the law cannot be reconciled with *secularism*. But there is no inherent opposition between ethical and spiritual religion and *secularism*, if the latter frees itself from its narrow dogmatic pretensions and its imaginary interpretation of religion. So long as the upholders of *secularism* conceive religion as something absolutely otherworldly, there can be no reconciliation between the two. But reconciliation between them is possible if it is admitted that religion not only fulfils the other worldly needs of man, but it plays a vital contribution in developing faith and respect in the people toward the moral and spiritual values of life. It has played this vital role at least in this country since the dawn of history. So *dharma-nirpekshata* is in no way entitled to displace *Dharma* and occupy its place in the life of the individual, of Indian society and nation. ²

India cannot live without its *Dharma*, Its universal spiritual religion. The great sages, philosophers and thinkers of India of the nineteenth and present century, namely, *Swami Dayananda, Vivekananda, Tilak, Gandhiji, Tagore, Sri Aurovinda* and others have brought this truth into clear focus. So the ethical and spiritual *Dharma* has to be given its rightful place in the constitution of India, as well as in the secular scheme of life. This is possible only if the democratic state of India makes a resolve and comes forward to affect a practical synthesis between *secularism* and *Dharma*.

But *secularism* by itself cannot provide any guarantee of religious freedom and tolerance. It can be guaranteed only if *Dharma* is assigned a place of honor in the constitution of the country and the universal ethical and spiritual religion is allowed to govern and operate freely in the life of the people and the rulers of the country. The place given to this universal *Dharma* in the constitution of India will not make the state theocratic in character. A theocratic state is governed by the religion of the law. These laws are generally conceived as the divine commands and are embodied in the books of law which are treated as sacred. The priesthood commands great authority in such states. The universal *Dharma* is radically different from the religion of the law. The latter is imposed from outside, whereas the former constitutes the meaning and truth of human life,

individually as well as collectively. It resides within man and not outside. It shows people the way to act and behave as social and cultural human beings and attain a higher level of moral and spiritual life. It alone can promote in an effective way the cause of unity among the people and of national integration. The universal spiritual religion based on the perennial moral and spiritual values of life can alone teach the people of India today, the lesson of tolerance, compassion and of sanctity in their conduct and behavior. It can go a long way in bringing the people belonging to different religious closer to one another and establishing concord, peace and amity in the country.

So, *secularism* does not stand for the destruction of Religion, it rather stands for the destruction of that which, in fact, is not religion. We need *secularism* for the sake of true religion. For an orthodox believer, rational thought and scientific knowledge constitute a danger to religion, ideas of equality and social liberation constitute a danger to religion. They, therefore, work up irrational fears and insecurities in themselves and to their followers. According to *Vivekananda* religion of the world have become lifeless mockeries. It is this mockery of religion that secularization opposes and this opposition makes it possible for the truth in religion to emerge and find expression. Following the footsteps of *Vivekananda*, *Radhakrishnan* affirmed the universality of the spirit, the universality of all religions. *Radhakrishnan* stressed the authentic spirit of religion. Religion is an expression; it is the toleration of others and is service of man.³

A truly religious man is as much religious in his place of work as in his prayer room. To him nothing is secular in the ordinary sense, for he views life as a long act of worship. Religion, apart from caste, creed, and dogmas emphasizes principles like truth, justice, equality, and love. Religion is commitment to these principles. If religion has any justification, it is because it stands for these values. The two concepts, 'the religion' and 'the secular' cannot be kept apart. Religion, in the true sense, is an overall attitude which governs all aspects of life. According to *Vivekananda* religion is not necessarily to be related to God or any supernatural entity, for in the ultimate analysis it is nothing but the manifestation of divinity already in man. It only implies the best human virtues that lie latent in the self of man and religion is nothing but a mental exercise to archive the fullest development of these virtues. People of all religions will then be united under a common religion which may go by the name of religion of *humanity* and the religion of *humanity* based on true education.

So in tune with *Swamiji*, we want that education through which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet. Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man. All knowledge therefore, secular or spiritual, is in the human mind. In most of the cases, this truth is not manifested, but remains latent and when the truth comes to the manifest content, we declare 'we are learning'. Knowledge is inherent in humans from eternity. This is not acquired skill. Its manifestation is only a question of being conscious of it. The same is applicable with the education of the child. A child educates itself. Every soul is the Soul of God. Education is not the amount of information that is put into one's brain mechanically. Knowledge means wisdom not information We must learn to assimilate good ideas. We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded and by which one can stand on one's own feet. The end of all education, all training, should be man-making and the aim of all training is to make proper human being Here we may recall a famous saying of Hegel, the great German Philosopher who commented, "Be a man". The training, by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful, is called education. The very essence of education is concentration of mind. The power of concentration is the only key to open the treasure-house of knowledge. Controlled desire leads to the highest results. Transform the libidinal energy into spiritual energy and then alone faith and *shraddha* (respect\faith)will come. The doctrine of *Shraddha* or genuine faith is one of the most potent factors of humanity. Habit is the second nature of man. The only remedy for bad habits is counter habits. All bad habits can be controlled by good habits. Good character is formed by repeated habits and repeated habits alone can reform character. We commit mistakes because we are ignorant about our real inherent nature. The ideal of faith in ourselves is of the greatest help to us. If the faith in us had been more extensively taught and practiced, then of course, the evils and miseries would have vanished. Religion is the innermost core of education. But no scriptures can make us religious. Religion is not in doctrines or dogmas, nor in intellectual argumentation, it is being and becoming, it is realisation. The in tensest love that humanity has ever known has come from religion. The noblest words of peace that the world has ever heard have come from men of the religious plane. At the same time the bitterest denunciation that the world has ever known has been uttered by religious man. Each religion brings out its own doctrines and insists upon them as being the only true ones. Some will even draw the sword to compel others to believe as they do. This is not through wickedness, but through a particular disease of the human

mind called fanaticism. Yet out of this strife and struggle, this hatred and jealousy of religion and sects, there have raised from time to time great voices proclaiming peace and harmony. *Sri Ramakrishna*, a grand brilliant intellect harmonized all conflicting sects not only in India but also outside India; and brought a marvelous harmony, the universal religion, into existence. As a tolerant and respectable person he loved every one and to him all religious were true. His whole life was spent in breaking down the barriers of sectarianism and dogma. Tolerance means acceptance and exclusion. So *Swamiji* solicited to all-"Let us take in all that has been in the past, enjoy the light of the present and open every window of the heart for all that will come in the future. Solution to all the prophets of the past, to all the great ones of the present and to all that are to come in the future.'⁴

In conclusion it may be remarked that the term *secular* denotes a kind of open space, where different types of faith may co-exist. If we follow this meaning of the term *secular* , then no conflict will result in near future.

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