

Secularism in Indian Culture: A Critical Study

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APRIL, 2017**

DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled ;Secularism in Indian Culture :A Critical Study, has been prepared by me under the guidance of Dr, Debika Saha, Professor of Philosophy, University of North Bengal. No part of this thesis has formed the basis for the award of any degree or fellowship previously.

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Dedicated To

LATE URMILA CHOWDHURY

(My Grandmother-in-Law)

GOD EVER REMAINS PRESENT AT THE DOOR
OF THE DEVOTEE AND HE DOES NOT MAKE ANY
DISTINCTION OF CASTE OR CREED, BETWEEN A HINDU
AND A MUSLIM. AS THE WORLD IS LIGHTED BY THE
RAYS OF THE MOON, SO EVERY LIVING BEING IS BORN
OUT OF THE SAME DIVINE SPRIT

Lalon Faqir

THE UNIQUE ENDEAVOUR OF INDIA HAD ALWAYS BEEN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF UNITY AMIDST DIVERSITY, DIRECTING VARIOUS ROAD-WAYS TOWARDS A SELF-SAME OBJECTIVE AND TO REALISE AND FEEL DOUBTLESSLY THE UNITY AMONGST MULTIPLICITY AS ITS INNERMOST APPRECIATION-WHATEVER DIFFERENCE SEEMS APPARENT FROM OUTSIDE AND TO DISCOVER THE DEEPER LINK INHERENT IN IT WITHOUT DESTROYING THEM...INDIA NEVER DISCARDS ANYTHING BUT MAKES EVERYTHING HER VERY OWN BY ACCEPTING EVERYTHING

Rabindranath Tagore

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Abstract

Secularism in Indian Culture: A Critical Study

Secular traditions are very deep rooted in the history of India. Secularism is the key to Democracy. The term 'democracy' derived from the ancient Greek "*Demokratia*," which literally means power that belongs to the people. In the sixth century B.C. a large number of states in Northern India were not ruled by kings but formed petty republics or *oligarchies*. But all these republican states were destroyed by the Imperial *Guptas*.

Indian culture is a mixed one which is based on the blending of various spiritual traditions and social movements. Hinduism is known as *Sanatan Dharma*. The development of four *Vedas* and the various interpretations of the *Upanishads* and the *Puranas* clearly highlight the religious plurality of Hinduism. Religious traditions arose from different ancient theist schools of philosophy. They defined the guiding principles of the personal and social conduct for their followers and utmost emphasis is placed on the higher moral and spiritual values which is the characteristic feature of Indian cultural heritage.

Two heterodox systems have established themselves as well-defined philosophical schools surviving in this country till now. They are Jainism and Buddhism. The two sects have some basic doctrinal similarities. Complete liberation from the cycle of rebirths is the highest aim of life.

Jain canon recommends a well-defined code of conduct (*achara*) for its followers. The code consists of five elements called *vratas*. Here it may be mentioned with emphasis that Jain canonical texts have recommended only a moral code that is necessary to ensure social stability and this shows their secular tendency. In fact modern followers of the faith strive to show that they are not atheist. Jains uphold that the legislation formulated by the ruling king or democratically elected government have to be obeyed by everyone without question. This shows the secular tendency of the Jains.

The fundamental principles of Buddha's teaching are the four *Aryasatyas* or Noble Truths. Buddha's philosophy is known as the doctrine of the Middle Path.

In India, Buddhism became the state religion in the third century BC at the time of Aśhokā. After the battle of *Kalinga*, he took refuge to the non-violent and humanitarian

religion of Buddhism. In his 12th Rock-edict Asoka made an appeal not only for the toleration of all religion sects but also to develop a spirit of great respect toward them. The religious tolerance expressed by Asoka more than 2300 years ago has been one of the cherished Indian social values. Asoka's secular outlook is one of the landmarks not only of Indian civilization but also of the human civilization itself.

In medieval India the *Sufi* and *Bhakti* movements bind the people of various communities together with love and peace. The leading lights of these movements were Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti, Guru Nanak Dev, Saint Tukaram and Mira Bai. They contributed to the development of a humanitarian culture. The great Akbar to a great extent promoted the policy of toleration of different religions. His propagation of *Din-e -Illahi* was highly inspired by the spirit of secularism.

The coming of Islam to India led to a series of remarkable responses. It is not possible for two cultures to exist side by side without influencing one another and in India the Hindu and Muslim patterns of culture have had a good deal of sharing. Evidence for this can be found not only in the development of new schools of painting sculpture and architecture and music it can also be observed in religious movements. The devotional movement of the *Bhakti* cult and the tradition of the Islamic-*Sufis* bear the proofs of this blending culture.

In the last two-hundred years *Hinduism* has been greatly influenced by the impact of the West.. These new developments are partly the result of the influence of Christianity which is also connected with the rise of a new middle class.

The first period of Western impact which covers the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is characterized by the influence Christianity.

And the second period is known as the period of 'Hindu Revivalism' or 'Hindu Reformism'. The pioneer in this movement was Raja Rammohan Roy. In 1828 he founded the *Brahma Samaj* based on the Unitarian doctrines of the *Upanishad*.

Rammohan's work was continued by Debendrenath Tagore. His son, the poet Rabindranath although born as *Brahmo* saw that the *Samaj* had one great weakness ;it embraced only the elite. In his poetry and other writings we find Rabindranath voicing the *Wisdom* of the outcastes. In his *Hibbert Lectures at Oxford* he expressed his love for the poetry of the medieval mystics and the *Bauls*. His philosophy is a religious synthesis of

Abstract Monism and a particular type of theism. Reality according to him is one. He identifies this reality with personal God i.e. '*Jiban-Devata*'. So Tagore's philosophy oscillates between Sankara's *Vedanta* and *Vaisnavism*.

Another new school of Hinduism developed in Bengal under the influence of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. His approach was not intellect and he put much emphasis on simple devotion to God. This is of course in direct line with the *Vedanta*. His disciple Swami Vivekananda, declared himself *a socialist*-spread this *Vedantic* doctrine of *Advaita* in India and abroad and many Western countries now have branches of the Ramakrishna Mission. In the time when materialistic science was gaining ascendance, Vivekananda introduced to the Western world the ideas of *Vedanta* which he called *the science of the soul*. He claimed *Vedanta* to be the only religion fit for the rational mind. His philosophy is known as spiritual humanism.

Mahatma Gandhi is often referred to as the spiritual father of Indian Secularism. Gandhian politics was inseparable from religion. There was hardly any Hindu religious practice to which he did not give a worldly secular content. But it is a much debated question that did he secularize religion, or sacralise politics? He declared politics as *yugadharma*. But he also secularised Hinduism as much as possible within the spiritual framework. His secular vision becomes clear when instead of "God is Truth" he ascribes to "Truth is God".

The rulers of India after Independence imported the idea of secularism from the West known here as *dharmanirapekshata*. The word "secularism" in the Preamble to the Constitution means "equal respect for all religions" (*Sarva Dharma Sambhava*) instead of *Dharma Nirapeksha*, i.e., state neutrality in matters of religion. This approach implies holding in balance multiple religious varieties by secular state and the consequent development of national reconciliation.

So the present secular view of religion of India may apparently look like a paradoxical proposition. India mainly faces two types of crisis: One is Ideological and the other is Real. Because Secularism in India is a enigmatic word, what it means depends upon who uses the word and in what context. There is, therefore, no single or straight answer to the question as to why secularism in India always raises debate. But it is perfectly possible and indeed workable in real life to achieve a secular vision if we follow the teaching of Swami Vivekananda. According to him 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 achieve the fullest development of these virtues. People of all religions will then be united under a common religion which may be given the name of religion of humanity. India will be a real secular country when each one of us has the feeling to follow this religion of humanity.

Preface

The present study is an attempt to explore and examine the concept of 'Secularism' in Indian Context. This is a burning issue of our time. Though this concept has a much broader area to cover, the present dissertation tries to locate it within Indian Culture only.

To present the above endeavor clearly, the present study is divided in five chapters. They are as follows (1) Introduction, (2) Secularism in Ancient Philosophy ; Jaina and Buddhist Philosophy,(3)Secularism in Modern Philosophy; Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi, (4) Crisis of Secularism in Present India, (5) Conclusion.

First chapter traces the origin of the concept historically and how it has been developed and used in different periods of history. Indian culture is mainly based on the four fundamental and universal values, viz, *Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksa*. The chapter tries to throw light on the above values and the changed perspective of the value-system in this 21st century.

The second chapter mainly focuses on the philosophies of Jaina and Buddhist Schools. It tries to analyze the secular thoughts of their philosophies.

Secularism in Modern India is the thrust of the third chapter. This chapter tries to make a threadbare analysis of the philosophical thoughts of Swami Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore. Besides that, attempt is made to analyze the thoughts of Raja Rammohan Roy and Mahatma Gandhi.

Crisis of Secularism in present India is the main tune of the fourth chapter. This chapter explores the nature of secularism in India and discusses the difficulties associated with this particular concept. Three basic assumptions are considered. First, secularism as an anti-religious or non-religious ideology has universal applicability, but has culturally specific expressions. Second, secularism will be welcomed by all right thinking persons, for it shows the way to the making of rational plans for social reconstruction and state action, placing ultimate faith in the adequacy of human agency. Finally, with appropriate corrective measures, it is possible to develop ideological secularism in India

The fifth chapter presents the concluding note and it attempts to throw light on the peculiarities of Indian Secularism.

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Chapter-1

Introduction

The principal objective of this dissertation is to explore the notion of secularism in Indian context. Though this concept has a much broader area to cover, the present study tries to locate the concept only in Indian concept. At first, the question arises, what is secular? Before getting the answer of that term, it is better to elaborate the meaning of democracy, because secularism is the key to democracy. And to unlock the meaning of democracy we are concentrating on the views of ancient Greek civilization. Democracy starts with secularism. It is only after secularism was established in the seventeenth century, the theory of social contract appeared. The idea was that society was made by man and not by a religious authority. People lived together and made laws to govern themselves, and they disown some of their rights to the ruler in return for peace and safety. The term 'democracy' derived from the ancient Greek "*Demokratia*," which literally means that power belongs to the people. It was actually a compound word, a combination of two words into one. The first is '*Demos*,' which in ancient Greek means 'people'. As *Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece* observes, while the word originally encompassed all of the people in a city or religion, it implicitly came to refer primarily to the common people in contrast to the upper class. The second word in democracy is "*Kratos*", or power. It is a power of common people. So, the word 'Democracy' in ancient Greek literally means '*rule of commoners*'.

The aim of politics, then, by extension, is to determine what kind of political association is the most effective in guaranteeing the individual's happiness. Aristotle describes man as naturally sociable and, therefore, political. So, the state is not only a means of meeting his physical needs, but also his need to be sociable, to discuss his concerns for justice, exercise virtue and lead in the fullest sense a virtuous and, therefore, a happy life. The interests of the state and individual are, therefore, identical in pursuing the happiness of the individual. Unlike modern views of the state in the Western liberal politics, there is no opposition between the interests of the state and the individual. In Aristotle's view man can only be truly human when he is totally involved in the affairs of the state: only then does he fulfil his ultimate purpose.

In '*Politics, Book iv*', Aristotle classified different forms of democracy. Of forms of democracy, first comes that which is said to be based strictly on equality. In such a democracy the law holds that it is just for the poor to have more advantage than the rich, and that neither should be masters, but both equal. For if liberty and equality, as it is interpreted by some, are the two important marks of democracy, they will be best attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost. And since the people are the majority, and the opinion of the majority is decisive, such a government must necessarily be a democracy. Following Aristotle, the term democracy may be interpreted in this way, i.e., (1) everyone is equal by law, regardless of wealth, (2) an individual must meet a modest minimum property qualification to hold public office, i.e., the magistrates are elected according to a certain property qualification, but a low one, he who has the required amount of property, has a share in the government, but he who loses his property loses his right (3) the nobly born may hold public office, but the law remains sovereign, i.e. in which all the citizens who are under no disqualification, share in the government, but still the law is supreme., (4) any one can hold public office but the law remains sovereign, i.e. everybody, he be only a citizen, is admitted to the government, but the law remain as supreme as before, and (5) anyone can hold public office and the public, rather than the law, is sovereign. i.e. the fifth form of democracy, in other respects the same, is that in which, not the law, but the majority have the supreme power, and supersede the law by their decrees. This is a state of affairs brought about by the *demagogues*. This last form is susceptible to the onset of *demagoguery*, in which a popular leader can win public opinion to such an extent that he can do as he wills without any hindrances.¹

After discussing the traditional Greek system, it is time now to explore the ancient Indian views of state; this will help us to locate the position of secularism clearly. In the sixth century BCE. a large number of states in northern India were not ruled by kings but formed petty republics or *oligarchies*. The existence of republican states in India, at that time, has been accepted by all scholars. There is no unanimity among scholars regarding the method of election and qualifications of voters. That was the age of Buddha and, therefore, the republican states of this period has been called, "Republics of the age of the Buddha". Buddhists had a commitment to discussion as a means of social progress. There are "*Buddhist councils*", which were held in aiming to settle dispute between different points of view. The *Buddhist* sources provide sufficient information regarding the then republican state of the Lichchavis. Gautama Buddha specified seven conditions for the

successful operation of the states. These conditions insisted on holding of full and frequent assemblies: meeting together in concord and rising in concord, carrying out business in concord, adhering to the ancient usages: honoring the older; protecting women and girls from violence; honoring *Chaityas* and protecting the saints. Besides this, we come across several terms in the ancient Indian literature to describe the republics, namely, *Gana*, *Sangha*, *Ganarajya* etc. It is assumed that *Gana* indicated a certain type of state or Assembly or Parliament, so called because of the number of the members present.

From the above information we learn about the existence of several republics during ancient times. Some of the prominent republics of that time were *Sakyas* with their capital at *Kapilavastu*., the *Koliyas* of *Ramagrama*., the *Liche* with their capital at *Vaishali*: the *Vidhans* with their capital at *Mithila* etc. It may be observed that the Republic in ancient India differed from republics in modern times in so far as the power was not shared by the entire population but only by a handful of persons. Further these republics were more of *Aristocratic* in which the power was concentrated to the upper section of society. This class mainly composed of *Kshatriya*, although the references in *Arthashastra* that power in certain republic were shared by military and the trading classes. One thing is quite certain that there did not exist any uniformity in the constitutional set up of the various republics. Probably the constitutional machinery of states like, *Mauryas*, *Koliyas* and *Sakyas* were quite different from that of *Yaudheyas* and *Milavas*. In the smaller states the business of the state was mainly carried through a Central Assembly which met at quite regular intervals. Each member of the aristocracy was known as *Raja*. In addition to the governing class, there existed certain artisans, farmers, servants, serfs, etc, but they did not have any effective say in the administration.

The Central Assemblies were most powerful bodies of the Republics. They not only elected members of the executive but also appointed military leaders. The foreign affairs of the state were also regulated by the Central Assemblies. They not only decided issues of peace and war but received foreign ambassadors. The Assembly exercised complete control over the executive. Kautilya, in his *Arthashastra* records that if the President of a *Sangha* or a member of the Executive Council was found guilty of mismanagement of public funds, they could be punished by state tribunals. The Assemblies were quite well-developed and worked according to well established rules, the matters were thoroughly discussed in Assembly and all the decisions were taken by majority vote. The decision taken by the Assembly without quorum was not considered valid. The use of voting tickets

was there. These tickets were known as *Salaka*. There existed an officer known as *Salakagrahaka*, who collected the votes either openly or secretly and announced the decisions. Committee system was also in vogue. These committees were often appointed to investigate specific issues and report to the *Sangha*.

Each *Gana* had a central Executive, consisting of four to twenty members. These members were probably elected by the General Assembly. It is not certain whether these members were picked up from amongst the members of the Assembly or outside or from certain leading families only. But it is certain that the members of the Executive Council are capable and dauntless leaders, who provided able leadership to the state during times of crisis. They were generally well-informed about laws, customs and traditions of land. The members of the Executive Council headed various departments and were assisted by officers of various grades in the discharge of their responsibilities.²

All these republican states were destroyed by the Imperial *Guptas*, who pursued the policy of extension of the empire and that of annexing the neighboring states. We find no existence of republican states in India afterwards.

The main source of Indian culture is religious ideology, though it is not detached from real life. *Dharma Artha, Kāma* and *Moksa* are the four *Purusārthas* of Indian life, where *Artha* and *Kāma* are treated as *dharmanirapeksha*. But *Artha* is never neglected in Indian culture. *Bramhanya, Buddha* and *Jaina* religious books bear the proof for that. Similarly *Arthashashtra, Kamasutra, Charak, Susrutsamhita*, and *Brihatsamhita* were written for providing the ways of happy life. Inside of the temple the deity gets the prime importance but on the walls of the temple the sculpture engraved, depicted the different moods of humans which bears the expressions of artist's creation. So both the asceticism of *Vedānta* and the pleasure principle of *Cārvāka* exist side by side in ancient Indian culture.. *Aryavatta and Brahmagupta*, scientists of ancient India wanted to discover the Truth as the subject of life, which is not transcendental.³

This above cultural scenario ruled even in social life. Various types of competitions were performed like sword-dance, hunting of beast or bird, The position of women were different. They performed to dance and sing specially with *Bina* or *Karotal*. Death was never their point of discussion except in case of war. Some commentators believe that in *Samveda Sukta*, 10th episode of *Rig-Veda* lies the beginning of *Mahakavya* or drama between the conversations of *Pururaba* and *Urbasi*. But not only pleasure, duty and

morality were also important to them. In general it may be commented, *Aryas* were interested in life, not afterlife. The prayers in *Rig-Veda* were mainly for long life, good health, wealth, strength, good food and drink, valiant son, and of course for the defeat of enemy. In this era, the natures of Gods were depicted in the form of humans. The Aryans were mainly hopeful, prayed for immortality and wished to attach with god.. For them that life was enjoyable not painful. It is possible to get liberation after the annihilation of desire.⁴

There are many hymns in *Rig-Veda* which prove that the Aryans constantly sought the help of their gods against non-Aryans. *Indra* was the main Aryan god. The head of the state was the king. There were no legal limits to the powers of the king. The Aryans used a moving car, known as the *Ratha*. The patriarchal family was the basis of social life. Women did not always remain indoors and moved freely and attended public feasts and entertainment parties and even went to battle-fields. They occupied a more respectable place among Aryans but they did not enjoy equal rights with men. The early Aryans divided the society in two parts--*Dvija* or twice- born and *Adivja* .In Chapter 10, of the *Rig-Veda* viz, *Purusha-sukta*, it has been mentioned that God created Brahmanas from his head, Kshatriyas from his arms, Vaisyas from his thighs and Sudras from his feet. This *chaturvarna-system* which has been gradually distorted in shape and meaning and replaced by the prevalent caste-system in India, had its beginning during the later *Rig-Veda* period. There was no rigidity in the system. Change in *Varna* was quite often possible with change in profession and there was inter-dining and inter-marriage. But the Sudras were distinguished from the rest. The chariot race, hunting, gambling and dicing, dancing and music were the main source of entertainment of the Aryans. Music, both vocal and instrumental, was well known. The drum, the lute and flute were very much familiar to them. Both men and women enjoyed themselves in festive assemblies with music and dance. The religion was utilitarian as the Aryans always expected power and prosperity by pleasing their gods. The religious attitude was optimistic towards life. The joys and pleasures of this life attracted them more than the life after death in heaven. The principles of *Karma* and that of the transmigration of soul, that is, the soul never dies and takes rebirth every time after the death of an individual, were yet not so much discussed at that time.

Thus, the *Rig-Vedic* period has its own distinct features which distinguish itself from the later. *Vedic* period and has its own importance. The *Rig-Veda* is therefore justly

regarded as a source-book of the first rate importance for the study and appreciation of the gradual development of Hindu culture, and no wonder it is revered by three hundred million Hindus as the holiest of the holy. ⁵

Later on, when society became more populated, priesthood came to dominate the scenario.. They were also classified according to position. On the top were *Brāhmins*, who used to direct the complex rituals, *Hotri* used to address Gods with *Mantras*, hymns, *Udgatri* used to sing *Samgana*, *Adharyu* used to recite *Mantras/* hymns. While offering their prayers, it was also noticed that the position and importance of God was appreciated and sometimes depreciated. In later *Vedic* era, the importance of *Indra* and *Agni* became downwards. *Brahmā* was placed on the top as a creator of the universe. *Siva* is often equated with *Rudra* of the *Vedic age*. *Vishnu* occupied a better position, and became the main worshipped god of the worldly people. *Pusan* acquired the role of *Sudra* God and a custodian of cattle groups. In *Rig-Veda* some *Suktas* were secular. They were secular in the sense that they were not directly related with any God, they were basically ethical (*Daanastuti, SamvadaSukta* etc.).

A new philosophy emerged with *Karmafalavāda* (*theory of Karma*) and *Janmantarvāda* (theory of rebirth) besides *Vedic* sacrifices. Common people came to believe that the consequences of one's action govern his happiness or woe. It disappointed them very much. And they realized that the so-called *Brāhmins* had no way to solve the above problems or way out. *Aranyak* emphasized on *Dhyan*, and *Atharvaveda* on *Sannyas*. *Maharshi Patanjali* had a prescription of *Yoga* and *Asana*. Scholar's opinion is that the *Upanisadic* theory on transcendence of *Jivātma* to *Pramātma* was just a philosophical basis of kingdom.

Not only spiritualism but materialistic philosophy is there in *Upanishads*. *Uddalak* was the propounder of it, who placed *Prakriti* in the place of God as a creator of universe and it was the first step towards the *Cārvāka* 's *Dehatmavada* (doctrine of the identity of the body and the soul). We are discussing the ancient trends of society only to show that though the term secular was not used at that period but their ways towards lives revealed a kind of secular attitude.

The emergence of *Brāhmanya dharma*, in later *Vedic* era, propagated a change in remodeling of society and in materialistic culture. Agricultural economy replaced the place of grazing cattle. Plough based agriculture transformed into iron based agriculture. Handi

craft developed along with agriculture, foreign business and coin were introduced. In society, the characteristics of *Varna* system like rights, and code of conduct become more distinct. Different professions came into existence following *Varna*. Later on, they became counted from birth. The constant flowing of tribes from different sector make the society more populated with lower caste people. *Brāhmīns* and *kshatriyas* were in charge to rule the society from sixth century BCE and it was regulated by scriptures. They used to take the surplus from farmers and mechanics and became rich in society. This system probably continued without any break from six century BCE till to third century AD. Buddhist and Jain, the protesting religions emerged against *Brāhmanya* religion too during this time. Buddhist and Jain were called *Nastika* because they did not accept the authority of *Veda*. *Carvaka*, *Ajibak*, *Nirgrantha*, *Jatilak*, *Paribrajak* were also regarded as *Nastikas*.⁶

The different phases of ancient Indian society are helpful here to understand the transition from one stage to another. Gradually *Sanatani Vedic* religion changed in *Pouranic dharma*. It was known as *Brahmanya dharma*. *Varna* system become more complex and strict, the social status of *Sudras* decreased. Historians divided this era in two forms. The first stage was from 500 BCE to third century AD, and the second stage was from fourth century to seventh century AD. We can know about the first stage from *Sutrasahitya*, *Smritisashtra*, *Puran* and from *the Mahakabyas*. Among the *Sutras* there were *Srutasastra*, *Dharmasastra*, and *Grihyasutra*. *Manusmriti* was the prime among *Smritisashtra*. Besides these texts, there were smrities like *Narad*, *Yagnabalkya*, *Brihaspati*, *Katayan*, and *Parasar*, *Bishnupuran* among *Puranas*. *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, are *the Mahakabyas* among other texts.⁷

Historians show that in present *Hindu Dharma*, (or *Brahmanya Dharma*) five trends exist. These were, *Vaisnab*, *Saiba*, *Sakta*, *Soura* and *Ganapatya*. They came together in *Gupta* Era and all together called *Panchopasana*.⁸ Each sect had their own God but they placed other's God in their own religion. Actually these Monotheists were similar in their religious procedure and languages. So they were consistent in their religious mind. They were called *Bhagavat Dharma* in early stages. To both *Vaisnaba* and *Saiba*, this name was applicable and later *Vaisnaba* adopted it. In the early stage, *Basudeva--Krishna of Jadav* tribe was worshiped as God and He become identified with *Vedic* God *Vishnu*. Later *Bhagavat Dhārma* became *Vaisnaba Dharma*. This *Dhārma* came to be known from fourth and third century BCE onwards.

Besides the emergence of Gods and Goddesses, *Brahmanya Dharma* correlated with many popular religions. Animals, Birds, Trees, Mountains, Rivers, acquired divine power. Cow and snake become Goddess, *Peepul Banyan* and *Tulsi* trees were worshipped. *Vaikunthya* as *Visnu's* home and *Kailasa* as *Shiva's* home were introduced as divine places. *Ganga* was treated as a holy river because its source is under the feet of *Visnu* and it flows in between *Siva's* matted hair to this world. These popular beliefs were very primitive but in that time they occupied place in *Brahmanya Dharma* along with saints like *Atri, pulalhya, Vasistha, Kashyap and Viswamitra*.

The five sects of *Panchopasana* had the path on *Bhakti*. So, *Brahmanya Dharma*, correlated with popular religion was based on *Bhaktimargo*. The *Bhakti* cult creates a relation between God and devotee, which is not possible by sacrifice. Surrender to God, firm belief, the source of this *Bhakti* are the main elements here. Though the existence of *Bhaktivada* could not remove the sacrifice at all, but, common man gradually got disillusioned from *Vedic* code of conduct. The *Mahakabyas, Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata*, and *Purānas* have got more religious importance than *Vedic* literature. The *Mahakabyas* were being sung by minstrel. The *Phakirs* were attached to any established religion. But during this period, the *Brahmins* took the upper hand and they wanted to add some religious flavor, so that they could easily win the hearts of the people. The prominent example of it was *Gītā*, as it was originated from *Krishna's* mouth the great Lord. Later *Gītā*, become the main religious book of *Vaisnava* doctrine. As *Bhaktivada* being popular, the social status of *Brahmin Priests* decreased, so that worship becomes personal matter. But they had the power to control men's social behavior as if it is God's order. Those who protest against this system were given punishment. The social regulators introduced four *Purusarthas* i.e. four principal aims of human life, -*Dharma* (piety), *Artha* (wealth) *Kāma* (love) and *Moksa* (salvation of soul), the consistence of first three show the way to the fourth. In this way, the need of man's material world was arranged to solve⁹

Before *Goutam Buddha's* reign, a drastic change was visible in socio-economic positions in India. The changes of that period influenced the history of Indian greatly. Not only in business and industry but in all the aspects of social life, the influences of science, contemporary religious and philosophical thoughts were visible. It is on this specific ground, *Goutama* and *Mahavira* preached their religion. It is noticed that different thoughts arose as a revolt against *Hinduism* in sixth century BCE. They did not believe

that the world is created by any supernatural power or by God himself. The ascetics, thinkers and philosophers were not supporting sacrifice and *Vedic* rites. They uphold a different view regarding rebirth and doctrine of *Karma*. They did not even believe in superiority of *Brahmins* and *Vedic* God/Goddess. They were in favor of a new religion instead of the ongoing *Vedic* religion. It is considered that in *Upanishadic* age, man's life is a part of greater life or worldly life. *Paramatma* become united with *Jibatma* after death; *Vedic* rites are capable to free man from the so-called 'life-cycle'. Only right work, right behavior, meditation and *bhakti* are the ways to attain salvation. This new philosophical doctrine changed the dominance of *Vedic* age and created a secular flavor in society.¹⁰

Sixth century BCE witnessed many religious movements in different parts of the world. In India too, we find an upheaval of new ideas leading to the rise of new philosophical tenets and religious sects. They were many varied views because philosophical speculations ranged from the religious speculations and craving to search for the Truth which was the result of *Upanishadic* thought. The old *Vedic* religion had ceased to be a living force; there was widespread discontent against religious rituals and bloody sacrifices. Hatred against the social order was prevalent, leading to worse conditions of the *Sudras*. The changing features of social and economic life, such as the growth of towns, expansion of the artisan class and rapid development of trade and commerce focused on the necessity to bring about changes in society and religion. The new ideas challenged the established social order particularly the caste-system, the religious rituals and sacrifices; the supremacy of the *Brahmanas*, particularly by the *Kshatriyas*, and all the worn-out customs of the society. The spirit of the age was against the existing organization of the society and against the caste-system. It was based on pure individualism and spiritualism. It emphasized personal liberty and purity and claimed that every individual had a right to attain *nirvana*.

By that time, economic conditions had changed to a great extent. Iron objects were made and used for agricultural purposes which resulted in enhancement of agriculture land and its production. Cattles were helpful in agriculture and therefore, cattle-rearing too was very much encouraged. Increased agriculture-production led to the growth of trade and commerce. It resulted in the growth of cities where the population of traders and labour was concentrated. It required changes in society and certain well entrenched traditions. The *Vaisyas*, having accumulated wealth and property, were gaining higher social status, the trading and commercial communities, where mostly *Vaisyas* ruled. They were in favor

of security of private property and better facilities for foreign trade i.e. social and religious sanction for sea-travelling which, by then, was not sanctioned by Vedic religion. These changed economic conditions necessitated changes in society and religion. Among them were the abolition of the privileges of the *Brahmanas* and, particularly, those of the *Purohitas*, relaxation in *Varna* or caste-system and abolition of ritualism. The neo-rich among the cities, particularly, the *Vaisyas* were keen to have these changes. The *Kshatriyas* saw an opportunity to gain advantages for themselves and utilize it for abolition of the supremacy of the *Brahmanas*. Therefore, they provided leadership to those who desired changes in society and religion. That is why we find that the preceptors of both *Buddhism* and *Jainism* which proved to be the most popular religious movements of that period were *Kshatriya* princes and both of them brought change in caste according to one's karma and opposed the prevalent caste-system, the supremacy of the *Brahmanas*, rituals and animal sacrifices. Both these religious sects, therefore, got support of the *Kshatriyas* and *Vaisyas* and because of the same reason we find that while Jainism discarded agriculture but did not protest against trade, Buddhism exhibited favorable opinion towards sea-voyages¹¹.

As a result, we find that the *Kshatriyas* used to reject the *Brahmanya Dharma* and tortured them, which scared the *Brahmins* and they took a shelter to the commands of *Sudras* descent, who were described in *Vedas* as dacoit, slave and *Sudras*. These *Sudras* become emperor of India later. This happened mainly for economical clash between *Brahmins* and *Buddhist*. We find in Kautilya's *Arthashastra* that in spite of race-consciousness, he helped to rise the *Sudras* and gave them some opportunities in different areas. Kautilya argues for the rights of *Sudras* and all classes to participate as warriors. He mentioned *Sudras* as artisans. In that age, the institution of slavery existed. They were sold and purchased in the open market. The slaves were, however, not ill-treated. There existed several rules for their protection. They could not be flogged or abused. They enjoyed the right to inherit the property of their parents. They could get rid of slavery by paying a stipulated amount. In fact, the treatment showed towards the slaves was good. The selling of *Sudras*, who is not a born slave, and has not attained adulthood, but is an *Aryan* in birth shall be punished with a fine. Any person who has voluntarily enslaved himself shall, if he runs away, be a slave for life. Similarly any person whose life has been mortgaged by others shall, if he runs away twice, be a slave for life.. Deceiving a slave of his money or depriving him of the privileges he can exercise as an *Aryan*, shall be punished with half the

fine levied for enslaving the life of an *Aryan*. *Arthashastra* states that *Aryans* were free man and could not be subject to slavery under any circumstances. The text contrasts *Aryans* with *Sudras*, but neither as a hereditary slave nor as an economically closed social class in a manner that the term *Sudras*, later was interpreted. The economically strong *Sudras* enjoyed some opportunity, but the fate of the downtrodden people remained as it was before. It is said that, this attitude towards *Sudras* was actually to rescue them from *Buddha*. So 'Aryatta' was one kind of bribe of Kautilya to *Sudras*. Kautilya prescribed a unique law regarding marriage. He has given in detail the rules for re-marriage, property of widows and abandoned wives. He ordered that the state should look after those helpless women who had no one to look after them. There is absolutely no mention of *Sati* i.e. *Sahamaram* during his time. A woman who had an aversion towards her husband, cannot dissolve her marriage with him against his will. Nor a man can dissolve his marriage with his wife against her will. But in case of husbands who have become ascetics, or who were dead, their wives may marry next in age to her former husband or she may marry one who belongs to the same *Gotras* i.e., her husband's relative. If a husband either is of bad character, or is long gone abroad, or has become a traitor to his king, or is likely pose a threat to his wife, or has fallen from his caste, or has lost virility, he may be abandoned by his wife.¹²

The attitude of Kautilya towards *Sudras* became more stable by king Asokā's withdrawal of special privilege to some extent, which *Brahmin* enjoyed before. Asokā was depended on the ideals of *Buddhism*. But the *Buddhism* of his age was not merely a religious belief; it was, in addition, a social and intellectual movement at many levels, influencing many aspects of society. Thus, his personal beliefs and the necessities of the empire gave birth to his policy of *Dhamma*. The *Dhamma* which was propagated amongst his subjects had many essential features. Among them, the description on the 12th Rock-edict of Asokā stated that the people should not only tolerate all religious sects but develop a spirit of reverence for all. This clearly shows there is a secular tendency in the mentality of the King. It declared that all people should talk sweetly to each other, purify their hearts, study the religious texts of each other, abstain from criticizing each other and praising their own religions, and they must observe non-violence in their personal, social, national and international life.

Thus Asoka's *Dhamma* was a code of moral duties, benevolent acts and freedom from passions for an individual. It comprised both personal and social moral virtues. The principles of *Dhamma* were such as could be acceptable to people belonging to any religious sect. Therefore, it could not be equated with *Buddhist Dhamma*. The *Dhamma* of Asokā was a practical code of conduct of social ethics which formed the basis of all religions. Its primary quality was social responsibility. Dr. Romila Thapar writes, "For Asokā, *Dhamma* was a way of life, the essence of what he had culled from the moral teaching of the various thinkers known to him, and probably his own experience of life. It was based on a high degree of social ethics and civic responsibility."¹³ Further, the *Dhamma* of Asokā was based on extreme toleration and its principles were freely drawn from moral precepts of all religions such as *Buddhism and Hinduism*. The credit to create this *Dhamma* belonged to him. As stated by Dr. Romila Thaper, *Dhamma* was Asokā's own invention. When he propagated his *Dhamma*, he did not propagate any particular religion. Rather, he desired that his subjects should practice religious toleration, engage in virtuous deeds and fulfill social obligations irrespective of religious distinctions. Dr. Romila Thaper writes, "In the propagation of his *Dhamma*, Asokā was attempting to reform the narrow attitude of religious teaching, to protect the weak against the strong, and to promote throughout the empire, a consciousness of social behavior so broad in its scope, that no cultural group could object to it."¹⁴ Further Asokā did not force his *Dhamma* on his subjects. He tried to persuade them to accept it. This attitude proved his secular mentality. When he appointed *Dhamma-Mahamatras*, he did not desire to pursue and enforce a religious policy to promote any particular religious sect but desired to promote the economic, social, religious and political life of all his subjects. If he would have desired to promote a particular sect, then there was no necessity to create the office of *Dhamma-Mahamatras*, as all religious sects existing at that time were not only free but capable enough to propagate their sects without the support of the state. Particularly, it was very much true of *Buddhism*. Dr. Romila Thaper writes, 'Had the *Dhamma* conformed to any of the religions, more particularly *Buddhism*, the institution of *Dhamma-Mahamatras* would have been superfluous.'¹⁵ *Dhamma-Mahamatras* did not help in the propagation of any particular religious sect. They, rather, helped the people in due observance of their respective religions without being detrimental to each other's faith and, one of their primary duties was to assist the destitute, the aged and the unfortunate ones in the society. Thus, the ideal of Asokā in the propagation of his *Dhamma* was a novel and secular ideal,

the so-called first secular ideal in Indian culture. Probably, no other Indian ruler, either before or after him, was guided in his state policies by a higher ideal than this. Only Akbar, the *Mughal* emperor, deserves comparison with him. Asokà's main feature of policy always remained humanism. He decided that all people would be treated as equals before law and justice and the same laws, whether civil or criminal, would apply to them. He decided that death-penalty was to be executed after three days of the judgment. He fixed certain days on which the prisoners and offenders were granted amnesty.¹⁶ But this equal treatment seemed to *Brahmin* very much intolerant and objectionable, because this new system of law deprived them from the opportunity of that *Brahmin* should not be slain or to given capital punishment.

According to the view of Shastriji and Jaisowal ,the revival of *Brahmanism* which ultimately reached its zenith during the period of the *Guptas*, was carried to success by the *Brahman* Commander-in-Chief ,*Pushyamitra Sunga*.¹⁷ He was the Commander-in-Chief of the army and he utilized his position to seize the throne from his weak king. He was a staunch *Brahmin* and a great champion of *Brahmanism* and revived its tradition. During this time *Manu-Smriti* was revised and the *Manu-Smriti*, *Visnu-Smriti* and *Yagyavalka-Smriti* were compiled at this age. *Sudra* had no power to confer judgment. A new culture grew in this age, Raja became representative of God, which was purely new and had no evidence in early Indian culture and literature. Division of class became more and more stagnant and immobile. The purity of blood of higher class became glorified. These signs showed that Indian culture was slowly proceeding towards feudal system.

In Indian social history, Kautilya,Manu-and Yagyavalkya-these three were the renowned social reformers and philosophers who were responsible in developing Indian society. Manu was famous for the rejection of '*Aryetta*' of *Sudra* and practiced equal social justice. A fresh stimulus was provided during this time which was responsible for the revival of the Brahmanical religion and the development of the caste system. Through *Manu-Smriti* and other *Smritis* ,*Vedic* rites were revived and *Brahmins*, giving themselves special privileges and imposing severe restrictions on the *Sudras*, once again established their supremacy. *Manu-Smriti* mentioned that the *Sudra* who insults a twice-born man shall have his tongue cut. If a king be in a dying condition on account of lack of money, yet he shall not take tax from a *Brahmin* who is well-versed in the *Vedas*. Thus, equality in law was completely destroyed by such prescriptions and the caste-system developed on rigid lines and assumed a new structure.¹⁷

In the sixth century BCE, when Magadha was striving to build up an extensive empire in India, invasions of foreigners started to enter into Indian territories for the first time after the coming of the *Aryans*. It is a very significant stage of Indian culture. However India neither succumbed to foreign invaders permanently, nor permitted its culture to be over-powered by them. Rather, after some lapse, it again revived its political power and succeeded in strengthening its culture. Primarily, Indian culture proved its strength not only in maintaining itself but in making alterations and additions and thereby further strengthening itself. It exhibited remarkable capacity to absorb foreigners within itself. These foreigners absorbed in Indian culture along with their respective religions, culture and heritage. The period proved quite important from the point of view of the progress of Indian culture. They contributed to Indian culture a lot. *Kushanas*, who invaded India, desired to settle in India as their homeland. The Indians, on the other part, converted them to their religion, accepted them in their society and thus encouraged them all to settle down here. Thus, in turn, all of them became Indians. This period, continued to be based on traditional caste system. The castes were not based on wealth or profession but birth. The caste system had grown quite rigid by this time. The *Brahmins* continued to occupy a position of respect and privilege in the society and were held in great esteem. So, the *Sudras* again became downtrodden and being exploited by *Brahmins*. At that time a trend emerged towards anti- *Brahmanism*, i.e., *Buddhism*, *Jainism*, *Vaisnavism* and *Saivism*. These isms were free from *Vedic* religion and very much liberal to the society. Those downtrodden tried to relieve themselves from the exploitation of higher castes. The aim of this class struggle was for social justice and the weapon was religion. ¹⁸

So, Indian idea of unity is not uniformity but harmony. The historic co-existence of different religions, languages and tribes symbolizes India's broad cultural unity. India is a poly-ethnic society based on race, caste, class, language, religion and region. Indian society may be viewed as a society of societies. It is intricate web of caste and class, language and religion, ethnicity and territory. Such varied diversities have occasionally produced strains, stresses and conflicts but the strength of India's long and continuous tradition---the outcome of a synthesis of diverse social and cultural elements through the processes of assimilation and accommodation---has enabled the society to maintain its unity. It is a unity of thought and ideal and basic values born of a culture and civilization that ancient India produced. This assimilation of all Indians, virtually, with the possible exception of the tribals, are differentiated into hundreds of groups of caste which

constitutes a central pillar of the traditional social organization, which is named as 'Hindu'. And the rituals they observed is known as "*Hindu Dharma*". It is a larger platform than Vedic religion-just like *Sarvadharmasamanway*.¹⁹

The economic change of any society not only affects the geographical boundaries but it affects population too. In *Vedic* Era, it is noticed that each *Kauma* consisted with one patronized God and was proud of God. But later *Kaumoas* were converted in a large state. Then their God became small and took a form of "*one Brahmin*"²⁰ The ruling class had virtually acquired the status of the *Kshtriyas* and adopted the practice of donating lands and other presents to the *Brahmanas* to keep them appeased. The *Brahmanas* continued to occupy a pre-eminent position in the society. They were entitled to certain special privileges. The punishments given to the *Brahmanas* in comparison to the members of the other castes were rather light. Usually no corporal punishments were given to the *Brahmanas*. They enjoyed tax exemptions. Often they were granted villages and all the revenue from the village was utilized by the *Brahmanas*. At a later stage the *Brahmanas* were given the power to punish the criminal offenders. During this period a number of *Brahmanas* turned warriors, some even took the profession of *Vaisyas* and carried on trade.

The real development of *Brahminism* came in the Gupta period, the period called the Golden Age of Hinduism or the period of Hindu Renaissance. *Brahminism* became the ethnic religion of India in this period and caste system got a fresh incentive. However, the caste system had not assumed that rigidity in this period which we associate with it in the Muslim or in the beginning of the British period in respect of inter-marriage, inter-dining, and professions. Marriage rules were somewhat elastic and inter-marriages between people of different castes were in practice even in that period. The status of the Sudras in that period were high and it was not necessary for them to serve for their masters. The *Sudras* in this period were permitted to become traders, artisans and agriculturists. However, Untouchability existed in this era more or less in its present form. The untouchables lived outside the main settlements and used to make sound with a piece of wood as they entered, so that men might note their arrival and avoid their contact. The system of slavery was there with the exclusion of Brahmins. The Gupta rulers followed *Vaishnavism* and people worshipped Lord Siva and Vishnu side by side. . *Buddhism* continued to flourish even though it got divided into two major sections by this time viz, *Hinyana* and *Mahayana*. Some of the prominent preachers of *Buddhism* during this period were Asanga,

Vasubandhu, Kumarajiva. According to Fa-Hien, (Chinese scholar) Punjab and Kashmir were the important centers where *Buddhism* were flourishing. Mahayana form was more popular due to the influence of Brahmanical religion. It had lost much of its original heretical fervor and come closer to *Brahminism*. After fifth century A.D, Mahayanism came increasingly under the influence of the Tantric religion, which led to the rise of Vajaryana Buddhism. The religious conditions during this period were the spirit of religious freedom and tolerance which paved the secularist attitude.

It is generally believed that trade greatly flourished during the Gupta period. The advanced stage of trade and industry is evident from the fact that several guilds of traders and merchants existed in the country which played a vital role in the economy of the country. It may be observed that guilds were formed not by the traders and merchants but by workers and weavers too. Each guild had its own laws. These guilds undertook religious and public utility services.

The high literary level attained during the Gupta period is evident from the inscriptions and coins of the Gupta rulers. Sanskrit was the official language. Even the Buddhist writers of this period started writing in Sanskrit. *Puranas* were recompiled by the Brahmanical priests. Likewise, *Mahabharata*, traditionally attributed to Vedvyasa was re-edited. *Smriti* literature based on *Manu-Smriti* was produced during the Gupta period. In addition to Sanskrit literature considerable progress was made by Prakrit, Pali and Tamil literature.

In addition to enormous religious literature considerable secular literature was also produced during the Gupta period, in the form of poetry, drama and prose. The most outstanding literary figure of this age was Kalidas who probably flourished during the reigns of Chandra Gupta II and Kumara Gupta I. He produced outstanding works like *Abhijnana Sakuntala*, *Meghaduta*, *Raghuvamsa*, *Kumara-Sambhava* and *Ritu-Samhara*. During this period not only the Hindu system like Samkhya flourished but Buddhist and Jain philosophers produced various works.

After the Gupta reign, northern India again divided in small states and more small kingdom were in existence in the course of next fifty years. But under Harshavardhana, these disintegrating units were brought under the central authority and the political unity of India was restored. The caste system, continued to have that structure in this period as it had in the Gupta period. The elaborate account of social, religious and economic

conditions of India of this period is available in Chinese scholar Hieun Tsang's writings who visited India in 630 A.D, The economic condition of the people was quite good. Majority of the people were engaged in agriculture. Trade and commerce flourished. Several new industries like weaving, gold industry, dying cloths had developed. Certain large industries had organized themselves into guilds. The country had intimate trade relations with a number of foreign countries, which contributed to the prosperity of the country. Harshavardhana was a religious person and followed a policy of religious tolerance. He continued to be liberal in religious matters and other religions continued to thrive during his rule. He worshipped Sun, Siva as well as Buddha. The Universities of Vallabhi and Nalanda were most outstanding centers of learning of Hinyana and Mahayana Buddhism respectively. A large number of students from different parts of country as well as other countries came here to study. Harshavardhana provided economic funds to these Universities as subsidies.

The ancient Hindu period came to an end with the death of Harshavardhana and the medieval period of the history began in the middle of seventh century. But the Indian social system did not change. Society became static and the caste system became rigid. Brahmins were given high status in society. Rajputs were loyal to their clans. A large number of castes and sub-castes sprang up. Besides the *RigVedi* and *Yajurvedi Brahmins* of ancient age, they came to be known by their territorial limits as Kanauji Brahmins, Konkan Brahmins and similarly sub divisions among the *Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas* soon followed.

The Pala emperors established an extensive empire in north India. The Palas were the patrons of *Buddhism* and, therefore, encouraged Buddhist learning, literature, religion and fine arts. They contributed to the growth of *Buddhism* and formation of Tantric sect like Vajrayana in *Buddhism*. They constructed and repaired many *Buddhist* monasteries and *Viharas*. The University of *Vikramasila* was established with their support and all possible help was given to the University of *Nalanda*. They helped in the growth of Bengali literature and developed an art of architecture, sculpture and painting which influenced the arts of even South-East Asia. Thus the *Pals* helped, in enriching the Indian culture and in extending it beyond the borders of India.

After the *Pals* ,the *Sens* succeeded in establishing an empire in Bengal. The *Sens* called themselves, *Karnata-Kshatriya* or Brahma-Kshatriya. The earliest known member

of the *Sen* dynasty was Samantasena, who established his rule at Radha in Bengal. The credit of safeguarding Bengal from anarchy after the fall of the *Pal* dynasty went to the *Sens*. The *Sens* believed in *Hinduism*. They contributed to the revival of Hindu and *Sanskrit* literature in Bengal.²¹

In the first phase the *Muslims* were eager to conquer the land. That is why the conflict that arose was natural between the conquerors and the conquered—the Muslims and the Hindus. But they came into contact with the Hindus after the establishment of the kingdom for the interest of ruling over the country. In due course of time, their contact became closer for various reasons particularly for living together in the same country. Contemporary sources indicate that *Hindu-Muslim* contact was visible first at the end of the thirteenth century A.D. The influence of one community over the other or vice versa was noticeable since the 14th century and continued even beyond the Battle of Plassey. In course of time, the scope of conflict became narrower, mutual appreciation and assimilation gradually began to grow between the two communities. They began to understand each other better than before.

The *Brahmins* had never been able to establish their supremacy equally strongly on all sections of society. *Hinduism* was as well-organized and coherent in Bengal as in North, South and West India. The people of Eastern Bengal did not wholly conform to *Hinduism*; rather they were the followers of a form of *Buddhism* which was not classical before the *Muslim* conquest. As it was not classical Buddhism, so it failed to resist the onslaught of Islam. There was no class system in society during the Pal dynasty. But the so-called lower class people were neglected, looked down upon and disregarded in the society under the *Sens*. People were getting proper status as human under the Muslim rule. So the landless peasants, artisans, chandalas and other low caste people welcomed Islam to escape social oppression. The cultivators, fishermen, hunters, pirates and others of East Bengal were regarded as untouchables by the upper class Hindus. To these despised, down-trodden and neglected human beings, Islam with its message of equality and monotheism proved a soothing means of escape from social oppression and offered a chance to lead a good life. It was principally for these reasons that they were influenced by the persuasions and preaching of the *mullahs* and *maullavis*, and the cases of compulsory conversion were not wholly absent.

Many *Hindus* in Bengal also embraced Islam during the medieval period for securing social and material gain, like, political or financial concessions. Conversions to Islam wiped out *Hindu-Muslim* political differences and secured exemption from certain taxes imposed on them like pilgrim tax, tax on saving and bathing. Those *Hindus* who had lost their position in their own society eagerly adopted Islam in the hope of winning political status under the *Muslim* rule.²²

The *Hindus* were divided into castes at the advent of Islam in Bengal as in other parts of India. They were not integrated among themselves in Bengal. But the rise of Sri Chaitanya creates a revolution in the history of Bengal. Sri Chaitanya tried to change the mentality of the caste ridden society of the Hindus with his philosophy of universal love of *Neo-Vaishnavism* and he was partly successful in his attempt. Yet the main trend of casteism of the Hindu society existed till the last day of Mughal rule in Bengal. The foreign Muslims, who came to Bengal during the rule of the Sultans, lived together with the Hindus. Centuries of contact between the two communities led to a mutual understanding. In the context of Bengal, the fundamental concept of *Islam* was changed due to *Hindu* influence. Islam borrowed the idea of *Avatar* for its Prophet from the way of personal devotion of *Mahayana Buddhism* and *Vaishnavism*. The *Muslim* theory of creation then prevalent in Bengal was an admixture of *Hindu* theory. Islam was detached from its original standpoint in Bengal and it became *Hinduised Islam*. It cannot be denied that orthodox Islam practiced in Bengal acquired certain *Hindu* characteristics. Along with the traditional faith in the unity of God and other fundamental beliefs of *Islam*, there was the influence of *Hindu* belief and thought. Out of the mutual practices of both the communities, a new religious sect named '*Kartabhaja Dharma*'. appeared in the scene. Aule Chand was the founder of this sect and preached his *Dharma* in Nadia district of Bengal, and had as his disciples Muslims as well as Hindus. From the school of Sri Chaitanya the *Kartabhaja* sect came out and this sect preached the "Satya Dharma".²³

There are three types of Bengali literature in Medieval period--(a) *Mangal Kavyas*, (b) *Vaishnava* Literature and (c) Translated Works.

After the Muslim invasion, it was no longer possible for the Brahmins to look down upon the lower class Hindus and disavow their gods, goddess and mythology. They had to give them a place in literature. The *Mangal Kavyas* were composed during the

fifteenth to seventh centuries. The chronological orders of these three were the following: *Manasa Mangal*, *Chandi Mangal* and *Dharma Mangal Kavyas*.

Nathism was born of the fusion of the old Yoga system of Patanjali, Tantricism of the Buddhist and the Hindus and Saiva-Agama theory of the Pala age. During this period there were Muslim devotees of *Nathism*. *Natha* and *Sufi* literature mutually influenced each other.

Bharatchandra Ray (*Ray Gunakar*), the court-poet of Maharaja Krishna Chandra Roy of Nadia composed *Ananda Mangal* in 1752 A.D. Among all the *Chandi Mangal*, Panchalls Kavikankan Mukundaram Chakraborty's *Chandi* is the most famous.

While Islam was spreading in Bengal, a new force arose which was destined to rise its pace with the philosophy of equality and brotherhood under the leadership of Sri Chaitanya. The Bengalis became transformed into an integrated nation by the bhakti movement of Chaitanya. He had deep love and sympathy for human beings. Many poets composed verses about him and his philosophy. The poem versified the love towards God and Radha Krishna love is known as *Vaishnava Kavya*. Many Muslim poets appeared with *Vaishnava* inclination in this period. They preached the message of religious synthesis and tolerance in their poems. The devotional movement between the two communities helped the integration among the *Hindus* and the *Muslims*.

During this period Muslims rulers were interested in the knowledge of *Puranas* and the other classical works of the Hindus written in Sanskrit. The Bengali translation of the three holy scriptures, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Srimad Bhagavata Gita* which started with the Ilyas Shah regime, continued under Hussain Shah, fulfilled the devotional urges of both communities, the Hindus and the Muslims. Hussain Shah of Bengal is said to have started the worship of a common God *Satya Pir* who was a synthesis of Muslim *Pir* and Hindu *Satya Narayana*. This trend of transference between two sects was followed by the Mughal rulers.²⁴

On the one hand we found that, from the emergence of multi religious faith, the rulers of India were secular, but not theocratic. *Samrat Asoka* was the prominent instance of it, and it continued up to *Pal King*. After the reign of *Sen*, the *Aryan* heritage lost its glory for the trick of the class of *Purohits* and India's destiny became pervaded with darkness at the time of invasion of *Islam*. *Islam* delegates comprise with scientists,

philosophers, historians and Wiseman. *Alberuni* was a philosopher among them. On the other hand, the so-called hypocritically upholding of *Aryan* culture, the *Purohits*, were very ignorant, superstitious and alchemists. The victorious *Islams* were scientific, liberal and socialists.

Now let us withdraw the discussions on politics and have a look on common people to understand their pulse towards religion. During the reign of *Sultans* of *Gour*, the aristocrat *Hindu* and *Muslim* worked together with same interests, even for *Sultan Ilias Shah*, they sacrificed their life in battlefield. *Hindu zaminders* of East-Bengal supported them. In the battle of *Ekdala*, commander-in-chief was *Sahadev*, who was killed in the battlefield. Raja *Ganesh* was favorite to both *Hindus* and *Muslims*. Later his son decided to convert himself in Islam but due to protest of *Sardars*, he was ready to leave throne to his brother but his members of council assured him that in spite of his religious belief they would obey him. *Sultan Hussen Shah* was brought to a *Hindu Zaminder* family and his chief subordinate was a *Hindu*. The *Rāmāyana* was translated into Bengali version with the help of *Muslim* aristocrats and it formed the basis of present Bengali literature. It is not possible here to get the whole picture of *Hindu-Muslim* exchange of thought. *Munsi Abdul Karim* collected almost one hundred poems of *Muslim Vaisnab* poet. If we have a look to common people, it is found that, they were exploited by both aristocrats *Hindu-Muslim*.²⁵

In *Muslim* period of Bengal, the major incident was the appearance of Chaitanyadev, the founder of *Vaisnab Dharma*, which was spread out in all over Bengal and the aim of this *Dharma* was to spread the *Hindu-Muslims* brotherhood. They try to abolish the caste system and first time adopts the *Islam oriented thought*. In fourteenth century, after the victory of *Islam*, with the mixture of both religions, new *Vaisnab Dharma* was created and in the restructured community, appeared *Jaru Thakur*, the so-called untouchable person. He was admired by all.²⁶

At the time of invasion of British East India Company in India, both nationalism and communalism were new phenomenon. Both of them were the product of social change under the impact of colonialism. Colonialism in India was economic and political as well as a cultural phenomenon. Its history is the history of the conquest of India by the forces of English East India Company. It began in the battle of *Plassey* in 1757, when the company's forces defeated *Siraj-ud-Daulah*, the *Nawab* of Bengal. It paved the way for the British

rule of Bengal and eventually of the whole of India. The main objects of the administration policy were to increase the Company's profits. By the mid-nineteenth century the Company, however, lost its commercial monopoly and acted as the administrative agent of the British Government. Finally, after the Revolt of 1857, the power was transferred to the British Crown, and the Company liquidated.

It is true that under British Raj, Indian economy underwent economic modernization but it was imperfect or distorted due to India's colonial position. It can be better named as "the development of underdevelopment".²⁷ It was a centralized bureaucratic state handled by the Britishers who exercised governmental powers and made decisions in the interest of their own country and against the vital interests of the people of India. In order to safeguard their colonial interests against the increasing onslaught of the national movement, the British followed the policy of '*divide and rule*' by turning the princes against the people, caste against caste, group against group, and above all, *Hindus* against *Muslims*. Indian nationalism is the forerunner of the great anti-colonial national movement that swept over Asia and Africa immediately after the end of the Second World War. Indian nationalism that grew in the nineteenth century was basically a product of British imperialist rule in India and its system of exploitation and of the social and economic forces that generated within Indian society under the conditions of colonial exploitation sustained by vast systems of law and administration, coercion and repression. Along with the growth and development of nationalist movement in India, communal politics emerged and despite the efforts of the nationalists to curb its growth, communalism--mainly Hindu-Muslim communal divide- proved to be a cancer to India's struggle for freedom and led to the division of the country.

In India, both nationalism and communalism were the products of same historical process under the impact of colonialism. Both were the reflections of a new reality, which was being born out of the conflicts of the pre-colonial social structure. Both were followed from the very newness of the modern politics, the politics of mass participation that arose in India in the nineteenth century. Modern politics were the emergence of public opinion and of the revolutionary notion of popular sovereignty. The new political life had to be based on a totally different uniting principles and political identities. Different kinds of consciousness produced from the process of the cognition of the new reality. Indian people and the modern intelligentsia had no help except from Europe. They had no clear ideas about the ongoing socio-political order. Nationalism and communalism were fresh

ideologies and novel organizing principles of politics. They were post-eighteenth century phenomena. Nationalism as well as communalism was not existed in past, but try to connect links in the past. Nationalism was the valid consciousness of the objective reality, the consciousness of the new identity of the Indian people or nation. Nationalism represented the struggle for national liberation from the colonial state and for the formation of an independent state. It was a solution of a real problem.²⁸

The history of the constitution of India begins with the decisive triple breakthrough. First of the consequences of British colonialism in India and the various institutions, ideas, and practices introduced by the British, and second of the people's struggle for freedom from alien rule and third of the ideas derived from the nationalist movement regarding the desirable shape of the social and economic order on which the future state of Independent India would be founded. The Constitution might have been adopted at a particular moment of the life-history of the Indian people but has its roots in the immediate past. According to Bipan Chand , Nationalism, Communalism and Secularism, emerged as a consequence of the emergence of modern politics which marked a sharp break with the politics of the medieval or ancient or pre-1857 period. Communalism, as also nationalism and socialism, could emerge as politics and as ideology only after a structural break had occurred in the nature of politics, that is, after politics based on the people, politics of popular sovereignty, politics of popular participation and mobilization, politics based on the creation and mobilization of public opinion had been introduced, even when the term people was defined narrowly. In the previous politics, which were based entirely on the upper ruling classes in which the people either played the role of cannon-fodder or were compelled to rebel outside the political system with successful rebel leaders being incorporated into the old ruling classes, there was no need to take politics to the people and unite and mobilize the people as a people. Thus the notion of *Hindus* or *Muslims* uniting as *Hindus* or *Muslims* for politics, or Indians uniting as Indians for politics--could come only with the entry of people as a constitutive element of politics, with politics based on the doctrine of popular sovereignty. Nationalism was basically a true consciousness in the colonial countries precisely because the overthrow of colonialism was the first necessary condition for opening the path to social development. For the same reason, nationalism in the imperialist countries was a false consciousness because it prepared class divisions but did not help to solve any of the problems of the people. At the same time , if the social situation calls for new solidarities and new

identities and the struggle for social change requires new principles of organization and mobilization, and if in certain areas and segments of society national and class consciousness do not emerge as a response to the situation, communal and other similar identities and forms of politics are likely to emerge and move in to fill the vacuum²⁹. The *spirit* of nationalism could not be inculcated by appealing to an old consciousness, the consciousness of religion, it could be done by bringing out the link between the people's lives and concern and anti-imperialism. Here, the appeal had to be entirely modern, secular and democratic. Nationalism here, required a fundamental change in the system of values and a national movement had to base itself on a correct understanding of the basic central contradiction between colonialism and the Indian people who are entirely modern, political, economic, social, and culturally programmed.

The medieval period had witnessed a certain cultural rapprochement and the synthesis and the gradual development of a common culture among the upper and middle class *Hindus* and *Muslims* in different parts of the country. Popular religions with their unorthodox forms had been bringing the common people together socially and culturally. The high religions adopted with variety of tribal, local cultures, beliefs and different caste traditions. Most of the *Muslims* were converted. Marriage and other social customs and practices thereby tended to be uniform or mutually influenced. *Hindus* and *Muslims* shared to visit same saints and *Pirs*, *Mazaars* and other holy places. Food, taboo and marriage restrictions, the common elements of caste system had become common to both. The common people and ruling classes celebrated together *Holi*, *Durga Puja Id* and *Rakhi*, in the eighteenth century in Avadh, Bengal and in many areas. The *Maharam Tazia* was an occasion for all, particularly for the *Hindu* women, who believed that they could be blessed with a child if walked under the *Tazia*.³⁰ Literary tradition had developed, based on secular heroes and heroines, symbols and myths. In early stage, heterodoxy was found but Reformist and revivalist movement spread religious orthodoxy. Even they spread religiosity and religious self-consciousness of being *Hindu*, *Muslim* or *Sikh*. They made the middle classes and the masses more susceptible to communal propaganda, though often not by themselves but by the outsiders.

Hindus and *Muslims* had sharable interests along with different language, culture class and stratum, to fight united against imperialism and for social development. National Congress, as a national organization preached harmony and emphasized on their common interests, along with the diversity of languages and social classes. Along with all

diversities, National Congress asked for their cooperation and collaboration to form and build up the nation.

Moreover, the revivalist movement often affected and represented the ruined *zaminders*, the emerging rural landlords and other intermediaries, the rising but insecure middle classes and the merchants and money-lenders, as they were mingling with their interest communal politics to serve their material and class needs. And the same social classes and groups monopolized their own institutions through the press, publications and political parties. Thus, they disseminated their ideas and ideologies among other sections of society by using these types of modern means of communication.

The challenge of communalism is a major threat to the Indian society and the functioning of the secular democratic polity. It adversely affects the whole process of nation-building. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines "communalism" as (1) a principle of political organization based on federated communes and (2) the principle of communal ownership, etc. The word 'communalism' is used in different sense in our country. It differentiates to the belief of a group of people that religion is their basic identity from another religious group of people. But adherence to a religious system is not communalism. On the other hand using one religious community against other communities is communalism. It is the exploitation of religion, open or subtle, to further certain interests. Communalism exploits both religion and politics and is born out of hatred or of a real or imaginary fear of the other communities in a plural society. As Bipan Chandra observed, "...the concept of communalism is based on the belief that religious distinction is the most important and fundamental distinction, and this distinction overrides all other distinctions. Since *Hindus*, *Muslims* and *Sikhs* are different religious entities, their social, economic, cultural and political interests are also dissimilar and divergent. As such, the loss of one religious group is the gain of another group and vice-verse. If a particular community seeks to better its social and economic interests, it is doing at the expense of the other."³¹ It is a zero-sum game. So, *Hindus or Muslims or Sikhs or Christian* did not form a nation or a nationality, they did not even form a distinct and homogeneous 'community' except for religious purposes. That is, they did not separately form 'a monolithic social structure' or a cohesive unit on a religious basis with common economic, political, social, and cultural interests. The religious coordinates did not coincide with the class, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural coordinates. There were no sharply etched or articulated interests of *Hindus* and *Muslims* particularly as the condition of *Hindus* and *Muslims*

peasants and workers were the same. Communalism was not a partial or sectional view of the social reality; it projects an unscientific view. Communalism represented only one community, So it should not be narrow or false, but it did not do that. The communalist claimed to represent the interest of community, but he did not do that ,even he failed to represent national interest. The political activities of communalists were not only detrimental to the interests of the country in general, but also to the interests of *Hindus* and *Muslims*. On the other hand, secularism did not mean the communal interests but the denial of the existence of such interests. To accept the representatives of *Hindus, Muslims, or Sikhs* minorities, was to accept communalism. Due to the absence of scientific, view, false consciousness took the place. The origins of false consciousness often lie in the efforts of men and women to grasp and change reality.³² In Bipan Chandra's view," Many false consciousness emerge in the process, partially because men and women try to grasp the new reality in the context of, with the aid of, and in terms of inherited social ideas and institutions and more familiar traditional identities which were the product of an older, different social reality and which might be to a lesser or greater extent unsuitable for understanding the new social situation".³³ Generally a religious diversity existed in real life, but objectively, no real conflict between the interests of Hindus and Muslims existed. So, it is said that, communalism was the false consciousness of the historical process of the last one hundred and fifty years. The objective contradiction between colonialism and Indian people was the real cause of the national movement; but Hindu-Muslim conflicts, having no basis in reality, cannot be the real cause of communalism. Nationalism and social struggle had the historical existence in colonialism and social classes . Similarly communalism had no historical basis. It was not a conceptualization of social reality but it's a kind of false consciousness. The main aspect of communalism was deeply rooted in the interests, aspirations, attitudes and psychology of the middle classes of a economically stagnant society. The persistence of communalism and the rise of religious ideologies may be said to be the consequence of using the secular ideology of the Indian state by all parties for their political benefit. And the failure of the socialist forces to mobilize the deprived masses of the people against the ruling classes are responsible for the mismanagement of the nation's economy and creating divisions between the working people in the name of religion.

Before defining Secularism, it is important to clear the idea between the term 'secular' and 'secularization' Sometimes we use them in a same manner, but they are not .It

is a common saying that "we live in secular age" and almost everyone would agree with it. Here the term 'we' mean who are living in West, or in other word, the North Atlantic world although secularity extends also partially, and in different ways, beyond the world. The secularity of that world consists with two big candidates for its characterization. The first concentrates on the common institutions and practices of the state. The modern Western state is free from the connection of God. Religion or its absence is largely a private matter. The political society treated believers and non-believers in the same manner. The second is, one can engage fully in politics without ever encountering God. So, one understanding of secularity is in terms of public spaces. These have been allegedly emptied of God or of any reference to ultimate reality. In the second meaning, secularity consists in the falling off of religious belief and practice, in people turning away from God, and no longer going to Church. In this sense, the countries of western Europe are mainly secular. And in the third sense, secularity is a matter of the whole context of understanding in which our moral, spiritual or religious experience and search takes place.³⁴

Now, in terms of secularization, the core component of the classic theories of secularization is related to the original etymological-historical meaning of the term. It refers to the transfer of persons, things, meaning etc, from ecclesiastical or religious to civil or common use, possession or control. On the other hand, secularization refers to a process of transformation in society that involves a change from close identification of society with religious institutions to a more separated relationship between society and religion. It involves a removal of dominance of religious institutions and symbols from sectors of society and culture. But secularism is an ideology; it states that religion and religious considerations must be kept out of temporal affairs. It refers to a neutrality of the state/ administration where religious affairs are concerned.³⁵ Now let us concentrate on the etymological meaning of the term 'secular'.

George Jacob Holyoake who introduced the term secular (1817-1906) was an atheist and freethinker, self-proclaimed 'agitator', champion of the working class and co-operator, born at Birmingham on 13th April 1817. In 1831, Holyoake joined the Birmingham Reform league and began an active participant in political and social movements. He attended meetings addressed by Robert Owen, who greatly influenced his thinking and his own lectures socialism and co-operation. In 1841, Charles Southwell started a weekly atheistic publication, *The Oracle of Reason*. and was shortly thereafter arrested for blasphemy. Holyoake responded by volunteering to edit the paper and on his

way to visit Southwell, who was imprisoned at Bristol, he delivered a lecture in Cheltenham on Owenite socialism. During this lecture he replied to a 'loaded' question put up by a clergyman about the place of religion in proposed socialist communities. This has led to his prosecution for atheism and to six months imprisonment in Gloucester jail, thereby achieving the distinction of being the last person in Britain to be imprisoned on such a charge. Following his release Holyoake coined the term "secularism" in 1851 to describe his views, which he promoted in the journal that he established, *The Reasoner*. (<http://gerald-massey.org.uk/holyoake/> 8.2.17 at 9pm.) The ideology of secularism is the product of modern western culture, a gift of the European enlightenment of the 18th century. Both Robert Owen and Thomas Paine are the founders of the secularists tradition in Britain. The London Secular Society was formed in May 1853. By the turn of the decade the secular movement flourished under the leadership of Charles Bradlaugh. Later the secularists were divided into two schools of thought regarding a fundamental question. Does secularism imply atheism? Bradlaugh agrees to the idea that secularism does imply atheism, whereas Holyoake takes a negative stand. Bradlaugh was provoking hostility, prompting opposition by identifying the secular movement with atheism. Secularism was born out of the long struggle between the Church and the state, which culminated in the triumph of the state's supremacy over all mundane affairs. A state by definition became secular, concerned with the affairs of the world, not bound by religious rule. The religious realm was separated from the secular realm. Secularism, which has been spread over three centuries in the Western World, has its intellectual anchorage in rationalism, scientific temper and universal humanism, and expresses itself essentially in non-religious modes of thought and action.

The word 'secular' is difficult to define and the issues involved are the most vital of our times. The word in its Latin origin means generation or age, meaning, this present age or the world as opposed to the age that is to come or things pertaining to religion and the church. There are two orders, the secular and the sacred, both are important though the sacred sometimes is treated as superior and ultimate. The most common contemporary usage regarding the term 'secular' is secular state, implying that the state is concerned with the secular order, leaving the sacred to religion. 'Secularism' refers to the ideology which affirms the process of secularization claiming that education should be secularized or that morality should be based solely on the well-being of mankind in the present life, to the exclusion of all considerations drawn from belief in God or a future state.³⁶

Encyclopedia Britannica defines 'secularism' as pertaining to things 'non-spiritual', having no concern with religious or spiritual matters, anything which is distinct, opposed to, or by not connected with religion, temporal as opposed to spiritual or ecclesiastical.³⁷ *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* defines it as an attempt to establish an autonomous sphere of knowledge free from supernatural presuppositions. The first person articulated the human culture of man's history was *Plato, Confucius, Buddha*, on which human culture until this are based. Secularism, as A.R. Black shield writes, is not exactly opposition of religion, it is to be understood as implying religious freedom and tolerance and respect for ideas of rationalism, materialism, humanism, etc .Donald Eugene Smith defined secularism in Indian context in the following manner; 'The secular state is a state, which gives individual and corporate freedom of religion, is not constitutionally connected to a particular religion, nor does it seek either to promote or interfere with religion'. The founding fathers of our *Constitution* made no attempt to give a precise meaning of the term. They were conscious of the fact that secularism is the only response to India's plural society but secularism as has been developed over three centuries in the western world cannot be taken as a model and applied in India where the religious largely encompasses the secular realm. Hence they sought to lay down the foundations of secularism in India through several provisions of the constitution .³⁸

In the absence of any formal definition of secularism in the Indian context, the essential ingredients of our secularism are the recognition of religion and beliefs as private and personal aspects of life; liberation of the civic polity from religion-dominated politics; domination of common civil laws, as made and modified by representatives of the citizens; recognition of equal status and opportunity for men and women irrespective as caste, color, and creed; fraternity of citizens as citizens and not as members of the primordial ascriptive groups; acceptance of scientific temper and inquiry involving rejection of dogma. Thus viewed, secularism is an instrument of social change and political modernization. It is a positive concept and a dynamic ideal as is manifested in several provisions of our *Constitution*. But over the years there has been a distortion of the true spirit of secularism by its practitioners.

Secular traditions are very deep rooted in the history of India. In India, the word secular is identified with tolerance among the different religions. India is a land of religions, languages, and customs. Many religions are flourishing here since long back,

which have their own traditions and beliefs. Therefore, India is a multi religious and multi cultural country from its known history. It was never mono-religious. The number of invasions and incursions from Aryans to Moughals 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 became more and more complex and rich. Perhaps no other society of the world is as multi-cultural and multi-religious as Indian society. But beneath the manifold diversity, there exists a sort of unity which has made responsible to treat India as a single unit in various periods of history, and the unity has been only possible for the spirit of tolerance. From the ancient times, India has been showing this tolerance, which Indians practiced in their life and which we termed as *dharmanirapeksata*. Moreover, unlike Europe, the necessity of toleration of different paths of religion, and the right of every individual to choose his own path is advocated in India by religious leaders themselves. In Europe this principle was formulated and propagated by scholars and philosophers who remained outside the mainstream of religious controversies. In other words, the principle of religious freedom or religious toleration arose in Europe as outside interference to keep religious conflict away, but in India this principle became, in the Middle age, an integral part of religion itself. Religious leaders like Nanak, Kabir, Chaitanya, Dadu, and others of medieval India worked hard to develop the spirit of religious respect and **toleration** among the people. It is important to mark here that not only religious tolerance but due respect to other religions is the primary need here.

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 of four *Vedas* and the various interpretations of the *Upanishads* and the *Puranas* clearly highlight the religious plurality of *Hinduism*. Religious traditions arose from different ancient theist schools of philosophy. They defined the guiding principles of the personal and social conduct for their *Urs* followers and pay utmost emphasis on the higher moral and spritual values that have constituted a fundamental and essential part of Indian cultural heritage. The integral value-system established by the seers, philosophers and the law givers of ancient India has enriched the people and kept their spirit alive through all the ups and downs of history. *Hinduism* and Indian culture as a whole were

based on the four fundamental and universal values namely *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāmā* and *Moksa*. *Artha* and *Kāma* which symbolized all the secular values of men's individual and collective life were centered in *Dharma* which constitutes the basis and source of all the higher social moral and spiritual truths and values. The three fundamental values namely *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kāmā* embraced all the empirical spheres of life of the individual and society. The fourth value namely *moksa* could be attained and realized in some systems in this life or in after life. Most of the people believe that their lives have meaning and purpose in after life. This has been designated as the Central Spiritual Reality of Humankind. Some suggest that this is what sustains the concept of God. Atheists too uphold human values such as justice, honesty and honorable treatment of everyone in the society though they do not acknowledge the existence of God. In polemical debates they argue that God as a psychological concept though useful, is only an assumption and not an established fact. In spite of this apparent 'victory' of the atheist camp on this point, theism still prevails. Thus religion cannot just be washed away.³⁹

There is no general agreement among scholars concerning the meaning of religion. The Latin word '*religio*' which stands for religion has been interpreted in the Western tradition from the very early times in two ways. According to one view, the word '*religio*' is derived from a root '*leg*' which means to take up or observe. It is to observe the signs of a Divine communication or "to read the omens". According to another view, it is derived from another root '*lig*'-which means 'to bind'. So it meant a relationship or a communion between human and the superhuman or the divine being. The word '*religio*' has carried both meanings in the Christian tradition. Religion, essentially, has been taken to signify a fixed relationship between man and the divine Being or God.

But the word 'religion' does not convey the same meaning in all the religions or religious traditions. The word *Dharma* has a different meaning altogether. It is derived from the root *dhr* which means to be or exist, to be maintained or preserved. It is conceived as that which maintains or sustains human society and the world. According to Samkaracarya, *Dharma* sustains the world and is the direct cause of prosperity, this worldly and other worldly, and of liberation of the people. It is, according to him, to be practiced by all the people who are desirous of their good or well-being. So the word '*Dharma*' cannot be taken as an exact equivalent of the word 'religion', as the two have different connotations. In the same way 'religion' carries different meaning in different -

religions. Its meaning undergoes change in the same religion in the course of time with the emergence of various religious sects and cults. According to Radhakrishnan, "Religions have helped us to realize that there is more to life than the satisfaction of immediate needs of hunger, sex, sleep. They have given us support to our values, and helped us to harmonize our dreams and wishes." ⁴⁰ The consciousness of the finiteness and morality of all our achievements makes us ask, whether there is anything beyond and behind the world process. There is always a basic human need towards a world beyond strife and suffering. If there were no Beyond, we should have been satisfied with the world process. The above situation has been depicted in the *Upanishad*,

“Lead me from the unreal to the real

Lead me from the darkness to light

Lead me from death to eternal life.”

Suffering is the result of conflict in men. He belongs to two worlds, the spiritual world and the natural world. Man is a unique being, the one living creature, who is aware of his own existence. He needs a faith with the help of which it is possible for him to sustain. The religious instinct cannot be uprooted. If it is not satisfied with a given religion, it seeks another. In all religions, there is faith, a desire to belong, and a desire to escape from oneself. There cannot be faith and hope without love. Our mental unhappiness, disease and delinquency are due to the lack of spiritual life. Faith affirms that there is another and better world, a world of super-natural, but faith cannot hold itself apart from reason and experience ⁴¹. The great religions are in general agreement in respect of certain things in spite of their differences regarding the meaning of religion.

1, That religion is ultimately concerned with something that is beyond the reach of human and the world and supernatural Reality, whether it is conceived as a personal God or impersonal Absolute or Nirvana.

2, That it shows human being the way to establish communion or unity with Reality and to attain the supreme goal of his or her life.

3, That the truth or mystery of religion or dharma cannot be attained or discovered by human mind or reason: it is known through the Word or revelation received by the seers, prophets etc, from the Divine Being himself or through some supernatural source.

4, That the good of the individual and the society lies in obeying and following the commandments or injunctions that are laid down in the scriptures which embody revelation.

5, That religion embodies the moral , the spiritual and all other higher and noble values of life which should be cultivated by the people individually as well as collectively.

6, According to some organized religions, the state should be governed in accordance with the laws laid down in the scriptures or in the books that derived their authority from the scriptures. It is this view which leads to the alignment or identification of a particular religion with state and raises the demand for religious constitution in some countries even today. The Islamic world bears a clear witness to it.⁴²

Since the dawn of the history, man has found himself drawn towards religion on account of its claim to reveal the mystery of life and existence. It has always inspired man to attain great heights in the realm of moral and spiritual life. It tends to full fill some of the deepest human aspirations. It has promoted in an effective way solidarity, peace, and harmony in society and has established unity and fellowship among peoples belonging to different races and cultures. This constitutes the bright side of religion which brings peace and joy to the people. But there is another aspect of religion, its dark aspect, which brings unhappiness and suffering to people and deprives them of their legitimate freedom. The history of religion bears ample witness to this dual and rather conflicting role of religion throughout the ages. This is mainly due to a persistent confusion between the deeper aspect of religion which constitutes its truth and its external aspect or structure which ordinarily serves as a means to attain that truth.

The truth of religion is the divine being himself. It lies in the living realization by man of his eternal and blissful existence of his union with the Supreme Being and his liberation or salvation. It constitutes the deepest aspect or the unfathomable mystery of religion. Some modern *Hindu* philosophers have called it the true religion. The external structure of religion consists of beliefs, dogmas, creed, cult religious organization, rituals, sacraments, moral code etc. The organized religions have often failed to draw a clear

distinction between the true religion and its external structure. True religion, according to Sri Aurobindo, is spiritual religion, that which seeks to live in the spirit, in the intellect, beyond the aesthetic and ethical and practical being of man and to inform and govern these members of our being by the higher light and law of the spirit. True religion constitutes the reality or essence of religion and has to be clearly distinguished from its external structure. Any exclusive stress on the external side of religion often leads to undesirable consequences. It brings into prominence the radical differences that exist between religions in respect of their doctrines, dogmas, rituals, ceremonies, organizations etc, and ignores their deeper aspects where they tend to converge and come closer to each other. The result is that the supporters of different religions develop pride in their own religion, and start looking down upon other religions which, according to them, are either not true or at the most only partially true. It generates a feeling of intolerance among them towards each other. It has resulted in the internal warfare or conflicts between various religions or sects of the same religion in the different periods of history.

Modern man's revolt against religion or his callous indifference towards it is mainly due to its destructive role which it has played in history. The history of *Christianity* and *Islam* bears a clear witness to it. This happens due to the misunderstanding and lack of appreciation of the real nature and meaning of true religion.

The true religion is spiritual religion. It cannot be confined within the limits of its external structure. It constitutes a spiritual dimension where the individual has a living experience of the Divine, of the timeless infinite Being or of absolute freedom or *nirvana*. It brings the finite and moral being into direct touch with the infinite and immortal Reality and generates a feeling of unity and fellowship among the peoples of the world. It makes man aware of the perennial values of life, which provide meaning to his individual and collective existence. It manifests itself in good and noble conduct and in the ideal relationship between the people which is based on mutual regard, respect and friendly feeling. Good conduct is the supreme *dharma* according to Manu. A spiritual religion brings about a qualitative change in human personality. It frees man from the ego-centric attitude and the lower passions and emotions which are detrimental for his own well-being and for social integration, harmony and peace. A truly religious man is in possession of divine nature. He is fearless, enjoys purity of heart and does not indulge in deceit, fraud, and lie in his dealings with others and behaves in an honest way. As the *Bhagavad- Gitā*

puts it :Charity, control of senses and mind, performance of sacrifice, study of the *Vedas*, penances, non-violence in thought, word and deed, speaking truth, absence of anger, not finding fault with others and not speaking ill of them, mercy and compassion towards all suffering beings, non-attachment, softness or absence of tyranny, sense of shame in doing things not permissible under the social code, non-indulgence in meaningless activities, excellence, forgiveness, fortitude and enthusiasm, purity of body and mind, absence of desire, to injure others, not entertaining feeling of excessive glorification for oneself-these are the moral and spiritual virtues which are found in man possessed of divine nature.⁴³

Moral conduct or behavior in relation to other people constitutes the essence of religion. According to the *Mahabharata*, the essence of religion lies in observing one supreme precept: Do not behave in that way which one is not able to follow in one's life. This supreme truth of moral conduct, if followed, can bring about a total change in human relationships. It will develop a sense of respect and regard among the people for each other and will free them. In a considerable measure, it will free them from their ego-centric attitude which generates all kinds of tensions and discords in human relationship. The moral and spiritual religions embody such higher moral and spiritual truths. Every great religion has this spiritual dimension within it. The trouble with the higher religions are that, in their institutionalized forms, they are not able to bring these higher moral and spiritual truths into clear focus on account of raising a superstructure of intellectual doctrines, dogmas, rituals, ceremonies etc. A greater emphasis is laid down in the scriptures in respect of worship, prayer, etc, and not on bringing an inward change in one's personality by cultivating the higher moral and spiritual values of life. If organized religion has not transformed the human race, its life and society, this is because it has not sufficiently emphasized that its sole function is to open the way to spiritual existence. We have to change human nature not outwardly, but inwardly . The common goal of all religions is spiritual life. They do not differ in their aim, but only in the extent of the progress which they are able to make with the aid of their varying lights. If we compare one religion with others, we will see that the differences lie only to the formulas and practices. Behind dogmas and creeds lies the main source of energy from where all religions draw their strength. This unfathomable source constitutes the deepest spiritual dimension of all the world religions. A true understanding of the spiritual religion in all its dimensions, namely, devotional, moral, spiritual, will enable one to have a clear appreciation of the importance of religion for the individual as well as for society.

The ancient *Hindu* philosophers have given a most universal definition of *Dharma*. According to them, *Dharma* is that which sustains the world, is known as *abhyudaya* and *nihsreyasa* means liberation. Man attains these two ends of life by following the way of *Dharma*. The existence of the individual, family and society is, according to the *Hindu* view, based on *Dharma*. Man is required to strive for the attainment of wealth and happiness in the world on the basis of *Dharma*, and not by the way of *Adharma* or evil. *Dharma* sustains human society in the sense that it governs the conduct and behavior of the people and thus maintains order and balance in society. Society enjoys security, peace, order and harmony when the people act and behave in accordance with the higher moral and spiritual values laid down by *Dharma* in their personal, social, and professional life and when human relationships are based on them. A society entangles in confusion and disorder when the moral and spiritual dimension of *Dharma* ceases to provide light and life to it.

Thus *Dharma* has not been conceived by the *Hindu* sages and philosophers as something which is concerned only with the individual and his other worldly interests. It is equally concerned with the worldly interests of the individual, family and society. In a true sense, *dharma* provides security, peace, and well-being to them. It is only when the society enjoys peace, order, and harmony and is governed by moral and spiritual values, the gateway of liberation will be easier. Thus *Dharma* embraces man's life as a whole, individually as well as collectively. It provides light, direction and proper atmosphere to individuals to attain all-round fulfillment in life, materially, morally and spiritually and to attain the supreme goal of life. *Dharma* constitutes the heart and soul of Hinduism and the foundation of Indian culture and civilization. It has been lived and practiced by the *Hindu* from times immemorial and has sustained it through all the ups and downs of history. This universal *Dharma* has inspired man to realize his eternal self or *Atman* directly or have a living experience of it in faith and seek union with the Supreme Being, *Paramesvara*. This is the true meaning and goal of religion according to the *Veda* and the enlightened ancient sages, philosophers and leaders of *Hinduism*. This universal and spiritual religion has from the very beginning manifested itself in the life of the *Hindus* through its socio-religious structure.⁴⁴

According to F. Engels, 'With each generation, labour itself became different, more perfect, more diversified. Agriculture was added to hunting and cattle breeding, then

spinning, weaving, metal-working, pottery and navigation. Along with trade and industry, there appeared finally art and science. From tribes there developed nations and states. Law and politics arose, and with them the fantastic reflection of human things in human mind: religion. In the face of all these creations which appeared in the first place to be products of the mind, and which seemed to dominate human society, the more modest productions of the working hand retreated into the background, the more so since the mind that plans the labour-process already at a very early stage of development of society...was able to have the labour that had been planned carried out by other hands than its own. All merit for the swift advance of civilization was ascribed to the mind, to the development and activity of the brain. Men became accustomed to explain their actions from their thoughts, instead of from their needs--(which in any case are reflected and come to consciousness in the mind)---and so there arose in the course of time that idealistic outlook on the world which, especially since the decline of the ancient world, has dominated men's minds."⁴⁵

What are the causes of 'Communalism'? Is it because of the existence of many religions side by side? The secularists do not believe that religion acts as the cause of Communalism. While religious difference are not the cause of the communal division, because they are real and do explain a sense of separate religious and social identity, cannot explain the genesis of communalism, a long term socio-political phenomenon. Religion is not the end of communal politics or the inspiration of communalism in modern times. In other words, religion is not the underlying cause, whose removal is basic to solving the communal problems. It is often been noted that the purely religious or theological content of communalism has tended to be rather meager. The communalist seldom relied on theology and, in fact, actively avoided theological issues.⁴⁶ Apart from the fact that religion might have satisfied certain personal urges which were not a part of the personal or group interests of the believers, there was also a basic difference between religion as a source of nationalist inspiration and communalism. In early twentieth-century revolutionary terrorists took the help of religion for inspiration and ideology, but they were not communalists. To them, religion was a source of inner strength and not the basis of their politics. It inspired them to become fighters for the national liberation of all Indian people and not organizers of communal politics, generating hate against other sections of the Indian people. On the other hand, the communalists were often pro-imperialist but they served imperialism to divide the Indian people and turning the edge of their politics against other Indians and not against imperialism. Religion as such was not responsible for the

origin and growth of communalism, but a contributory factor of it. Religiosity imparted passion and intensity to communalism to make it politically successful. Religiosity has a tendency to let religion and religious emotions intrude into non-religious areas of life. Peasantry and the middle classes, due to their lack of modern education and culture, had a tendency to fall prey to religiosity.

In modern India, vast new areas were opened up. So, either religion would intrude there or accept a narrowing sphere of life for itself. Secularism is partially the result of the expansion of life. So, secularization does not mean removing religion or religious consciousness but reducing religiosity. It means the increasingly narrowing down the sphere of religion to the private life of the individual. In this respect, it may be noted that, modern secular nations are not giving importance to religiosity but to religion.

The *Constitution* of India as adopted on 26 November, 1949 by the Constituent Assembly of India and implemented on 26 January, 1950 consists of a Preamble and 395 articles plus 12 Schedules. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Independent India was influenced by mainstream views of the Enlightenment. He was against any kinds of falsehoods and superstition. Nehru supported scientific reason against religious faith. He was in favor of secular state- a state that separated itself from religion. Nehru agrees with Gandhi that no man live without religion, and religion consists of the inner development of the individual, the evolution of his consciousness in a certain direction which is considered good. The conception of higher good and a path towards self-realization may be gods or goddesses dependent, or be god-dependent, or they could be independent of god-faith in the rightness of human action and human rationality. Nehru understood and experienced this deep religious diversity and 'polytheistic' characteristics. Nehru learnt from his own experience and under the influence of Gandhi that this deep diversity was a major feature of the Indian religious landscape. Nehru himself embraced Religion-a faith in modern humanism and rationality. He held it and the values yielded by it, as the highest normative ideals, but he realized that this religion was one among many others. He accepted that while each of these were sufficient, none were necessary for self-realization. Like Gandhi, Nehru failed to realize how politics could be conducted without religion, that is true religion and like Gandhi he would not mix politics with religion that is communal. Nehru stated that, "The word 'secular' is perhaps not a happy one. And yet for want of a better term, we use it and call our state a secular state"⁴⁷ Nehru's view on secular state was that the

state cannot attach itself to any one religion and declare it as the state religion. The state may be nourished by all or by none. He did not believe in any coloured state. He was particularly critical of Hindu nation state. In Nehru's view, " it may sound very nice to some people that we will create a Hindu Rashtra, but this term is not so easy as it seems. Hindus are in the majority in this country and whatever they wish will be done. But the moment you talk of a Hindu Rashtra, you speak in a language which no other country except one can comprehend and that country is Pakistan, because they are familiar with this concept. They can immediately justify their creation of an Islamic nation by pointing to the word that we are doing something similar... *Hindu* Rashtra can only reduce the status of those who are not Hindus,...You may say patronizingly that you will look after the Muslims or Christians or others....but do you think any race or individual will accept for long the claim that they are looked after while we sit high above them ?" ⁴⁸He continues, "For all of us , therefore, the first problem that presents itself is how to free India and remove the many burdens of the Indian masses. But the women of India have an additional task that is free themselves from the tyranny of man-made customs and laws. They will to carry on the second struggle by themselves for men is not likely to help them". ⁴⁹For Nehru, India needed another model in which (a) a distinction is drawn between the identity of the state which is made entirely independent of religion and an important but limited sphere where religion is officially recognized (for instance in Articles 25 to 30 of the Indian Constitution);(b) given the new reality of the interlocking of Religions (true) and Religions (institutions) and the potential of conflict between different religions, the state must be vigilant in trying to remove conflict and must foster cooperation instead; (c) a distinction must be made between being anti-religious and being anti-institutionalized religious domination. A secular state respects Religion (true) and the diversity within it, including the diversity of atheisms, but under some conditions it can attack the vicious power and status hierarchies within Religion (communal), as well as their potential to unleash a host of un-freedoms.

From Nehru's view, Rajeev Bhargava draws the following conclusion that - defenders of secularism need to do three things simultaneously and consistently. Their (a) defense of minority rights must always be accompanied by (b) a robust critique of minority extremism and all forms of communalisms and both of these must always reflect (c) a deeper understanding and defense of the best of every religious tradition. Our critiques of

minority extremism and majoritarianism must reflect that we know both, minority and majority religious traditions from the inside.⁵⁰

Nehru was one of the Prime ministers who served India until his death in May 1964. He was succeeded by fellow Congressman Lal Bahadur Shastri, whose 19-month term also ended in death. Nehru's daughter Indira Gandhi succeeded Shastri in 1966, to become the country's first women premier. In 12 June 1975, the High Court of Allahabad declared Indira Gandhi's election to the Lok Sabha void on grounds of electoral malpractice, in an election petition filed by Raj Narain. The court also banned her from contesting any election for an additional six years. In the mean time, Jaya Prakash Narayan initiated the peaceful 'total revolution' movement. And he demanded the resignation of Smt Gandhi. In fact, on June 25, 1975, he announced a plan of daily demonstration, not merely in Delhi, but in every state and district headquarters. He opposed to the Army and the police. Her Cabinet and government then recommended that President F.A.Ahmed declare a state of emergency because of internal disorder. President declared emergency based on the provision of Article 352(1) of the Constitution on 25 June 1975. Eventually, during emergency, the captive Parliament of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi passed the 42nd Amendment Act, 1976. In this Amendment, the Constitution envisages a secular polity in India. This is embodied in three key articles of the Constitution: (i), Article 14 which guarantees all citizens the right to 'equality before law' and 'equal protection of laws' with their religion irrelevant in this matter;(ii) Art.15 which prohibits the state to favour any religion or members of any religious community over others; (iii) Art 25 which gives everyone the right, within justifiable reason, to profess and practice any religion or none. The Preamble then, proclaims the solemn resolve of the people of India to **constitute India into Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic**. The word Secular and Socialist were added to reassure the nation that minorities would be safe and the higher class would not dominate the country.

After the Emergency, the 44th Amendment by the Janata government undid most of the substantial damage achieved by the 42nd Amendment. But it too, chooses to preserve the addition of the words 'Socialist' and 'Secular' to the preamble. When India emerged as a sovereign democratic republic in 1950, secularism was not one of its signposts. Because, Dr. B.R.Ambedkar, the father of Indian Constitution said that Indian Constitution already had 'secular' characteristics defined in Article 25, so, there was no

need for adding this word and for adding 'socialist' in the Constitution, as Dr, Ambedkar hold, God is restricting future generation from choosing an economic model suitable for their need. However, 23 years after the Indian Constitution had come into effect, the Supreme Court of India, on the basis of its understanding of Articles 25-28 of the Constitution, recognized secularism as a basic feature of our political system. In 42nd Amendment Act, 1976, India was declared as a secular state by changing the wording of the Preamble to the Constitution of India. Thus, with a clear constitutional sanction behind, a secular state has been at work in India for the last 40 years. But what are the meanings and implication of the secularism is not very clear. In fact, secularism has been defined neither by the Constitution nor by any Central or State Act. Articles 25-28 of the Constitution serve as the lone frame of reference in this matter. So let us try to understand from part iii which dealt with Fundamental Rights

Articles 25 and 26 guarantee the right to practice and propagate not only matter of faith or belief but all those rituals and observances which are regarded as integral parts of a religion by the followers of a doctrine. Of course, religion is a matter of faith but is not necessarily theistic, and there are well-known religions in India like *Buddhism* and *Jainism* which do not believe in God. On the other hand, though a religion undoubtedly has its basis in a system of beliefs or doctrines which are regarded by those who profess that religion as conducive to their spiritual well-being, it would not be correct to say that religion is nothing else but a doctrine of belief. Religious practices or performances of acts in pursuance of religious belief are as much a part of religion as faith or belief in particular doctrines.

What constitutes the essential part of a religion is primarily to be ascertained with reference to the doctrines of that religion itself., which are subject to judicial scrutiny for this purpose. On the other hand, a society or organization which aims at the propagation of a philosophy, cannot claim the protection of Articles 25-28. No place of worship is immune from the law of limitation on compulsory acquisition.

In Article 27, no person shall be compelled to pay any taxes, the proceeds of which are specifically appropriated in payment of expenses for the promotion or maintenance of any particular religion or religious denomination.

What is forbidden by the Article 27, is the specific appropriation of the proceeds of any tax in payment of expenses for the promotion or maintenance of any particular religious denomination. The reason underlying this provision is obvious. Ours being a secular state and there being freedom of religion guaranteed by the Constitution, both to individuals and to groups, it is against the policy of the Constitution to pay out of public funds any money for the promotion or maintenance of any particular religion or religious denomination.

It does not prohibit the levy of a 'fee' for the defraying of expenses of the State for regulating the secular administration of religious institutions. Article 27 is not attracted to such a case as there is no question of favoring any particular religion or religious denomination by such imposition.

In Article 28(1) states that, no religious institution shall be provided in any educational institution wholly maintained out of State funds.

(2) Nothing in clause (1) shall apply to educational institution which is administered by the State but has been established under any endowment or trust which requires that religious institution shall be imparted in such institution.

(3) No person attending any educational institution recognized by the State or receiving aid out of State funds shall be required to take part in any religious instruction that may be conducted in such institution or in any premises attached thereto unless such person or, if such person is a minor, his guardian has given his consent thereto. ⁵¹

So, our Constitution has the provision to treat the state as a secular state. Though the term 'secular' is alien to our culture, but the above elaborate discussion proves that the seeds of secular culture was present in ancient Indian culture and polity. Our next task is to unveil the secular ideals that Jainism and Buddhism preached through their philosophy.

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Chapter-2

Secularism in Ancient Periods: Jainism and Buddhist Philosophy

VEDIC AGE

After dealing elaborately how the concept of secularism contributes to the development of Indian culture and polity, the present chapter will try to show the journey of religion through the secular thoughts of Jaina and Buddhist philosophy.

Hindu religion is a culmination of many cultures and many races, if it predates the Indus civilization, the oldest civilization of India is still unclear, but the essence of India was certainly present in that ancient civilization. The reason why the Indus civilization perished is still surrounded by an air of ambiguity, even though many answers are offered by the Historians. A new phase of Indian culture started when several groups of Aryans, nomads by nature decided to settle down in the heart of the fertile Indus valley. They were clearly polytheistic in nature, and almost all of their gods were derived by the natural forces, like thunder, wind, fire, and even sun and moon, their theistic beliefs were infested by sacrifices in open air, and a direct connection with nature. They worshipped what they desired or feared the most. Eventually the Aryan and non-Aryan mythologies merged together to form a more viable religion that was best suited for that place, some Gods were sacrificed and some new Gods were brought into existence. From the point of view of believers, however, different outlooks upon life had influenced each other, and compromised to develop the philosophies of the *Upanishads*, the *Gitā* and so on. By the beginning of the first millennium BCE, the two religious traditions seem to get together and the *Vedic* religion accepts ideas of renunciation, asceticism and so on.

The *Upanishads* centred mainly on the doctrine of *Brahman* and *Ātman*. By *Brahman* it is meant the all-pervading God and *Ātman*, means self. According to *Upanishadic* view *Brahman* and the *Ātman* are the same. The Supreme has manifested *Himself* in every soul [*Tat tvam asi*]. This idea provides the core of most *Hindu* religious thought and is developed later by *Samkara* into his doctrine of *Advaita*. It concerns itself with non-duality. This is a monistic doctrine, which denies the existence of the world as separate from God. *The Bhagavad-Gitā*, discusses, not the unreality of the world, but man's duties in the world. The indestructibility of the soul is claimed, selfless work is put forward as an ideal, and the duties of every human being are emphasized. It is in this

period that the main foundation of modern *Hinduism* was laid. Polytheism eventually gave way to monotheism, because the future religions were to be more determined and organized. Meanwhile *Jainism* and *Buddhism* emerged. Both developed the *Hindu* ideals of renunciation and use the *Hindu* metaphysics of renunciation, but the emphasis was considerably changed. India becomes largely the *Buddhist* for some time, particularly from the third century BCE under the great Emperor *Asokā*. Later, *Hinduism* gains predominance again. *Buddhism*, however, leaves behind considerable influences on *Hinduism*, adding to its mythology, expanding its cultural content and affecting its moral code.¹

Post-*Buddhist Hinduism* shows different trends. *Hindu* documents states three main ways of reaching God; *Jñāna* (knowledge), *karma* (action) and *bhakti* (devotion). While some school of thought depended upon knowledge like *Advaita Vedanta*, some emphasized on sporadic devotion not taking time to appreciate the calm profoundness of God. This is, not only a post-*Buddhist* phenomenon, the tradition of *bhakti* was found from the time of *Vedas*, but it is true that it is actually a non-Aryan tradition. In the later part of first millennium, the idea of *Avatar* or divine reincarnation came into existence, because it was easier for people to worship a personal god, than an omnipotent entity derived from *Upanishad* as *Brahma*. The *Bhakti* movement has almost always centered the *avatars*, *Krishna* or *Rāma*, sometimes it has based on devotion to non-incarnate God. Even in the latter case, however, some forms of attributes are offered to the Formless and He is worshipped in the form of, *Visnu* or *Siva* or *Kali*. The *Bhakti* movement was particularly flourished in the middle ages and was inspired by the *Muslim Sufi* tradition.

According to *Hindu* doctrines, the ideal life consists of four *asramas*; *brahmacharya*, the period of discipline and education, *garhasthya*, the life of the householder and active worker, *vanaprasthya*, retreat for the loosing of family bonding and finally *sannyasa*, the life of hermit. In *Hindu* values *jñāna* and *yoga* have always been placed a higher category, and it is only to be expected that disciplined education should be considered the prime religious duty of youth. In a sense *gārhashthya* is considered to be the mainstay of the four *āsramas*, for it gives unity and cohesion to the entire social structure, and the other *āsramas* depend on it for their sustenance. The *Hindu* is supposed to lead an active, married life at this stage. It is often said that the *Hindu* ideal is inactivity, but in fact a considerable part of the *Hindu* scriptures discusses the value of an active life, but the work must be selfless, that is, not for reward or even for the supreme goal of paradise. So

the successes of the material world are not considered sufficient and it is here that the ideal of *moksa* or *mukti* enters. This ideal of liberation is not a negative state. It is a state of completeness, free from the bondage of karma and thus from rebirth. The *Hindu* is supposed to cut his association with the social life at *vanaprasthya*, and later to lead the life of a hermit, *sannyasa*. The ideal man is supposed to retreat from the mortal life gradually and think not of worldly success but of *mukti*. Renunciation, thus, becomes an important part of ideal life. The *Hindu* system of values is a complex one. It includes knowledge, it embraces active work, it emphasizes sacrifice and service to others, and it culminates in renunciation. There are some universal values, like truthfulness, kindness and love, which are considered to be everybody's duty, but man's more specific pursuits are supposed to be relative according to his age and temperament. So renunciation and what is sometimes called 'other-worldliness' are not the only *Hindu* values. Active material service is as much part of *Hindu* life as contemplation and spirituality. Even the approach to the supreme may be either through *jnāna* or through *karma* or with the help of *bhakti*. Those who do not find prayers necessary for the completeness of their lives are, free to approach Him through good deeds. For others, prayers may be a vital part of devotion may be the best path for them. For a proper appreciation of the *Hindu* system of values, it is essential to understand this basic assumption of "many ways to God".²

It is not that like every other religion *Hinduism* deviates between the religious scriptures and actual practices, sometimes deriving a life that often contradicts their own sense of ethics. However, *Hinduism* has throughout its history produced great reforming movements to counteract these conflicting tendencies. The spirit of these movements has kept the social ideals alive through the three or four thousand years of the life of *Hinduism*. And it is in this light that we must look at the protests against the debased ideals of their own times made by the great *Hindu* religious thinkers at various moment in history. This chapter mainly tries to bring out the cultural history of the Aryan period to show how the secularist attitude weaves in their dealings.

The cast system seemingly developed due to the wide variety of communities from different races living together. Before the *Sanskrit* speaking *Aryans* arrived, India already contained various racial elements, of which the *Dravidians* were perhaps the most prominent. The *Aryans* who conquered most of India do not seem to have had much respect, at least initially, for the dark-skinned natives. This was because they felt culturally superior, since the urban Indus Valley Civilization, with its scripts, arts, sculpture, town

planning knowledge, and other crafts, represented a more developed, though less vigorous, culture than that of the illiterate, sharp-shooting, *nomadic Aryans*. As conquerors, they must have felt more powerful, and as strong believers in the *Vedic* religion, with its elaborate pantheon, they may have thought themselves more right-minded. Whatever the truth may be, the result is a plural society with different communities, different attitudes to life and occupations, and various religious beliefs, and a rigid caste-structure, as we find it today.³

Traditionally there are four castes, *Brahman*, priests and religious teacher, *Kshatriya*, kings and aristocrats; *Vaisya*, traders, merchant and people of other profession, and *Sudra*, servants, cultivators and so on. The division of the society into four castes has in all probability always been theoretical from earliest times. We find references to a much more complicated caste structure. Besides the racial element, the caste structure had an economic element in that it represented a system of division of labor and of class-stratification. The occupational divisions with which castes were associated give us a better view of the role of castes in the working of society. It must be admitted here that hereditary caste structure has supported the artisan skill of a particular section, for skill could be passed on through generation. The stability of the system and the security it offered, provided a firm base for operational efficiency.

There is a group of people who are against the inter-caste marriage, though there is one kind of marriage, *anuloma* which is acceptable. In *anuloma* marriage the bridegroom is of a higher caste than the bride. There is no doubt, however, that inter-caste marriages were much more common than the orthodox religious leaders would have liked. Even in the religious literature we find some mention of *pratiloma* marriage. It is very significant that many of the best-known and most-influential characters in *Hindu* literature were half-castes. The famous wise man of the *Māhābhārata*, *Vidura* was the son of a *Sudra* woman. The great *rishi* *Vasistha* was born of a prostitute, *Vyāsa* of a fisherwoman, and *Parāsara* of a chandala woman. The idea of a hereditary caste structure is not accepted in many *Hindu* documents, which suggest that caste should be determined by conduct not by birth. *Yudhisthira* defined *Brahmins* in terms of their behavior, (truthfulness, kindness, forgiving), nor need he be a *Sudra* even though his parents were *Sudras*. So when an orthodox *Hindu* suggests that the caste system is an integral part of *Hinduism*, he is ignoring a substantial part of India's religious literature.⁴

Anti- caste movements may be observed at various stages of *Hindu* history. The schools of thought that have emphasized the path of *jnāna* have, on the whole, tended to be supporters of castes. For it is a path that, by its very nature, was restricted to the upper classes. The followers of the path of *bhakti* , however, have tended to be, on the whole, quite liberal on this question. The *Alvar* poets of South India , whose works on *Ramanuja* in the twelfth century described as the *Veda* of the *Vaishnavas*, originated from low castes. Most leaders of the *Bhakti* school throughout the country have been opposed to caste-divisions. The best argument against treating caste-divisions as anything more than a particular social compromise at a particular period in history was put forward by the age-old *Bhavishya Purana* ;'Since members of all the four castes are children of God, they all belong to the same caste. All human beings have the same Father, and children of the same Father cannot have different castes.(*Bhavisya Purana, Brahma Parva,41,45*)

A system of beliefs is irrevocably associated with each religious tradition. The accepted philosophical views as given in the 'sacred' texts are given the status of 'settled truth'. The follower of each religious tradition has to be 'faithful'. Those who question the validity of the sacred texts have to face ostracism or even punishment. Whenever doctrinal differences arise the religious community has to split with the inevitable consequence of bitterness, often violent clashes between the different groups occur. The history of all major religions offers examples of such splits. The diversity runs through various races, religions castes, tribes, languages, social customs, cultural and sub-cultural beliefs, political philosophies and ideologies. But in midst of these various diversities run the thread of basic unity which makes Indian society a big society and the nation as a multicultural nation. The unity of India is essentially a religious one. People may worship different deities but the religious scriptures, *Puranas, Brahmanas, Epics* and the *Vedas*, knit the numerous heterogeneous groups together into one religious society and give them the sense that their country is sacred. The worshippers may visit different centers of pilgrimage but all have a common goal of "earning religious merit by visiting a sacred place". People of different language backgrounds and customs and religions are found in one place of pilgrimage and one shrine with one common object of achieving *moksa*. The unity among *Hindus* is found in commonly following the prohibitions, knit in the fabric of the caste system. Similarly people may say that they live in a particular region but the idea of region is contextual. Within one region there are smaller and more homogeneous areas which differ from each other in many ways. A linguistic area thus possessed a 'vertical'

unity which is common to all castes living there {from *Brahmins* to the untouchables} while caste represents a 'horizontal' unity which cuts across a linguistic area. A *Brahmin* is one who, for example, in Uttar Pradesh, may not share values with a local *Dalit* (*Bhangi* or *Pasi*) but he shares same cultural values with *Brahmins* everywhere in India from north to south and east to west. People may speak different languages in different regions but they have common languages of English and Hindi to communicate with each other. Hindi has made good progress in the non-*Hindi* areas and it has come to be accepted as the medium of communication for people in different states. Earlier English played this role as medium of communication for intellectuals from all parts of India though it created a barrier between the learned people and the ordinary folk. The concept of a linguistic state, using regional languages as medium of teaching in schools colleges and universities are the product of independence. But it is not that language differences will create chaos in the society⁵

The caste system has provided a common cultural ideology to Indians. Though it is true that caste has created inter-caste conflicts and has created a major social problem of untouchability and has brought a rift between the higher and the untouchable castes but it is true that the *jajmani* system till recently has succeeded in maintaining harmony and co-operation among various castes in the rural areas. A significant change has taken place in the power relations of different castes in the last few decades. The economic forces and the political and social changes in the last sixty nine years have vastly increased the power of the numerically large castes. The leaders of these castes are aware of the strategic position they occupy in the struggle for political power at the local regional and central levels. It is these castes which take up big issues like uplift of position of weaker sections, untouchability issue, land, reforms issue and so forth. This caste unity to some extent becomes crucial in taking up regional and national issues and thus indirectly contributes to the process of nation's development. Thus religion, caste and language may create some problems in the society yet the idea of the unity of India has its origin in these three areas. These bind people together closely at different levels. Though it is not being claimed that these three factors will be crucially important in integrating the inhabitants of India but it is being suggested that in the course of time people will come to appreciate the idea that members of every religion, caste and linguistic group are equal as citizens. This would generate tolerance and promote secularism as a value.

Atheism has generally been looked upon with horror and disapproval as an attitude of arrogance and selfishness. *Atheists* are sometimes considered to be persons who can never be trusted as they have no fear of God . In contrast, a God-fearing person is assumed to be trustworthy, kind and moral. In spite of this popular inclination towards *theism*, atheism has received considerable attention in serious philosophical discourses.

Hinduism is a product of many cultures. Every kind of religious act, from the sacrifices of the *Vedic Aryans* to the rituals of primitive animist tribes, can be observed in the system of *Hindu* practices. The meaning of most of these customs has changed considerably over the last two or three thousand years and many of them are now purely symbolical. These customs formed an important part of the life of the *Hindus*. *The Hindu* religious ceremonies of this large country vary in different area and community. These ceremonies can be classified into a number of groups .Like *pratahkriya* (morning ritual)and *sandhya*,(evening ritual)-they are to be observed daily. These meditations, prayers, and rituals constitute the religious duties that the high-caste *Hindu* is supposed to fulfill every day. Most of these are performed at home. Some *Hindus* place images of god or abstract symbols on shrines in their home for the purpose of worship. Prayers, services and various kinds of rituals are performed daily in *Hindu* temples Since *Hinduism* accepts the existence of many ways of reaching the Supreme, no particular practice is compulsory for everybody. Some *Hindus* have weekly religious observances, like weekly fasting, others can be described as occasional, depending on the wishes of the performer. The *vratas*(vows) are mainly performed by women of a little scriptural knowledge, and intended normally for the welfare of the family or the community. *Sāvitrī vrata* is for the welfare of the husband, *Paushā vrata* for good harvests and so on. The annual festivals provide great occasions for particular religious activity, for example, the *pujas of Lakshmi* (the goddess of wealth and beauty), *Saraswati* (the goddess of learning) and so on. Some of them celebrate mythical events, like the birth of the Divine incarnation *Krishna*, or the victory of the Divine incarnation *Rāma over Rāvana*, the king of *Rakshasas*..Other festivals again are connected with economic life of the community. The *Navanna* is the harvest festival. Annual festivals are connected with the sessions, *Holi* the spring festival, when people throw colored powder and colored water at each other.

Some religious ceremonies are connected with the stages of life. *Annaprasana* , weaning ceremony, *vivāha*, the marriage ceremony, *srāddha*, the funeral ceremony. Religious ceremonies are thus performed at every stage of life. Certain astronomical

configurations are considered to be of religious significance. Quite often on those days people gather in temples or at river-banks for bathing or for economic activities. The best known of these gathering is the *Kumbha*, which takes place once every twelve years, of which the most famous are at Allahabad and Hardwar .If a *Hindu* had to perform all ceremonies, he would have no time left for anything else in life. Most of the *Hindus* confine themselves to only a few of them, and some *Hindus* , such as the *Bauls*, perform none at all. Practices vary according to cultural background, social position, caste, sex, age, and sect. It is very important to mention that in the Hindu philosophy there is no contradiction between belief in an all-embracing, all-pervading, omnipresent God and the *puja* of a variety of gods and goddesses of the *Hindu* pantheon. In religious ceremonies the images of gods may help to focus devotion, but in theory they represent nothing more than imaginative pictures of the infinite aspects of one all-pervading God. To appreciate the personification of abstract concepts is very popular in *Hindu* culture.

Hinduism accepts not only the omniscience and omnipotence of God, but also His omnipresence. He is One without second. The number of paths to the One infinite is necessarily infinite. It is this recognition of 'many paths', each valid in itself but none alone complete, that gives to *Hinduism* its immense variety and tolerance. The religious beliefs of different schools of *Hindu* thought vary and their religious practices differ; there are different creeds like monism, dualism, monotheism, polytheism and pantheism. Indeed *Hinduism* is a great storehouse of all kinds of religious experiments. The *Vedas* do not accept an antinomy between *Purusa*(soul) and *Prakriti*(substance), it is this that provides the essence of the *Sāmkhya* philosophy. The *Sāmkhya* rejects the idea of a personal God, but the *Bhakti* movements base their religion on devotion to God who is regarded mainly as a person. In contrast to both these, *Sankara* and the *Advaita* school reject the idea that anything other than God exists. He is alone, the universe is his manifestation; the world is *māya*. The *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata* accept the idea that God may have human incarnation, *avatara* .Most schools of *Hindu* thought accept the *Upanishadic* idea of an all-pervading *Brahman*, the Supreme, but details of religious belief differ very widely indeed. So it is not doctrinal agreement that provides the unity of *Hinduism*.⁶

In fact *Hinduism* is a *dharma* rather than a religion in the restricted sense of the word. Professor *Radhakrishnan* upheld in his book *The Hindu Views of Life* that it enjoins a strict code of practice. The theist and the atheist, the skeptic and the agnostic may all be *Hindus* if they accept the *Hindu* system of culture and life....what counts is conduct,

not belief. It is an open question whether attempts to unite with God should not be considered part of *Hindu* conduct, and it is thus perhaps debatable whether an atheist can be considered a *Hindu* if he otherwise follows a *Hindu* way of life. There can be no doubt, that *Hinduism* is basically more a matter of conduct than a belief. Social observances can be either *Lokacharas* or *sastracaras*. The former refers to the socially accepted rules of behavior without, necessarily, any sanction in the *sastras*, while the latter to the *sastric* codes of behavior. Some of the *sastracaras* and *lokacaras* are concerned not merely with general codes of conduct (honesty, love), but also with details of forms of behavior, sometimes even specifying performances and rituals. But both *lokacaras* and *sastracaras* are considered to be, ultimately, *bahya* and anyone who feels that his temperament is in conflict with the detailed performances need not feel bound by them. Thus *Bauls* and members of certain *Bhakti* schools have often declared their rejection of these performances without denying the basic *Hindu* ideals. In fact the uniting factor among the enormous variety of religious beliefs and ceremonies which one finds in *Hinduism* has been a belief in a basic code of behavior, including selfless work, detachment and honesty. As far as religious worship is concerned, *Hinduism* is very free. One may try to reach God through karma, or knowledge, or simply through devotion. All are equally valid, natural. He is infinite omniscient, but He may appear different to different people. There are various ways of reaching Him, each as valid as every other. Apparently conflicting views of God may be nothing more than the infinite aspects of the same Supreme. *Hinduism* points out that the important thing about a man is his *dharma*, not necessarily his religion.

In ancient days *Vedas* were not written down. They called for remarkable memories in priests and teachers, the custom of *paramparya*, by which the literature was handed down orally from guru to the *sisya* and so from one generation to the next. The subsidiary arts, which first developed in the gatherings around the sacrificial altar, later became part of the traditional education of the cultured. These too were taught by the gurus in what were called *tapovanas*. These centers of learning were set up in the seclusion of forest retreats, presumably to be far from the distractions of urban life. The students lived as members of the guru's family and besides following their studies, helped in agricultural and other pursuits, so that the *tapovanas* could have economic self-sufficiency. The students probably did not pay any fees in cash, though most of them paid in kind later in their lives after achieving success. As the society was not yet very commercial, the respect with which the society looked upon the teachers was in itself a considerable

reward. The regional kings very often helped these institutions, though they did not seem to have interfered much in their learning. The reputation of the schools naturally varied with the reputation of the teachers, and there are many tales of students travelling long distances to study under a particular teacher.

As a result of the mingling of diverse races, ceremonies other than *Vedic* sacrifices the prayers and offerings were receiving more importance. One of these was the offerings made to the ancestors. From the *Purānas* and the *Mahābhārata* we find that this ancestor worship is a later innovation and the priests who conducted these ceremonies were looked down upon by the more orthodox. Though most *Hindu* religious practices in later days include this show of respect to ancestors as a part of the ceremony, the attitude of the orthodox shows that it must originally have been outside the scope of the more sanctified code of the *sastras*. In spite of this intermingling, the *Sanskrit*-speaking people and the earlier inhabitants of India seem to have had different social customs and different educational systems. While *Vedic* Age shows little evidence of a rigid caste system among the *Aryans*, and all *Aryans* were entitled to take part in the sacrifices, the earlier inhabitants were largely excluded.⁷

The householder followed the *Vedic* ideal, who, through sacrifices and offerings, might reach the joys of heaven, which were his desire. The non-*Vedic* cultures must have contributed to *Hinduism* the ideas of renunciation and asceticism leading to *mukti*, which were quite alien to the *Aryan* code of values. The *Aryans* were non-vegetarian and "slaying cows for guests" seems to have been considered a highly praiseworthy act among *Aryans*. The *Hindu* belief in non-violence, which has its origin in *Buddhism* and *Jainism*, is definitely of non-*Vedic* origin. With such different systems of values, the centers of education of the various communities were naturally different.

The educational centre of the *Aryans* was, to begin with, the sacrificial ground. History, legends, and drama would be told, or enacted around the sacred arena, and lyrics and tales of loves would be recited. A more intellectual form of entertainment was the posing of riddles whose answers were given in the *Vedas*. The forest-schools developed from this sacrificial gathering. For the non-*Aryans* the places for education and the interchange of ideas seem to have been the *tirthas*. In these holy gatherings such non-*Vedic* cults as *Yoga*, *Natha* and *Jaina* flourished. The cleavage between *Aryan* and non-*Aryan* life, thus, extended to education. Only later, during the *Upanishadic period*, there are

traces of mixing of the two cultures and systems of thought. In the age of *Upanishads*, when the cultural streams in India were mingling, *tapovanas* flourished, the schools were mentioned by names, such as *Aranyaka*. There is no doubt that these schools, where students including girls, from various parts of India came, played a very significant part in the propagation of *Hindu* culture and even in its evolution and coordination. Education is integrally connected with *dharma* of a community.

The philosophical and speculative synthesis of the *Upanishads* was largely confined to the elite. The influence of many cultures on the life of the common folk and the synthesis achieved there is no less interesting. The *Vedas* shows the "way of devotion" and the rise of the devotional cults in *Hinduism* can only be explained by the influence of non-*Vedic* cultures. According to *Padmapurāna*, the school of devotion had its origin in Dravidian country. The cult of devotion brought in a new class of guru in place of the older *Vedic acaryas*; at the same time the centre of learning shifted from the sacrificial ground to the more democratic places of pilgrimage and bathing, instead of alters there grew up temples with their special deities. The *Vedas* contain little reference to iconolatry or image-worship, so that this growth also is non-*Vedic*. Of the many races of India, some are worshippers of a river, or a mountain, or a tree, or a animal. Each of these cults has influenced *Hinduism*. *Ganesa*, is half human and half elephant. Sometimes, as a concession to mass sentiments, the *Vedic* sacrifices were preceded by these popular worships- certainly a wise measure on the part of the *Aryan* minority. *Siva* is another god of the non-*Aryan* who has been accepted in the *Hindu* pantheon. Relatively primitive tribes like the *Sabar* and *Kirata* seem to have been his worshippers, though there are a few possible traces of his worship even in the urbanized Indus Valley Civilization. From a study of the process of assimilation, it appears that *Siva* was accepted by the orthodox only after a good deal of hostility and opposition. The amalgamation of the cult of *Siva* and phallic worship, which can be observed later, certainly widened the *Saiva* cult. Whatever may have been the initial simplicity of such a worship, its later philosophization led to quite an elaborate theory. *Siva* was at first associated with *Rudra*, the *Vedic* storm god. Later, besides his association with fertility, we treat him as the lord of the *Yoga* and the lord of the cosmic dance of creation and destruction. This power to sublimate an originally crude concept and to personify the Supreme in many forms seems a typical feature of *Hindu* religion.⁸

Image-worship and idolatry are not same thing, though western observers seem to have treated the two as identical. It is the spirit of adoration of the Formless that is given shape in the images of the deities. Though these are used as aids in religious life, "every *Hindu* hopes to escape someday from the necessity of using images". It is the difficulty which the human mind has in grasping the nature of the all-pervading *Brahman* that often made specification and even personification necessary. In the *Vedas* there are no mention of idols or image. The fact that the Indus Valley Civilization had many images shows that image-worship is a contribution of the non-*Vedic* cultural trend. Some attribute its rise to *Greek* influence on India, which was strong after *Alexander's* invasion. It is believed that the *Greeks*, under *Buddhist* patronage and inspiration, made the first images of the Enlightened One. This thesis does not seem to be fully satisfactory, as there was image-worship in India even before the *Graeco-Buddhist Gandhara* school of sculpture was developed. In fact evidence of image-worship in *Mahenjodaro* suggests that it has existed in India at least since the third millennium BCE. There is no doubt, however, that *Buddhist* of the *Mahayana* school enriched *Hindu* image-worship. Characteristic of *Hindu* images is that the deities, according to the canons, must always be represented as youthful. There are no old gods in India It is a kind of worshipping the youth. The chief aim of the image-maker was the expression of emotion rather than anatomic precision.

Many of the taboos were obviously inspired by sanitary and hygienic considerations. In the *Vedic* period, when the invaders first took to agricultural pursuits, we find mention of diseases that were the results of careless collective living. Later on, in the age of *Smritis*, there grew up a large body of rules and regulations. These civic rules worked within the religious framework and sometimes even had religious sanction. Besides these hygienic rules, however, the peculiar traditions of various tribes and sects were absorbed into the system of *Hindu* religious observances, though their historical origin often lay in crude beliefs in myths and magic. *Vedic* and non-*Vedic* forms of culture were being combined in India to form new cultural trends round about 800 BCE. This period of cultural evolution was thus full of heterodox creeds and opinions. There developed, among other schools of thought, the *Lokayata*, of which *Cārvāka* was the best-known teacher. This school considered experience to be the only source of knowledge. Naturally it challenged the whole of *Hindu* metaphysics. The challenge of these atheists had a beneficial effect on *Hindu* thought, for it forced the religious leaders to defend their views, reconsider their positions, and even perhaps get rid of some of their doubtful practices. It was in this period

of heterodoxy that *Jainism* and *Buddhism* were flourished. The *Vedic* interest in gods were replaced by man and in human greatness; and the *Vedic* ideal of a pleasant life in heaven had been challenged by believers in renunciation, and selfless work. The theory of the transmigration of souls and the theory that life gradually evolves, through many births, towards its ultimate realization had been developed by the *Upanishads*. On the other hand materialist had begun to question the existence of God perhaps even as early as the *Upanishadic* period. In this atmosphere of intellectual experimentation *Jainism* and *Buddhism* arose, and the effects of non-Vedic schools are readily seen in these religions. The founder of both were *Kshatriyas*, not *Vedic Brahmins*, and both creeds arose in the eastern provinces, far removed from the centre of the *Vedic* culture.

The sixth century BCE, in the Indian culture is known as an age of protest against the old order of things. During this century a revolt was organized against the standardization of social patterns, the ritualistic form of religion, and the absolute power of the priest craft. A new philosophy made its appearance which was anti-caste in spirit. It preached pure individualism and spiritualism and discarded the principle of social immobility, inequality and injustice and upheld the sanctity of human intellect and its freedom. It stood for man and women to achieve his/her salvation as human beings. The ultimate aim of the revolt was not materialistic, but spiritual, not the socialization but the spiritualization of life. This spirit manifested itself in the form of two religions movements *Jainism* and *Buddhism*. The thinkers of these new movements were pure intellectual philosophers and conceived life as a philosophy of power and knowledge. *Mahavira* and *Gautam* in India protested against the corruption that had crept into *Hinduism*. In that time, *Vedic* religion was full of ritual ceremonies and sacrifices. As most of the common people could not perform these costly rituals and sacrifices, so, they were quite unhappy with the *Vedic* religion. People were quite fed up with the dominance of the priestly class too. The life of an individual was covered with so many rituals that the need of priests was felt at every stage. This greatly enhanced their importance. In fact, the priestly class became so powerful that they came to acquire great influence with the rules and begun to play an effective role in the administration, even the priestly class itself began to be worshipped. The attitude of this priestly class towards the common people was quite humiliating and no wonder the common people developed a disliking for the priests. The rigidity of the caste system contributed to the discontent among the people. By the time the *Hindu* society had come to be divided into four water-tight compartments, *Brahmans* were already in a very

dominating position. The *Brahmans* started demanding certain privileges . The *Kshatriyas* who belonged to the higher caste were not in a position to accept the supremacy of the *Brahmans* and led movements which challenged the dominant authority of the *Brahmans*. The difficult language used for the preaching and propagation of *Vedic* religion were beyond the reach of the common people. Most of the religious works were composed in *Sanskrit* which was not followed by the common people. This provided an opportunity to the *Brahmins* to interpret the religion as it suited their interests.

Both *Jainism* and *Buddhism* started as movements for the reformation of *Brahmanism*. They were not a new creed but an appeal for a better living in the heart of the existing *Hindu* religion and society. Both *Mahavira* and *Buddha* urged their hearers to give up their vices and follies and to practice that purity of conduct and sincerity of belief which is the essence of every true religion. They neither taught any new dogmas nor any new rituals nor a new philosophy. *Mahavira* laid stress on asceticism, reference to which are found in *Vedas* and *Upanishads*. *Buddha* based his teaching on the philosophy of *Sāṅkhya* and later *Upanishads*. The eight-fold path prescribed by *Buddha* for relieving the early miseries of soul caused by the cycle of birth and death is only a code of general ethics . *Gautam Buddha* preached to the people the futility of the various rites and rituals and insisted that true piety consisted in leading a life of simplicity and purity. He did not advocate any new principles. Even the principle of *Ahimsā* which he emphasized was taken by him from the later-*Vedic* texts.

So, the two religious movements were the outcome of the spirit of scientific enquiry and intellectual discussions which prevailed at that time. The emergence of these two religious movements was a significant development in the process of religious and secular development in India and went a long way in the reformation of the existing religions. ⁹

JAINA PHILOSOPHY

Two heterodox systems have established themselves as well-defined philosophical schools surviving in this country till now. These schools may be termed as secular in their modes of thinking. They are *Jainism* and *Buddhism*. The two sects have some basic doctrinal similarities. Complete liberation from the cycle of rebirths is the highest aim of life. Morally sound conduct in this life can attain the highest aim. The moral code is devised to accord with *karmasiddhanta*, a theory that seemed to explain several discrete facts of life. The concept of a non-material soul in every living body was a perfectly reasonable conclusion based on observation. No known fact contradicted the inference. As all attributes of life suddenly disappear at the time of death leaving behind the inert corpse, it is reasonable to infer that something, the *jiva* is separated from the living body. Further elaboration of the concept was 'logical'. It took the form of the well-known *karmasiddhanta*. Jain *Sravakacāra*, the ethical moral code to be followed by lay householders may be considered a model of secular moral code and its integration with the *karmasiddhanta* is not inconsistent with its secular nature. The existence of an immoral soul, the idea of its transmigration and recognition of *Nirvana* as the highest goal seemed to be valid as they were based on observation and inference. Indeed pristine Jain philosophy is a form of proto-science. It deals with *dravya*, defined as 'what exists'. Recognition of *Jiva* as a *dravya* seemed logical though not confirmed by independent evidence. Interpretation of pristine Jain philosophy by subsequent thinkers led to its degeneration into a typical religion, characterized by ritualism. Any philosophical doctrine, if trapped in a text that is declared to be a statement of *sarvajna*, fossilizes and loses the ability to improve and incorporate new knowledge. Besides, this attitude excludes assimilation of valid doctrinal elements from other schools of philosophy. If only ancient Jain philosophy were to accommodate growing knowledge, it would have developed into modern science.

On the basis of three kinds of Knowledge, the *Jainas* form their view of the universe. Perception reveals the reality of material substances, composed by the four kinds of elements. By Inference they come to believe in space (*Ākāśa*), because material substances must exist somewhere, believe in time (*Kāla*), because changes or succession of the states of substances cannot be understood without it and believe in the two causes of motion and rest respectively. For without them, movement and cessation of movement in things cannot be explained. These last two are called respectively *dharma* and *adharmā*

which should not be taken here in their ordinary moral sense, but in the technical sense of the causes of motion and rest. But the physical world, consisting of the four elements of matter, space, time, *dharma* and *adharma*, is not all. Perception, as well as inference, proves the existence of souls in all living bodies. We can internally perceive pleasure, pain and other qualities of the soul directly. Consciousness cannot be said to the product of matter. There are as many souls as there are living bodies. There are souls not only in animals, but in plants too and even in particles of dust. The existence of very minute living beings in dust and other apparently non-living material things is admitted by modern science. All souls are not equally conscious. Some, those, in plants and dust-bodies, have only the sense of touch and have tactual consciousness alone. Some lower animals have two senses, others three, still others four. Man and some higher animals have five senses through all of which they know things. But, however developed the senses may be, the soul living in the body is limited in knowledge; it is limited in power and is subject to all kinds of miseries. But every soul is capable of attaining infinite consciousness, power and happiness. These qualities are inherent in the very nature of the soul. They are obstructed by Karmas. In a word, Karmas lead to the bondage of the soul by matters. By removing Karma a soul can remove bondage and regain its natural perfections.

The most important teaching of *Jainism* is *Moksa marga* or path of salvation. *Samyak darsana* (right faith), *Samyak jnan* (right knowledge) and *Samyak caritra* (right conduct) known as *Triratna*, together constitute the path to salvation. They are wholly different from the *Bhakti-marga* of the *Bhagavatas*, *Jnana-marga* of the *Vedantins* and *Karma-marga* of the *Mimamsakas*. Unlike these religious schools, which lay all the emphasis one of them, as means of salvation. *Jainism* holds that all the three must co-exist in a person, if one is to walk along the path of salvation. The *Jaina* commentators make the meaning quite clear by bringing the analogy of medicine as a curative of some malady. Faith in its efficacy, knowledge of its use, and actual taking of the medicine—all these three must be present if a cure is to be effective. In the same way, the misery of the universe can be cured by this triple panacea. There are two courses of moral discipline or conduct in *Jaina* ethics, one prescribed for house-holder and the other for *Sannyasins*.

Jain canon recommends a well, defined code of conduct (*achara*) for its followers. The code consists of five elements called *vratas*. Refraining from sinful acts is *vrata*. The five *vratas* are *Ahimsa* {non-violence}, *satya* {truthfulness} *asteya* {non-stealing} *brahmacarya* {non-lustfulness} and *aparigraha* {non-possession}.

In addition to the five *vratas*, gambling, consumption of alcohol and meat are taboo in *Jain ācharā* . Gambling and drunkenness are not treated as good actions in any civilized society .About consuming meat it is difficult to get unanimity, as food habits are determined not only by religion but also regional traditions. Use of filtered water is recommended so that any tiny creatures in it are saved. Besides, drinking filtered water is a hygienic practice. So, there can be no argument against it. Eating food at night is another taboo since tiny creatures, falling by chance into the food, might get killed inadvertently. Some of these trivia are best left to the direction of individuals. If the rules of moral conduct are not in conflict with any philosophical or religious doctrine, they can be adopted universally. Violence, dishonesty, lustfulness and gambling ,are not recommended in any civil society . So, adopting Jain *srāvākācārā* as a secular common minimal moral code is a kind of morality which are acceptable to all .¹⁰

The first *vrata*, *Ahimsā* means not injuring or hurting in any way to any living being, an animal or even an insect, either by thought ,word, or deed. It includes forbearing from binding them cruelly with ropes, thus preventing free movement, compelling them to carry burdens beyond their capacity and not freeing them properly. It is not enough if he does not himself inflict direct injury ;he should neither cause injury through an agent, nor indirectly approve of the conduct of others when they indulge in such an act of cruelty. The second *vrata*, not to utter falsehood, is quite obvious. But it is interesting to note that even speaking truth which results in injury to others should be avoided. Thus it is clear that this principle is sub-ordinate to the principle of *Ahimsā* which is primary principle . This second *vrata* of *satya* includes refraining from teaching false doctrines with the object of misleading people, openly proclaiming from sheer wantonness certain secrets such as those pertaining to the private life of people, scandal mongering out of envy; sending anonymous letters containing mischievous insinuations and suppressing the truth for the purpose of deceiving others. The third vow, *asteya* or non-stealing has to be interpreted in the same comprehensive manner. A thing may be left by one due to forgetfulness; it may accidentally fall on the road. Such things belonging to others should not be taken possession of , for it may amount to stealing others property. This principle forbids indirect stealing in five different ways; instigating a person to go and steal in somebody's house , receiving stolen property, accompanying a victorious army in a military campaign with the object of looting the enemy's town, using fraudulent weights and measures, and adulterating things in selling them. The fourth principle, *brahmacarya*, refers to chastity

in thought, word, and deed. The last vow, *aparigraha*, refers to limiting one's attachment to wealth and other worldly possessions--*parimita parigraha*, inordinate longing for worldly goods will never result in contentment and happiness. It prevents spiritual harmony and peace in life. Hence even a householder has to reduce his wants and limit his desires, if he is to pursue his spiritual career and not be altogether lost in the world.

They may be practiced in two grades of severity: *yatyacāra*, a very rigid observance of the *vratas*, recommended for those who seek nirvana the final *liberation* from the cycle of rebirths; and *sravakacāra* for the lay followers who while being householders and pursuing normal professions for livelihood aspire to progress in the direction of attaining the ideal goal. Here it may be mentioned with emphasis that Jain canonical texts have recommended only a moral code that is necessary to ensure social stability and progress. They do not recommend any rituals characterizing theism. Thus *Jain āchara* is secular and is the essential aspect of *dharma*. Atheism was in those days probably marginalized and regarded as an 'inferior' system. So in order to get rid of the blemish of atheism, they started imitating the ritualism of those who dominated in the society while striving to retain their own doctrinal foundation. In this process idol worship, wearing a holy thread and sandal paste mark on the forehead and hair tuft seems to have entered into Jain *āchara*. In fact, modern followers of this faith strive to show that they are not atheist. *Jain* worship is of two kinds, meditational and material. Meditating on the virtues of *Jain Tirthankaras* and the latter resembles the conventional worship of *Hindu* tradition. *Jains*, ancient medieval or modern, have not formulated a criminal or civil code of their own. *Jains* assume that the legislation formulated by the ruling king or democratically elected government have to be obeyed by everyone without question. This is just as is expected in a secular state.¹¹

The basic tenets of Jainism can be epitomized in two words; namely *Ahimsā* and *Anekānta*, the two principles of peaceful co-existence – philosophically and socially. There is no denying of the fact that if we accept *Ahimsā* as the regulative principle of our conduct and *Anekānta* as the beacon light of our outlook, barbarism and exploitation, obstinacy and cold war in their subtle and gross forms may come to an end. It is no exaggeration to say that *Ahimsā* and *Anekānta* are the greatest contribution of Jainism to world thought in general and Indian thought in particular. No other religion in the world has worked out the principles of *Ahimsā* in the minutest details and no other philosophy has brought out the profoundest ramification of *Anekānta* as *Jainism*. Thus if *Ahimsā* is the flower of Jainism,

Aneākanta will be its crown. One cannot flourish without the other. Whatever different shades of meaning these two terms may have, *Ahimsā* is the principle of respect for life and *Anekānta* is the doctrine of open mindedness, it is based on the conviction that a thing is constituted of diverse aspect and its proper understanding requires the consideration of as many aspects as possible. The comprehension of a thing from different points of view develops in us a secular outlook necessary for peaceful co-existence.

Anekāntavāda is one of the most important and fundamental doctrine of *Jainism*. It refers to the principles of pluralism and multiplicity of viewpoints, the notion that truth and reality are perceived differently from diverse points of view, and that no single point of view is the complete truth. Jaina theory of *Anekāntavāda* emphasizes the truth that all the approaches to reality give partial but true pictures of reality, and because of their truth-value from a certain angle, we should have regard for other ideologies and faiths. Thus *Anekāntavāda* forbids us to be dogmatic and one-sided in our approach. It preaches a broader outlook and open-mindedness, which is essential to solve the conflicts caused by differences in ideologies and faiths. The spirit of *Anekāntavāda* is very much necessary in society, especially in the present day, when conflicting ideologies are trying to assert supremacy aggressively. It brings the spirit of intellectual and social tolerance. For the present day society what is awfully needed is the virtue of tolerance. This virtue of tolerance, regard for others ideologies and faiths, is maintained in Jainism from the very beginning. *Jaina* saints have tried at all times to maintain harmony among different religious faiths and they tried to avoid religious conflicts. .

The origins of *Anekāntavāda* can be traced back to the teaching of *Mahavira*. The dialectical concepts of *syadvāda* ‘conditional viewpoints’ and *nayavāda* ‘partial viewpoints’ arose from *Anekāntavāda*, providing it with more detailed logical structure and expression. The *Sanskrit* compound an-eka-anta-vada literally means ‘doctrine of non-exclusivity or multiple viewpoints (*an-‘not’*, *eka-‘one’*, *vada-‘viewpoint’*)’’, it is roughly translated into English as ‘non-absolutism’. An-ekanta ‘uncertainty, non-exclusivity’ is the opposite of *ekanta* {*eka+anta*} ‘exclusiveness, absoluteness, necessity’ {or also ‘monotheistic doctrine’}.¹²

Anekānta is an epistemological tool for understanding the nature of reality. In Indian Philosophy, epistemology is usually related with ontology. The *Jains* in their search not only evolved their own sense of understanding to know the nature of reality in their

diverse aspects but were also concerned about the nature of valid knowledge. The concept of *Anekānta* helps one to accept a pluralistic approach to reality without discarding other religious systems and in this way to maintain a smooth functioning of the secular system.

By virtue of this doctrine of *Anekānta*, Jainism has been able to appreciate the viewpoints of others in the field of philosophy. What is decried by it, is the one-sided obstinate approach to a thing which is at the root of all disagreements. Open-mindedness fosters magnanimity and balance of mind. Thus *Anekāntavāda* along with its corollaries of *Nayavāda* and *syādvāda* supplies us the necessary basis for easing national and international tensions and for developing the attitude of intellectual honesty in an individual. *Anekānta* does not mean compromise or doubt or uncertainty; but it means that Truth is many-sided; and one must be tolerant enough to understand the view-point of others. *Anekānta* is an idol in the intellectual field. *Anekānta* says that no ism can be condemned as absolutely wrong. Every statement has an intermixture of right and wrong. We have to adopt, an attitude of neutrality towards two apparently contradictory statements. It is not a case of indecisiveness but a case of clear understanding of what is right and what is wrong in a statement. We would find that there is no occasion for dispute, if we look at things from this angle.

Ahimsā in Jainism is a fundamental principle forming the cornerstone of its ethics and doctrine. It is the virtue of all virtues in Jaina System-“*Ahimsā parom dharmah*”. Though *Ahimsā* is a core value in other systems but *Mahavira*'s contribution is unique as he explicates the nature of life and living through six main categories of life forms: earth, water, fire, wind, vegetation and mobile beings with two or more senses. The term *Ahimsā* means non violence”, “non-injury” or absence of desire to harm any life forms. Vegetarianism and other non-violent practices and ritual of *Jains* flow from the principle of *Ahimsā*. According to *Adian Rankin*, the concept of *Ahimsā* is so much intertwined with *Jainism* that it conjures up images of ascetics who cover their mouths and sweep the ground before them with small brushes to avoid injuring the most minuscule forms of life and Jain-owned animal sanctuaries where even the sickest most deformed birds and beasts are protected and cherished. These overt manifestations of an ancient faith challenge the comfortable and near-universal-assumption of human precedence over other creature.¹³

The Jain concept of *Ahimsā* is quite different from the concept of non-violence found in other philosophies. In other religious traditions, violence is usually associated

with causing harm to others. On the other hand, in Jainism, violence refers primarily of injuring one's own self – behavior which inhibits the souls own ability to attain *moksa* or liberation. At the same time, it also means violence to others because it is this tendency to harm others that ultimately harms one's own soul. Furthermore, the *Jains* have extended the concept of *Ahimsā* not only to humans but to all animals, plants, micro-organisms and all beings having life or life potential. All life is sacred and everyone has a right to live fearlessly to its maximum potential. The living beings do not have any fear from those who have taken the vow of *Ahimsā*. According to *Jainism*, protection of life, also known as *abhayadānam*, is the supreme charity that a person can make.

The principle of *Ahimsā* recognizes that every individual irrespective of caste, colour and creed is an end in itself and has a dignity of its own; consequently one should treat all human beings accordingly. No man should be deprived of availing himself of the opportunities of advancement. The movement of life to the plane of *Ahimsā* signifies that the idea of domination over others and of being dominated by others is to be relinquished in the domain of politics and economics; and the principles of freedom of progress and equality of opportunity by recognized for all people, whether in Europe or America, Asia or Africa. The deeper significances of *Ahimsā* consist of the elimination of war, which has harassed mankind since the dawn of civilization. The easing of tensions and cessation of conflicts among states, the maintenance of universal peace and the promotion of human welfare can only be effected by suffusing world's atmosphere with the spirit of *Ahimsā*. Thus the principle of *Ahimsā* implies “life should be elevated altogether from the plane of force to that of reason, persuasion, accommodation, tolerance and mutual services.” The virtue of truth, non-stealing, continence and non-acquisitiveness are just the extension of *Ahimsā* to different modes of human existence. With the practice of these five virtues an atmosphere of security, freedom, equality and proper distribution can be created in human society.

Ahimsā or non-violence is a negative word; it indicates the negation of that which is unnatural as against that which is natural.. It means that non-violence is the negation of the unnatural and at the same time the affirmation of that which is natural. ¹⁴

Jaina philosophy preferred the negative term to a positive term like love or compassion. In this point of view Jain approach is peculiar. It asserts that we cannot speak of the positive aspect of love in our present state of mental make-up. We live a life,

without a taste of what is natural. Unfamiliar as we are with the positive aspect of non-violence, if one speaks in positive term, we are likely to be misguided. If we speak of love, we can think of one form or the other of attachment only. It was, therefore thought fit by *Jaina* thinkers to speak in negative terms like non-violence or non-attachment rather than using the positive term like love and compassion, though, they occasionally use positive terms like affection or compassion (*koruna*). This emphasis on negative terms however should never be taken to mean that the *Jainas* conceived of non-violence as a void state of mind, where there is no love. Non-violence is as natural as good smell to a flower. Flower emits good smell unmindful of the fact, where the smell is desirable to others or not and where those who receive it are grateful to him or not. It emits smell equally to one who plucks and crushed it. The flower emits good smell equally not only for its friend and foe but when the flower exists and there is none to receive its smell. Its good smell is not conditional. It is something which is unconditional of its surroundings.

The *Jainas* have very important contributions to the field of religion, philosophy, literature, and art. But these academic strivings did not deprive them of attending to the call of social and national duties. They seem to be aware of the fact that without social upliftment and national security nothing worthwhile can be achieved. The *Jaina* monks have always directed the attention of people to individual and social values which are essential for the establishment of a rational social order. Since they move from one place to the other they are capable of making contacts with the large number of people with the result that to a very great extent they could persuade them to regulate their physical needs in tune with the principle of *Ahimsā*. Some of the *Jaina* monks because of their austerity and learning attracted the attention of kings. *Jainacandrasuri* prevailed upon Akbar to Issue 'Farman' prohibiting the slaughter of animals for seven days every year in the month of *Asadha*. The most significant illustration of the influence of *Ahimsā* is that of *Mahatma Gandhi* who calls *Rajachandra* ,his Guru in inculcating in him the spirit of *Ahimsā*. *Mahatma Gandhi* can be rightly be called an incarnation of *Mahavira*.¹⁵

It is often thought that *Jainism* has carried the doctrine of *Ahimsā* to its logical rigidity and has thus made it impracticable for ordinary layman. It is true that *Jaina* monks are expected to observe this vow in an extreme form. The monks of the *Svetambara* sect even keep their mouths covered for fear of breathing in minute insects which cannot even be seen with naked eyes. However the rules of *Ahimsā* for layman as prescribed by *Jainism* are by no means impracticable or unreasonable. *Jainism* no doubt prohibited deliberate and

calculated injury to any being or wanton slaughter of animals. For layman it has made three exceptions. A householder or a housewife has to keep his or her house neat and clean and must keep the sanctity of the body. For this, the house has to be swept, the grain has to be grinded or pounded and finally cooked and water has to be stored in jars. If all this involves unintentional killing of minute creatures, there is no violation of the principle of *Ahimsā*. Similarly though one should not adopt a profession like that of a butcher or fisherman which is founded on *himsā* or killing of animals, one may sometimes be led to unavoidable injury to animals even in other professions. A farmer, for example, has to protect his crop from pests. This kind of injury to life is also not regarded as a violation of the principle of *Ahimsā*. The third exception which Jainism has made for layman is the injury which one inflicts on another being in self-defense. If somebody attacks you and you injure or kill the aggressor in self-defense, you do not violate the principle of *Ahimsā*. When these three exceptions are taken into account the Jain concept of *Ahimsā* remains by no means impracticable. We can in fact, call it a precious contribution not only to Indian culture but also to the well-being of the entire humanity.¹⁶

Philosophy and religion of *Jainism* have a great impact on Indian culture. The main tenet of Jainism is *Anekāntabād*. Literal meaning of *Anekāntabād* is that objects are infinite in their qualities and modes of existence, every doctrine is partial and even *Jainism* is not absolute. Only the *kevalis* can comprehend objects in all aspects and manifestations; others are only capable of partial knowledge. Differences of opinions start when we begin with a partial truth taking it to be an absolute one. Tolerance of others' opinions is an example of *Jain Anekāntabād*, which is one of the main characteristics of Indian secularism.

From the very beginning of the twentieth century ethical values are being ascribed on ecology-centric discussions. The Norwegian philosopher *Arne Naess* in his "Deep Ecology" advocates the idea that all of nature matters and deserves equal considerations. His thoughts are similar to *Mahavira's* teachings. There are mainly two aspects of his deep ecology theory—shallow and deep. Shallow theory is known as anthropocentric because they only care about mankind. But the bio-centric ethics based on deep ecology is called non-anthropocentric which carries a motto of reverence for life. And it is unethical if one tries to disturb the natural balance of nature.

The views that the modern environmental scientists are sharing in this twentieth-first century are the views that have been preached by *Mahavira, the Jain Philosopher* about

2500 years ago. *Mahavira* may be regarded as modern *Viswamanab* whose teachings are still equally relevant today.¹⁷

Jainism still survives in India though the popularity of *Jainism* is decreased overall the country. *Jains* believe that Jainism will decline day by day as it is written in their sacred texts. It will continue to decline until the end of this era. But scholars ignore the internal reason. To them, the most important internal reason is that *Jains* failed to keep its distinction. *Jains* adopted many *Hindu* faiths and rituals and many *Hindu* Goddesses. The most unfortunate thing was adoption of *Vedic Varna* system. This is the main cause of the *Jains* towards development of caste system within their community. Although the untouchability was a *Vedic* invention, orthodox *Jains* are mainly responsible for spreading it.

Jainism was divided into two major sects, namely *Digambara* and *Svetambara*. Further, they were divided into many sub-sects. The monk of each sect and sub-sect started to tell the layman that only their sect/ sub-set is true one and the others are wrong. The monks became enemies of other *Jain* sect. Thus for *Jain* monks *Jainism* became a secondary thing and sectarian views became prominent. *Jainism* became a victim of both castes and sects.

While *Jain* monks of ancient India initiated millions of people into *Jainism*, but in later period *Jain* monks stopped such kind of initiation. Orthodox *Jain* monks forced many people to quit *Jainism*. Extreme *Ahimsa* is one of the causes for leaving *Jainism*. And the worse impression was that *Jain* monks closed their doors for new comers.

Still, it is hold that, *Jaina* philosophy has a great impact of our mind even today. We know that the most burning problem of our age is the problem of mental tension. Nations that claim to be more civilized and more economically advanced are much more in the grip of mental tension. The main object of *Jainism* is to emancipate man from his sufferings and mental tensions. For *Jainism* the basic human suffering is not physical, but mental. Mental suffering or tension is due to our attachment to worldly objects. It is attachment which is fully responsible for them. The *Jain* text states that the root of all suffering, physical as well as mental, of everybody, including gods, is attachment to the objects of worldly enjoyment. It is attachment which is the root cause of mental tension. Only a detached attitude towards the objects of worldly enjoyment can free mankind from mental tension. The efforts made to satisfy human desires through material objects can be linked

to the chopping off of the branches while watering the roots. If mankind is to be free from mental tension, it is necessary to grow a detached outlook on life. *Jainism* believes that the lesser the attachment, the greater the mental peace. It is only when attachment vanishes that the human mind will be free from mental tension and emotional disorders.¹⁸

BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY

Buddhism, the most popular religion, grew up not only in India but in entire *Asia*. *Buddha* was not an originator of a new religion but a reformer of the *Hindu* religion. The basic doctrine of *Buddhism* sprang from pre-existing Hindu philosophy of the *Sāṅkhya* system and the later *Upanishads*. Thus, so far as the original philosophy of *Buddhism* is concerned there is hardly any break of continuity between *Buddha* and the *Hindu* sages who had preceded him. Nor did *Buddha* lay down a special ritual for his followers. Even the rules of monastic discipline left by him are few, simple, and undefined. The rules of morality preached by *Buddha* were not new. He simply emphasized a few of them which already existed.

Gautama, the founder of *Buddhism*, was born about 566 BC at *Luminivana* in Nepal on the Indian border. His father *Suddhodana* was a king of the *Sakya* clan. He was bought up by his mother's sister *Gautami*. He was married and had a son named *Rahul*. However his mind was influenced by the prevailing spiritual unrest and attracted by the appearance of a *sanyasin.*, left home at the age of twenty-nine. He first became the disciple *Arada* and afterwards, *Rudraka*, but did not feel satisfied . He then practiced meditation himself. Ultimately on the forty-ninth day of his continuous meditation under a *pipal* tree at *Uruvela* near *Gaya*, he got enlightenment. Henceforth, he was called *Buddha*.

Buddhism was a revolt against the prevailing systems. It was the first organized religion in the modern sense of the term 'religion'. The fundamental principles of *Buddha's* teaching are the four *Aryasatyas* or Noble Truths [1] that worldly existence is full of misery; It is admitted by all in some form or other. But with his deep insight *Buddha* saw that misery is not simply causal; it is universally present in all forms of existence and in all kinds of experience. Even what appears as pleasant is really a source of pain at bottom.[2] That thirst, desire, ignorance are the causes of worldly existence; He points out that the existence of everything in the world, material and mental, is caused by some other thing. There is nothing which is unconditional and self-existent. Nothing is, therefore, permanent in the world. All things are subject to change. Our sufferings depend on birth in this world. Birth again is caused by our desire for the worldly objects. The force of desires drags us down to the world. But our desires can be traced ultimately to our ignorance. If we develop a correct knowledge of the things of the world, understood their transitory and painful nature, there would be no desire for them; birth would then cease and along with it also

misery. [3] That worldly existence can be ended by the destruction of thirst; As sufferings, like other things, depends on some conditions, it must cease when these conditions are removed. This is the third truth about cessation of misery. [4] That in order to do this one must know the right path. And the right path is Eightfold path- Right views, Right determination, Right speech, Right conduct, Right livelihood, Right endeavor, Right mindfulness, and Right concentration. The fourth truth about the path that leads to the cessation of misery concerns the control of the conditions that cause misery. This path is known as the eight-fold noble path as it consists of eight steps. *Buddha* preached that the ultimate goal of one's life is to attain Nirvana, the eternal state of peace and bliss, which is free from sorrow and desire, decay or disease and of course from further birth and death and in order to attain it, one should pursue the Noble Eight-fold Path. These eight steps remove ignorance and desire, enlighten the mind and bring about perfect equanimity and tranquility. Thus misery ceases completely and chance of rebirth also stopped. This attainment of this state of perfection is nirvana.

Buddha's ethical teaching or eight-fold path consists of three main things-- knowledge (*prajñā*) ,conduct (*silā*) and concentration (*samādhi*). In Indian philosophy knowledge and morality are thought inseparable-not simply because morality, or doing of good, depends on the knowledge of what is good, about which all philosophers would agree, but also because perfection of knowledge is regarded as impossible without morality, voluntary control of passions and prejudices. *Buddha* explicitly states in one of his discourses that virtue and wisdom purify each other and the two are inseparable. In the eight-fold path one starts with 'right views'-a mere intellectual apprehension of the fourfold truth. The mind is not yet purged of the pervious wrong ideas and the passions or wrong emotions arising there from; moreover, old habits of thinking, speaking and acting continue still. In a word, conflicting forces- the new good ones and the old bad ones- create, in terms of modern psychology, a divided personality. The seven steps beginning with right resolve furnish a continuous effort for resolving this conflict by reform of the old personality. repeated contemplation of what is true and good, training of the will and emotion accordingly, through steadfast determination and passionless behavior, gradually achieve the harmonious personality in which thought and will and emotion are all thoroughly cultured and purified in the light of truth. The last step of perfect concentration is thus made possible by the removal of all obstacles. The result of this unhampered concentration on truth is perfect insight or wisdom, to which the riddle of existence stands

clearly revealed once for all. Ignorance and desire are cut at their roots and the source of misery vanishes. Perfect wisdom, perfect goodness and perfect equanimity-complete relief from suffering- are simultaneously attained, therefore, in *nirvana*.

The teachings of Buddha are contained in the four noble truths. It is clear from this that Buddha himself was not concerned so much with the problems of philosophy as with the practical problem how human misery can be removed. He regarded it as a waste of time to discuss metaphysical problems, while man is suffering in misery. But though showing his aversion to theoretical speculation, he could not avoid philosophical discussions altogether. Thus we find from early literature the following theories among his teachings; (a) All things are conditional; there is nothing that exists by itself. (b) All things are, therefore, subject to change owing to the change of the conditions on which they depend; nothing is permanent. (c) There is, therefore, neither any soul nor God nor any other permanent substance. (d) There is, however, continuity of the present life which generates another life, by the law of karma, just as a tree generates another tree through its seed, and the second conditions while the first withers away. .¹⁹

According to *Buddha* everything is transient in this Universe. There is no immortal soul. The transmigration passes over from one life to another- only a new life arises as part of events which include the old or rather it is the reaction of one's own actions. *Buddha* did not believe in the existence of God or soul. According to him, it is a delusion which one develops because of one's ignorance. It is this ignorance which creates desire in man, then, desire leads to action and that action to the impulse to be born again in order to satisfy desire. This leads to the chain of birth and rebirth which is the primary cause of misery of man. This chain can be stopped only by knowledge. *Buddha* had no faith in prayer, *Yajna*, or sacrifice. Therefore, he preached to pursue right action and acquire right knowledge in order to attain Nirvana According to him, the true knowledge is to acknowledge the absence of soul. He who realizes the absence of soul or substance in the constituents knows that he does not exist as an individual, and as such there can be no relationship between him and the objects around him. Therefore, there is nothing in the world to make him happy or sad and so he is free, he is *an Arhat* . Those who wish to attain this knowledge to Nirvana should keep faith in the "*Four Noble Truth*" and pursue the Noble Eightfold Path.

The moral doctrines of Buddha were simple. He preached that every individual is the arbiter of his own destiny. Good deeds lead to higher life till salvation is achieved while evil deeds retard the progress. An individual should avoid pursuing both the extremes, i.e. a life of luxury and a life of severe asceticism. The best course to be pursued by an individual is the *Middle Path*. He laid stress on truth, charity, purity, and control over passions and further declared that an individual should practice the Four Cardinal Virtues, viz. *Maître*, *koruna*, *mudita* and *upeksha* towards all beings in order to lead him to a better life in his next birth. Besides, one should avoid pursuing bad instincts such as ill-will, anger, deceit, jealousy etc. The common man was asked not to kill, not to steal, not to lie, not to get drunk and not keep sexual relations outside marriage. For a monk or a nun it was necessary to observe complete celibacy and to possess nothing except a yellow-dress, a rice bowl, a razor, a needle and a Steiner

Thus *Buddha* preached a high system of ethics. The central idea of his teachings was living a holy life. The Noble Eightfold Path, whereby a man attains Nirvana, is not merely a matter of belief or knowledge, but of conduct while the Four Cardinal Virtues of *Buddhism* are more positive in character as compared to the non-violence of *Jainism*. and the abstinence of the *Upanishads* of *Hindus*.²⁰

Besides, *Buddhism* had some main characteristics which helped in its speedy and widespread progress. These were-the establishment of the *sangha*; the admission of female members into the *sangha*; enjoyment of equal rights by all its members irrespective of classes or castes and practice of holding religious discourses in language of the common people, particularly *Magadhi*.

The followers of *Buddhism* were divided into two parts; *Bhikkus* or monks and *Upasakas* or householders. It was primarily for the training of monks that *Sanghas* were established though, of course, they served the purpose of meeting places for the gatherings of the *Upasakas* to listen to religious discourses given by the monks. *Buddha* had himself framed a number of rules concerning the *Sanghas* though many more were added to them after him. The membership of the Buddhist *Sangha* was open to all persons without any distinction of caste or class and males or females who had completed the age of fifteen years, dependents had to seek permission of their guardians. But disable persons, Lepers Criminals, Slaves etc were not permitted to become members of the *Sangha*. There was no central organization of *Buddhist Sanghas*. Each *Sangha* carried on its works as an

independent entity. All *Sanghas* were accepted as merely parts of one Universal *Sangha* and therefore, every member of every *Sangha* was regarded as members of all *Sanghas*. This was the bond of unity amongst them. Whenever any occasion arose, General Councils of the monks were convoked at various times.

Every *Sangha* functioned on strictly democratic principles. The general assembly of all the monks of a *Sangha* constituted the supreme authority concerning that *Sangha*, its member and all their activities. No meeting of the assembly was legal, unless all the members were either present, or being absent, formally declared their consent. Every matter was decided by majority votes in the assembly. The head of the *Sangha* and all the officials concerning routine work of the *Sangha* were elected by the assembly. But the nuns were subordinate to the monks. The organization of the *Sanghas* had two other special features. One was that regular assemblies of all monks residing within fixed boundaries of a locality were held on the 8th, 14th, and 15th days of each fortnight for the purpose of religious discourses. In these very assemblies, every monk had to accept his guilt or breach of any rule by him. If any, before all present and punishment to him was decided according to rules and regulations. During the three months of rains, the monks were required to take up a fixed abode. The rest of the year the monks used to wander all over the country. The *Sanghas* were primarily the training centers for monks and nuns. They had to practice certain spiritual exercises besides observing the code of conduct and rule of morality. Among the most important of the monk's or the nun's spiritual exercises were the four Sublime Moods (*Brahma Vihara*), in which sitting quietly cross-legged, he or she endeavored to fill his or her mind with four cardinal virtues of *Buddhism*-love, compassion, joy and equanimity. A fifth mood was that of impurity, in which he or she considered all the vileness and horror of the world and of the life of flesh. One more exercise for mental discipline was necessary for a monk, it was 'Right collection.' It meant that he had to train himself to be continually aware of what he was doing, what faults or mistakes he had committed and prepared to accept them and take remedial measures.

Apart from *Hinayana* and *Mahayana*, the *Vajrayana* sect created further split and controversy. The *Tantrik* philosophy which led to the emergence of *Vajrayana* sect of *Buddhism* was not unique to it. The *Tantrik* knowledge was one which helped an individual to attain *Nirvana* with the help of the *mantras* and *tantras*. The *tantra* was a diagram drawn with the help of lines or rice on earth or a paper representing a particular deity. The sect believed that by pronouncing the right *mantra* in the correct manner and by

drawing the correct magical symbol, one might force the gods to bestow magical power on the worshipper and lead him to the highest bliss- the *Nirvana*.²¹

The contribution of *Buddhism* in Indian culture has been appreciated by all. It has provided a glorious heritage in India in various fields. It helps to promote secular feeling among the masses. *Buddhism* promoted among the people a national feeling which greatly helped in the achievement of social harmony and the evolution of a strong empire in the country. *Buddhism* gave a serious blow to the caste system which had divided the Indian society and hampered the growth of harmonious relations among the people. By discarding unnecessary rites and rituals it aroused the conscience of the people and encouraged them to treat each other with respect. This sense of social unity proved greatly helpful to the *Mauryan* rules in evolving a powerful empire. *Buddhism* rose as a revolt against social and religious malpractices prevailing in the *Hindu* religion. It condemned caste system which accorded predominant position to the priestly class and relegated the *Sudras* to the sub-human conditions and emphasized the equality of all human beings. No doubt, caste system made its appearance after some time but its rigors were considerably reduced. Another notable contribution of *Buddhism* to Indian culture was that it greatly simplified religion. In *Buddhism* there was no place for numerous rites, rituals, *Yajanas*, and priestly class. Instead it laid great emphasis on the moral upliftment of man and insisted on leading a various and pious life. It pleaded for the development of qualities like truthfulness control over passions, non-injury to living creatures, charity and *self-scarifies*. It is true that these virtues were not emphasized by *Buddhism* for the first time and were advocated by the *Upanishads* too, yet the credit of giving these virtues a practical shape goes to *Buddhism*. It greatly contributed to the upliftment of the moral standards of the people. *Buddhism* largely is responsible for an improvement in the position of women and *Sudras*. Before the advent of *Buddhism*, the women and *Sudras* were treated with utmost disrespect.

Buddhism's contribution to Indian education and literature is commendable. The *Sanghas* became the centers' of learning, established universities and libraries and attracted teachers, students, and scholars from all over India and even from distant countries outside India. *Taxila, Nalanda, Udaypuri, Vikramsila* and alike other *Buddhist* Universities earned all India fame and were well-known in Asia. These universities were not only the centers of *Buddhist* learning but contributed a large share in the education and enlightenment of the Indian people in general. The contribution of *Buddhist* scholars like *Nagarjuna*,

Vasumitra, Dinang and Dharmakirti became a permanent asset to Indian literature. The literature written both in *Pali* and *Sanskrit* and enriched by scholars of *Hinayana, Mahayana* and *Vajrayana* sects successively has its importance not only from the point of view of religion and philosophy but from that of history by becoming the source-material for contemporary history. Besides, religious texts, literary works like *Lalit-vister, Millnd-Panhan, Buddha-charit and Jataka-stories* are its permanent assets to Indian literature. Most of this literature was destroyed by *Turkish* invaders. Yet, whatever has remained has been regarded as precious heritage of Indian culture and has been translated into many languages of the world. The Indian Academy of Indian Culture is still pursuing its efforts in this direction.²²

Buddhism contributed to the consolidation of the changes in the social and economical life of the people in the sixth century B.C. The rule that debtors were not permitted to be members of the *Sangha* naturally helped the moneylenders and richer sections of the society from whose clutches the debtors could not be saved. Similarly, the rule that slaves could not join the *sangha* helped the slave-owners. Thus the rules and teachings of *Gautama Buddha* took full account of the new changes in the material life and strengthened them ideologically. *Buddhism* created and developed a new awareness in the field of intellect and culture. It was taught the people not to take things for granted but argue judge them on merit. The emphasis laid on democratic values by the new religion was also largely responsible for the plurality of this religion. As most of the important decisions regarding religion were taken by the monks in consultation with the people, the people came to regard this religion as their own religion. This was in complete contrast to *Hinduism* where the ultimate decision rested with the *Brahmanas*.

The contribution of *Buddhism* fully flourished in the time of King *As'oka*. The terrible destruction and human misery of the war *Kalinga* changed *As'oka* 's views on life. He gave up wars of conquests and tried to find solace in peace and non-violence. And, according to *Buddhist* tradition, he was converted to *Buddhism* after the *Kalinga* war.

In the beginning *As'oka* was a follower of *Brahmanic* faith. According to *Buddhist* text, the *Mahavansa*, he worshipped several gods and goddesses and distributed food to sixty thousand *Brahmanas* every day. *Kalhana* in his *Rajtarangini*, described him as a worshipper of *Shiva*. Therefore, it has been expressed that it was only after the war of

Kalinga that he accepted *Buddhism*. Yet, his *Dhamma* was different from the *Dharma* which he pursued.

Dhamma is the *Prakrit* form of the *Sanskrit* word *Dharmā*. However *As'oka*, tried to use it in a much wider sense, Dr R.G.Bhandarkar says, *As'oka* 's *Dhammā* is nothing more than secular *Buddhism*. *As'oka* did not propagate the fundamental tenets of *Buddhism* but only its moral precepts which were very much common to all religions of India. This is accepted that *As'oka* accepted *Buddhism* after the war of *Kalinga*, and visited *sanghas* and *Buddhist* religious places. Dr R.K.Mukherjee says that *As'oka* 's position was midway between that of an *Upasak* and a *Bhikku*[monk]. Therefore, most of the scholars have agreed that the personal religion of *As'oka* was, of course, *Buddhism* but what has been described as *As'oka* 's *Dhamma* and which was propagated by him amongst his subjects was different and contained those moral precepts which were certainly inspired by *Buddhist* teachings but were common to all religions of India.²³

In reality, *As'oka* 's ideal was more ethical and social, than religious. He was not concerned with the particular religion of any individual but he desired that all people though pursuing different religions, should live in harmony with each other and cultivate habits of social good conduct. *As'oka* pursued this ideal and built up his policy of *Dhamma* on this basis due to several reasons. Primarily, his own private beliefs, the circumstances of his age and the political necessity of holding a big empire intact were responsible for this policy. *Mauryas* were not against *Brahmanism* but were definitely more sympathetic towards *Jainism* and *Buddhism*. *Chandra Gupta Maurya* had accepted *Jainism* during the latter years of his life. Therefore, *As'oka* 's family traditions were in favor of support to these new religious sects though , of course, with tolerance. *As'oka* attached great importance to principle of *Ahimsā* and himself gave up hunting, as well as meat eating. He forbade the killing the animals on certain days. As *Ahimsā* was intimately linked with *Buddhism*, a large number of people were attracted towards the new religion. It may be observed that *Ahimsā* was not entirely a new principle which originated with *Buddhism*. This principle finds mention in the *Smrities* and other *Brahmanical* literature as well. The description on the 12th Rock-edict of *As'oka* stated that the people should not only tolerate all religious sects but also develop a spirit of reverence for all. It declared that all people should behave properly, purify their hearts, study the religious texts of each other, abstain from criticizing each other and praising their own religions, and they must observe non-violence in their personal, social, national, and international life.²⁴

Thus As'oka's *Dhamma* was a code of moral duties, benevolent acts and freedom from passions for an individual. It comprised both personal and social moral virtues. The principles of *Dhamma* were such as could be acceptable to people belonging to any religious sect. Therefore, it could not be equated with Buddhist *Dhamma*. The *Dhamma* of As'oka was a practical code of conduct of social ethics which formed the basis of all religions. Its primary instinct was social responsibility. "For As'oka " writes Dr Romila Thapar," *Dhamma* was a way of life, the essence of what he had culled from the moral teachings of the various thinkers known to him, and probably his own experience of life. It was based on a high degree of social ethics and civic responsibility "²⁵ Further, the *Dhamma* of As'oka was based on extreme toleration and its principles were freely drawn from moral precepts of all religions such as *Buddhism* and *Hinduism*. The credit to create his *Dhamma* has gone to him as writes Dr Romila Thapar,' '*Dhamma* was As'oka's own invention'. And, when he propagated his *Dhamma*, he did not propagated any particular religion. Rather, he desired that his subjects should practice religious toleration, engage in various deeds and fulfill social obligations irrespective of religious distinctions. Dr Romila Thapar writes, "In the propagation of his *Dhamma*, As'oka was attempting to reform the narrow attitude of religious teaching, to protect the weak against the strong, and to promote throughout the empire, a consciousness of social behaviour so broad in its scope, that no cultural group could object to it".²⁶ Further As'oka did not force his *Dhamma* on his subjects. He tried to persuade them to accept it. When he appointed *Dhamma Mahamatras* also he did not desire to pursue and enforce a religious policy to promote any particular religious sect but desired to promote the economic, social, religious, and political life of all his subjects. If he would have desired to promote a particular sect, then there was no necessity to create the office of *Dhamma- Mahamatras* as all religious sects existing at that time were not only free but capable enough to propagate their sects without the support of the state. Particularly, it was very much true of *Buddhism*. *Dhamma- Mahamatreas* did not help in the propagation of any particular religious sect. They, rather, helped the people in due observance of their respective religions without being detrimental to each other's faith and ,one of their primary duties was to assist the destitute, the aged and the unfortunate ones in the society. Thus, the ideal of As'oka in the propagation of his *Dhamma* was a novel ideal.

As'oka wanted a general agreement on the need to conduct arguments with 'restraint in regard to speech'; 'a person must not do reverence to his own sects or disparage the

beliefs of another without reason'. He went on to argue; 'Depreciation should be for specific reasons only, because the sects of another people all deserve reverence for one reason or another'. *As'oka* supplemented this general moral and political principle by a dialectical argument based on enlightened self-interest. For he who shows respect to his own sect only and criticize the sects of others, in reality expresses disrespect on his own sect.

Gautama Buddha was primarily an ethical teacher and reformer. In course of time, as his followers increased in number, they were divided into different schools. *Hinayana* and *Mahayana* are the most well known division of Buddhism. The earlier form of Buddhism, the *Hinyana*, stands as an example of a religion without God. The ideal set by *Buddha* and the moral law of the universe are meant only for the strong, who are all too few in this world. Otherwise, *Mahayanism* emphasizes the aspect of the founder's life and teachings. The idea of *Bodhisattva* is nurtured by the *Mahayana* philosophy, which comes to think that all individuals are unreal as separate particular phenomena and that they are all really grounded in one transcendental Reality, The God, or *Buddha*.

At the present day the followers of *Hinyana* and *Mahayana* often try to look down upon one another. But to the discerning outsider, they stand as the living examples of a fight between two equally noble motives, namely, greater purity and greater utility. To impartial observers the mighty current of *Buddhism*, like every current, naturally divides itself into two parts, the narrow but pure stream that runs through the solitary uplands near the source, and the gradually widening river that floods and fertilizes the vast plains below, though not unmingled with the indifferent streams that increase its volume on the way and not unsoiled with to be the vast amount of dirt that it carries down. The first without second would remain sublime but relatively useless; the second without the first would cease.

There are all sorts of philosophies available in free society. Kings and Policy makers choose to patronize that philosophy which according to them will provide maximum political mileage. The political mileage and popularity given by *Buddha* and Jain traditions during peace is immense. *Buddhism* expanded in India with the royal support of *Maurya* Empire under *As'oka* , but it came to loss royal patronage in due course. *Brahmanical* revival under the *Guptas* perhaps led to the downfall of *Buddhism* in India. So *Hinduism* began to revive its strength. Attempts were now made to give up the

complex system of rites and rituals and make *Hinduism* simple and attractive. The *Hindus* were ready to accept the *Buddha* as a *Hindu* incarnation and accepted the principle of non-violence. This helped to revive *Hinduism* and made it popular again. The king *Harsavardhan* expelled the *Brahmins* from the religious council held at *Kanauj*. These *Brahmins*, under *Kumarila Bhatta*, fled to Deccan. Under *Bhatta's* leadership, *Brahmanism* staged a come-back. *Adi Sankaracharya* revived and strengthened *Hinduism*. He defeated *Buddhist* scholars' in religious discourses which were held in many places in course of his tour of the whole India. Thus, the superiority of *Hinduism* over *Buddhism* was established. It regained its lost glory, position, and popularity. People started liking the stories in *Puranas* in preference to those in *Buddhist Jatakas*.²⁷

Pushyamitra Sunga, the *Brahmin* commander of last *Maurya* ruler *Vrihadratta*, assassinated the king and founded the *Sunga* dynasty, replacing the *Maurya* dynasty. The *Asvamedha* sacrifice was done by him. It gave an impetus to the *Brahmanical* faith. Non-violence, the basic principle of *Buddhism*, was given up. He destroyed many *stupas* and monasteries. Many *Buddhist* monks were killed.

Buddhism was mainly an urban religion. During the time of *Muslim* invasion, the first thing they did was ransack towns and cities which were mainly inhabited by the *Buddhist* monks. Such invasions forced *Buddhist* monks to seek shelter in Nepal and Tibet. At that time another sect known as *Rajputs* emerged. *Rajputs* were militant rulers and loved warfare. They could not tolerate the *Buddhist* due to their preaching of non-violence. *Buddhism* which was once treated as one of the jewels of Indian culture along with *Hinduism* gradually lost its importance in the land of its birth.²⁸

Medieval Period

In medieval India the *Sufi* and *Bhakti* movements bound the people of various communities together with love and peace. The leading lights of these movements were Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti, Guru Nanak Dev, Saint Tukaram and Mira Bai. They contributed to the development of a composite culture in such a manner that nobody dares to challenge them. Most of *Mughal* kings were also tolerant and liberal in their approach. The great *Akbar* to a great extent promoted the policy of toleration of different religions. His propagation of *Din-e-Illahi* was highly inspired by the spirit of secularism.

Akbar not only declared in his kingship, the priority of tolerance, but also laid the formal foundations of a secular legal structure and of religious neutrality of the state, which included the duty to ensure that “no man should be interfered with on account of religion, and anyone is to be allowed to go over to a religion that pleases him.”²⁹ Despite his deep interest in other religions and his brief attempt to launch a new religion, *Din-ilahi* (God's religion), based on a combination of good points chosen from different faiths, *Akbar* did remain a good *Muslim* himself. Indeed, when *Akbar* died in 1605, the *Islamic* theologian *Abdul Haq*, who had been quite critical of *Akbar's* lapses from orthodoxy, concluded with some satisfaction that, despite his 'innovations', *Akbar* had remained a proper *Muslim*.

The meeting that *Akbar* arranged in the late sixteenth century for public dialogue involved members of different religious faiths. While the historical background of Indian secularism can be traced to the trend of thinking that had begun to take root well before *Akbar*, the politics of secularism received a tremendous boost from *Akbar's* patronizing of pluralist ideals, along with his insistence that the state should be completely impartial towards different religions. *Akbar's* own political decisions reflected his pluralist commitments. This attitude was reflected in his court with non-*Muslim* intellectuals and artists in addition to *Muslim* ones, and, rather remarkably, by his trusting a *Hindu* former king, Raja Man Singh, who had been defeated earlier by *Akbar*, to serve as the general commander of his armed forces.

The coming of Islam to India led to a series of remarkable responses. It is impossible for two cultures to exist side by side without influencing one another and in India the *Hindu* and *Muslim* patterns of culture have had a good deal of exchange.

Evidence for this can be found not only in the development of new schools of painting sculpture and architecture and music but it can be observed in religious movements. The devotional movement of the *Bhakti* cult and the tradition of the Islamic-*Sufis* have so much in common that cultural exchange was easy. The word medieval is a misleading one as it is associated with the ideas and practices of the Middle Ages in Europe. But here the movement is entirely different. The outstanding aspect of Indian medieval mysticism is its complete independence from sectarian organizations and orthodox scriptures. In Sind, the influence of the *Muslim Sufi* tradition was much stronger than that of the *Bhakti* school.³⁰

Tolerance is the prime value which the ancients gave importance than secularism, and the modern Indian philosophy reflects upon the secular mindset needed to insinuate a chasm in communally divided India, where not only all the religious communities can live together in tolerance but in harmony. In retrospect it may be commented that medieval India has not seen any astronomical philosopher, compared to ancient or modern India. All the secular movements were mass-movements and the movements were not led by philosophers. But at the same time the medieval secular movements in India has signified a great novelty, where cast or social structure was not only less important, but they were of trivial significance. This period of India was not only opulent in secular notions, but showed signs of a great liberal nation. The idea of the great Indian *secularism* is unattainable without the liberal warmth of the medieval times. Although ancient, and modern India's culture are the main thrust of the present chapter but the philosophical ideas of the medieval times cannot be discarded in binding the profanity of the ancient Indian *secularism of Buddhism and Jainism*.

Besides the cultural collage that are being discussed above, it is necessary to deal with the thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, and, Mahatma Gandhi. to consolidate our position regarding secularism further.

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Chapter -3

Secularism in Modern Indian Thought: Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi

This chapter is an attempt to bring out the secular thoughts that are weaved in the writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi.

In the last two hundred years, *Hinduism* has been greatly influenced by the impact of the West. It has not produced any really new doctrine but it has presented its old thought in a new light. These new developments are partly the result of the influence of *Christianity* but not entirely new. Indian society has undergone considerable changes. Since the advent of the modern age and it is only natural that this should result in certain changes of ideas. the development is connected with the rise of a new middle class.

The first period of Western impact which covers the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is characterized by considerable conversion of *Hindus* to *Christianity*. *Hindu* religious leaders seem to have been at a loss in face of this challenge and little attempt was made to prevent conversion. However this period did not last very long and in fact the number of conversions seems to have been fairly small in view of the heavy impact of the west on India. This does not mean that *Christianity* had no effect on Hinduism . The *Hindu* leaders were forced to carry out considerable reform of religious practices and to revive many of the old traditions of *Hindu* thought which was not in practice. Though this chapter mainly deals with the secular thoughts of Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi but here the thoughts of Raja Rammohan Roy are added as it acts like a connecting thread to the former thinkers.

This brings us to the second period which has often been called the period of '*Hindu Reformism*'. The pioneer in this movement was Raja Rammohan Roy, one of the reformer of Hindu society , the first modern man of India. He was a scholar and he read the scriptures of most of the world's religions in the original languages, only to find out that there was not much difference between them. The institution founded by Rammohan Roy originally called *Brahma Sabha* (1828) but the name was changed to *Brahma Samaj* in 1830. Rammohan was no mere religious reformer, but a stout social reformer who sought to eradicate the prevalent social evils and to introduce what was good for the society and

the people. He founded the *Brahma Samaj*, based on the Unitarian doctrines of the *Upanishads*. During this period he had to face the opposition of orthodox *Hindus*, among whom some of the less sophisticated even claimed that the *Upanishads* had actually been written by Rammohan himself to strengthen his case. But in reality, Rammohan depended on the *Upanishads* to formulate his views on religion. His outlook on social matters was progressive. He was very keen that the Indians should learn Western sciences and wrote to the governor general of India emphasizing the need for education in mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry and other useful sciences. It was his agitation for the abolition of the *Sati* that led the *British* government to act.

Rammohan is the great path-maker of this country who has removed obstacles that hinders our progress at every step, and inspired us to humanism .Rammohan belongs to the lineage of India's great seers who taught us to acknowledge the divine in human affairs, to offer hospitality to all that is imperishable in human civilization, regardless of racial and national divergence, from the early dawn of our history. It has been India's privilege and also its problem, to harmonize the diverse elements of humanity which compels us to synthesize contrasting cultures in the light of a comprehensive ideal. The complicated structure of our social system with its intricate arrangement of caste testifies to the vigorous attempt made at an early stage of human civilization to deal with the complexity of our problem , to relegate to every class of our peoples however wide the cleavage between their levels of culture in a cosmopolitan scheme of society. Rammohan's predecessors, *Kabir*, *Nanak*, *Dadu* and other saints and seers of medieval India, carried on India's great attempt to evolve a type of human between peoples and races; they broke through barriers of social and religious exclusiveness and brought together India's different communities on the genuine basis of spiritual reality. Now, that our outdated social usages are yielding rapidly to the stress of an urgent call of unity, when rigid enclosures of caste and creed can no more obstruct the freedom of our fellowship. When India's spiritual need of faith and concord between her different peoples has become imperative and seems to have aroused a new stir of consciousness throughout the land, we must not forget that this emancipation of our humanity has been made possible through the works of the great unifier, Rammohan Roy. It was for him that it is possible to realize the significance of the modern age.¹.

He knew that the ideal of human civilization does not lie in the isolation of Independence, but in the brotherhood of interdependence of individuals as well as of

nations in all spheres of thought and activity. He applied this principle of humanity with his extraordinary depth of scholarship and natural gift of intuition, to social, literary and religious affairs, never acknowledging limitations of circumstance, never deviating from his purpose lured by distractions of temporal excitement. His attempt was to establish our peoples on the full consciousness of their own cultural personality, to make them comprehend the reality of all that was unique and indestructible in their civilization, and simultaneously, to make them approach to other civilizations in the spirit of sympathetic co-operation. With this end in view he tackled an amazingly wide range of social, cultural, and religious problems of our country, and through a long life spent in unflagging service to the cause of India's cultural reassertion, brought back the pure stream of India's philosophy to the futility of our immobile and unproductive national existence. In social ethics he was an uncompromising interpreter of the truths of human relationship, tireless in his crusade against social wrongs and superstition, generous in his co-operation with any reformer, both of this country and of outside, who came to our aid in a genuine spirit of comradeship.² Unsparingly he devoted himself to the task of rescuing from the debris of India's decadence, the true products of its civilization, and to make our people build on them, as the basis, the superstructure of an international culture. Deeply versed in *Sanskrit*, he revived classical studies and while he imbued the *Bengali* literature and language with the rich atmosphere of our classical period, he opened its doors wide to the spirit of the age, offering access to new words from other languages, and to new ideas. to every sphere of our national existence. He brought the sagacity of a comprehensive vision, the spirit of self-manifestation of the unique in the light of the universal.³

Rabindranath Tagore

Rammohan's work was continued by Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, a saintly character who did much to consolidate the *Upanisadic* faith of the Brahma Samaj. Debendranath was against Idolatry, but he accepted *Brahmo Dharma*, gave it a shape, and became the leader of a re-oriented faith founded on the pure monotheism of the ancient *Upanisads*. Every morning his sons had to recite, with correct pronunciation and accent, the verses from the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*. The daily recital of these beautiful moral verses and the simple prayer influenced young Rabindranath and made a lasting impression on his mental make-up. The poet Rabindranath, although born in a reputed family saw that the *Samaj* had one great weakness; it embraced only the elite and debarred the lower caste. In his poetry and other writings we find Rabindranath voicing the wisdom of the outcaste. In his *Hibbert Lectures* at Oxford, he expressed his love for the poetry of the medieval mystics and the *Bauls*. He loved to describe himself as an *Bratya* (out caste) in respect of the institutional religion. Being a member of Tagore's family in 1884, Tagore had to take charge as the secretary of *Adi Brahma Samaj*. During this time *Brahma Samaj* was the target of adverse *Hindu* criticism. As a reaction to *Brahma Dharma* ,a group of Hindu educated men was formed. They called themselves positivists or atheists. Akshay kumar Dutta was one of them. The *Hindu* revivalist Pt Sasadhar Tarkachuramani invented a new religion called *Scientific Hindu* religion. Its two sects, *Navajiban* and *Prachar* systematically published articles against religion. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, the famous Bengali novelist used to write articles in these papers supporting *Hinduism*. Rabindranath, as a secretary, took up the challenge of the Hindus and replied to the articles of those. *Bankim Chandra* replied back and this heated exchange continued for some time. Ultimately a common understanding formed between them which turned into a kind of friendship.⁴ Meanwhile the 26th February 1891 was fixed for the Census in India. Some *Brahma* sects used to think themselves different from the *Hindus*. But the *Adi Brahma Samaj* sect of *Brahma Dharma* to which Tagore belonged, considered themselves as a special branch of *Hinduism*. In a letter to C.J.O' Donnell, in charge of Census, Tagore requested him to refer the *Adi Brahma Samaj* as '*Theistic Hindu*' . He published a circular in *Tattvabodhini* requesting *Adi Brahma* families to classify themselves as '*Hindu-Brahma*'⁵ . As a *Brahma*, Rabindranath was against the practice of idolatry in *Hinduism*. He was against the 'incarnation-theory' or *Avatarvada* of *Hinduism*. The taboos and prohibitions of *Hinduism* were repugnant to the poet. ⁶

In *Dharmer Adhikar*, he says:" there are two sides of man's power. one is his 'can' and the other is his 'should'. The man can do certain actions, this is the easy side of his power. but he should do certain actions, this constitutes the utmost exercise of his power. Religion stands on the high precipice of the 'should' and as such, always draws the 'can' towards it. When our 'can' is completely assimilated by our 'should', we attain the most desired object of our life, we attain truth. But these impotent people, who cannot act up to this ideal of religion, try to pull it down to their own level. Thus taboos and prohibitions arise".⁷ Rabindranath had an unprejudiced mind and did not subscribe to the views of any particular conventional religion. We have an idea of his religious view from the following statement, "I have been asked to let you know something about my own view of religion. One of the reasons why I always feel reluctant to speak about this is that i have not come to my own religion through the portals of passive acceptance of a particular creed owing to some accident of birth. It was born in a family who were pioneers in the revival in our country of a great religion, based upon the utterance of Indian sages in the *Upanishads*. But owing to my idiosyncrasy of temperament, it was impossible for me to accept any religious teaching on the only ground that people in my surroundings believed it to be true.....thus my mind was brought up in an atmosphere of freedom, freedom from the dominance of any creed that had its sanction in the definite authority of some scripture or in the teaching of some organized worshippers." ⁸

Rabindranath Tagore, throughout his life , never clung to one belief. His thoughts were flexible and developed further. From the fiftieth year of his life we find a change in his ideas about religion. He was no longer against *Hinduism*. He was eager to incorporate the best of *Hinduism* into *Brahmas*. At that time there was a debate in the country, are the *Brahmas* *Hindus*? The *Brahma* leaders were divided on the issue. According to some, *Brahmas* are separate from *Hindus* like *Christians* and *Muslims*. But according to Tagore, *Brahmas* were *Hindus* and in support of this view, he read a paper in the *Sadharan Brahma Samaj Mandir* under the caption *Atmaparichaya*. He said, "*Brahmanism* has received its spiritual inspiration from *Hindus*, it stands on the broad basis of *Hindu* culture. *Brahmanism* has a universal outlook but it is always the religion of the *Hindus*. We have thought and assimilated it by the help of the *Hindu* mind. Today *Hinduism* must open the sacred, secret truth of its own heart. It must preach the gospel of universalism to the entire Universe. Today through the salvation of *Brahmanism*, *Hinduism* has been fulfilling its own mission" .⁹

Tagore's unique ideas about religion began to take shape from this time. He was neither believer of *Hinduism* or *Brahmanism* but a synthesis between the two. He did not discard the old orthodox religion totally, and yet at the same time he did not accept *Brahma* religion with the same enthusiasm as before. *Brahmanism* also had become conventional and rigid like *Hinduism*. *Brahmanism* of Rammohan Roy, the aim of which was to unite people, failed to serve its purpose. *Brahmas* used to think of non-*Brahmas* specially *Hindus* as opposed to themselves. So it follows Tagore was not confined to any particular sect and religion. Man picks up that particular form of religion that suits him, but in the final analysis religion transcends all such particular forms., it is one's kinship with everything. Man has to realize his kinship with everything, he has to cultivate a universal feeling of love. Tagore insists that true religion must not be confused with so-called 'institutional religion.' He says, 'it should be remembered that religions or churches or religious-organizations are not the same. They are in one another as the fire is to the ashes. When the religions have to make way for religious-organization, it is like the river being dominated by sand beds, the current stagnates and its aspect becomes desert-like'.¹⁰

According to Tagore, the institutional religions are dogmatic and false and true religion must have the qualities of spontaneity and neutrality in it. Tagore says, 'in dogmatic religion all questioners are definitely answered, all doubts are finally laid to rest. but the poet's religion is fluid, like the atmosphere around the earth where the light and shadow play hide and seek'.¹¹ So, it follows that religion expresses the essential element of all things and man's religion is his innermost truth. Religion has been described as the spontaneous expression of the essential and inner aspect of man. In Tagore's view, "man possesses an extra-awareness that is greater than his material sense---this is his manhood. It is this deep abiding creative force which is his religion."¹²

So, man has a self-awareness, which reveals to him the fact that he has a capacity of going beyond himself, of constantly pushing himself ahead towards higher and higher regions. This is a distinct and essential peculiarity of man. Therefore, his religious life must consist in a constant exercise of this capacity. That is why Tagore clearly says, "if there is any philosophy of religion in my writings, it amounts to this ; to realise the relationship of perfect love between the supreme soul and the souls of all created beings is indeed true religious sense,-this love that holds duality on one side and non-duality on the other, union as well as separation and bondage along with freedom."¹³

According to Tagore, God is the supreme person, who is the combination of truth, beauty and goodness, that are related to human capacities . The different methods for understanding god are the art, philosophy ,religion, worship ,love and devotion. These will be meaningful when god is personal and the object of worship. A certain amount of isolation and sorting is needed in order to expose the metaphysical views of Rabindranath Tagore. It is needed as Tagore never tries to classify his doctrines. Tagore says, "I have never looked at god, man and nature as problems which can be considered in isolation from each other. I could never conceive of their occupying watertight compartment."¹⁴ His philosophy presents the integral picture of god ,man and nature. He says," My mind is used to look at reality as an integral whole, it being understood of course, that i am referring to the wholeness of spirit and not to material unity."¹⁵

God is considered as a postulate, an axiomatic reality in the philosophy of Tagore . No traditional proof for the existence of god was offered. God is the supreme person in Tagore's philosophy. He is the transcendent reality as well as an imminent being. Tagore's belief in spiritual love propels him to theistic conception of god. The formless absolute is conceived as one who has form for the purpose of love and religion. The absolute is considered as the personal lord of the universe. He says, ,"when I try to get a larger vision of this world with all its constant activity, I find that it is ever unwearied ,peaceful ,and beautiful. Through so much of movement and Endeavour, through the cycle of life and death , joy and sorrow, it does not seem over burdened.....how is it possible for peace and beauty to reside in the midst of such diversity and striving ? Why is it that all this is not just noise, but there is music in it ? The only possible answer is , there he stands, silent like a tree".¹⁶ God is knowledge but he cannot be known as things of the world. The worldly things can be experienced by our intellect but it is not able to have the knowledge of god. "The vision of the supreme one in our own soul is a direct and immediate intuition, not based on any ratiocination or demonstration at all"¹⁷

One finite intellect cannot reveal the nature of the infinite. God hides himself who is far from the finite consciousness. He can only be realized through intuition. "They are blind who hope to see it by the light of reason that reason which is the cause of separation. the house of reason is very far away."¹⁸ God is within us but we wrongly search him in the outer world. "To see god we should transfer ourselves to another dimension of reality. We should break down the barrier of individuality and relax the despotism of the sense, our ignorance will then remove. We escape from the light of separation and see god as the

transcendent darkness in which the whole universe is bathed."¹⁹ God is not an abstract reality like the *Brahman* of the *Vedanta*. We feel him in each and all, that is not only in nature but also in the family, in society and in the state. God is the concrete spirit. Tagore believes in the immanence of god.

Tagore never defines god in negative term. He describes god by calling him the sky, the tree and so many other things. The god of Tagore is not nameless and formless. He reflects himself in death and immortality. Tagore defines god as love, the supreme person is full of love for all creatures. He says; "The supreme person whose spirit is over us all, love for whom comprehends love for all creatures and exceeds in depth and strength all other loves leading to difficult endeavors and martyrdoms, that have no other gain than the fulfillment of this love itself."²⁰ Man's religious aspiration fulfils itself in his communion with a personal god. He seeks for a god who is a person like his own self, one within whom he may live, move and have his being. Thus the religion of man requires god as the personal being. God is mere abstraction in thought without the touch of the personal companionship or personal relations to man. God without personality is the absolute of philosophical conception. Tagore writes, "my world is given to a personal 'me' by a personal being. it is gift of soul"²¹ He further writes, "our personal 'I' must have relationship with the infinite personality".²² God is very close to Tagore. He never banishes his god in a far-off heaven. He writes, 'You come down from your throne and stood at my cottage door.'²³

God is the creator of the Universe. The supreme soul or god is also called as *Visvakarma* for his creative nature. The nature with its multiplicity of forms and forces are nothing but the outer manifestation of *Visvakarma* and god's inner manifestation consists in our souls. God manifests in the universe in order to find himself through his creation. Just as the eye cannot see the face and in order to do so, it requires a mirror, god creates this universe in order to realize his own nature that lies in absolute freedom. Tagore says that we can conceive neither *Brahma*, nor the world as the only reality. Reality, it can be described "as both this or that or neither this nor that."²⁴ The mere finite is like a dead well abstracting beyond the knowledge of the mere finite only accumulates but does not illuminate. It is like a lamp without its light, a violin without its music."²⁵ Just as a book cannot be known by counting its pages, a survey of all the finites cannot exhaust reality.

Tagore never conceives the world as an illusion or *Mâyâ*. He tries to give a new explanation of *Mâyâ* that never illustrates the world as an unreality. Tagore does neither totally reject *Mâyâvada* nor the theory of illusion as Ramanuja and other philosophers do. "To dismiss the world as ' *Mâyâ* ,' would imply that god is passive and inactive. If god is inactive then the result of this action, namely the phenomenal world must also be real."²⁶ He believes that god is both transcendent and immanent in the world. God and the world both are interdependent. Without the world god would be like phantom ; without god ,the world would be turned to chaos. Rabindranath Tagore further writes, "I began to ask the question who is he that attunes my ears to the universal music? Who has made me conscious of the subtle links that bind me every object of creation?"²⁷

God is neither separate from the world nor is the world detached from him. Tagore says that *Mâyâ* or ignorance only covers the truth. " *Mâyâ* is that which revolts against the truth of relatedness."²⁸ We find that Tagore believes in the reality of the phenomenal world. but from the standpoint of human existence. He says, Both *Mâyâ* and the world are real. The reality of these two is indubitable. The world appears as illusion only to those who approach it intellectually. It becomes positive and real to us when we enjoy it. Only a person having a narrow outlook, who is sitting inactive in a corner of his room, can divide this world as an illusion. Though the world has its own existence; yet it is not independent of god who is the creator of the universe. Tagore holds that this world is not a construction according to certain rules or laws. It is an expression or creation, a single unity expresses itself in diverse forms. The so-called natural laws are the reflection of this unity in diversity and the supreme unity is therefore, the law of all laws. the world with its manifold appearance has no meaning unless it has the creative unity or god, the supreme person .For Tagore, the world is real with its manifold appearance having a unity maintained by god who is therefore, called the creative unity in relation to this world.

The aim of Tagore's religion, therefore, is the realization of oneness of the individual soul with the supreme soul and this realization has to be a realization in love and joy. Thus we find that the innermost essence of man is the presence of divinity in him. Therefore, religion is nothing but an attempt to realize this divinity. A man possesses the universal man in him. In other words, he has given the name of the Divine as universal man. The liberation is, according to Tagore, the connection of the individual man to the universal man. From the coinage of the term 'Universal man' ,it is proved that a man may not remain confined within himself but can extend himself to all persons and times. It is

remarkable contribution of Tagore that he has emphasized on the fact that it is possible to realize the universal man within man. He has deliberately used universal man instead of god in order to point out that divinity does not come from outside but it lies in the heart of a man, which is a novel way of pointing out truth to mankind. This attitude of Rabindranath reveals his secular mentality.

His philosophy is a peculiar and yet a religious synthesis of abstract monism and a particular type of theism. Reality according to him is one. He identifies this reality with personal god. So Tagore's philosophy oscillates between *Sankara's Vedanta* and *Vaisnavism*, specially the *Visistadvaita of Ramanuja*. In this system it has stated clearly that an individual, though the part of Divine, cannot be infinite. Even at the stage of liberation the relation between a man and the divine is "worshiper and worshipped." As he thinks Divine as a lord of all, controller of the world, he cannot think himself equal to him. But in Tagore's philosophy a man remains in the middle stage. He, though conscious of his ego, thinks himself as infinite as the Divine. In the same individual there is *Vis'va*, i.e. the whole world and the ego. In other words, a person who is doing this worldly works is at the same time related to the divine. Tagore does not believe in liberation in the sense of *Kaivalya (Bairagya sadhane mukti se amer noi)*, but he speaks about liberation existing in innumerable bondages. that is, liberation lies in between finite and infinite or bondage and liberation. At this stage a man looks towards finite as the manifestation of the infinite and the infinite as the manifestation of the finite, which is real picture of harmony. Tagore has clearly pointed out that god intentionally takes the form of the finite out of love. Such type of view which is completely different from the traditional theories of liberation. *Vaisnavism*, the cult of the deity and devotee, the love between the two attracted him. Rabindranath received the inner significance of creation and love from the medieval *Bengali Vaisnava Padavali*. The *Vaisnava* concept of beauty is imbibed by the poet, as beauty and love form the keynote of Tagore's writings. In the lover's gift and crossing he says, "o, listen to the secrets of the world, I know that Lilly is pale for moon's love,"²⁹

He never hesitates in attributing personality of god, and this personal being designated by him as the '*Jivan-devata*', the lord of life, the guiding principle of his life. A clear picture of Tagore's conception of '*Jivan-devata*' would emerge only after having the idea of his philosophy of man because in his scheme god and man go together. Man is called the spark of the divine and supreme is conceived as the ideal which man has to realize. This ideal cannot be an impersonal or absolute. His presence has to be felt

everywhere because he also is an actual participant in the drama that is perpetually going on. This divine personality is 'infinite', finite personalities are individual centers whereas the infinite personality is the 'Universal man' as Tagore calls it. Tagore says "the world for me is both individual and Universal. my world is mine but it is also yours. it is not in my own individual personality that reality is contained but in an infinite personality". So there is a sense in which Tagore humanizes not only nature and objects but also god. His mission is- the divinization of man and the humanizing of god. Tagore was influenced by *Buddhism* also. He was attracted to *Buddhist* concept of *Ahimsā* . He was fascinated by *Buddhist* teaching of *Maitri* (brotherhood), *Upekṣā* (indifference), and *Karuna* (compassion). Tagore was also influenced by *Bauls* tradition. *Bauls* is a non-orthodox faith that flourished in Bengal. The *Bauls* philosophy is very similar to *Sufi* philosophy. The simple life style of *Baul* singers wandering around singing and dancing, always absorbed in the joy of life touched Tagore. The *Bauls* believed that there is god in every man's heart and he may be realized only by sincere love and devotion. There is no room for distinction of caste and sex. In *Religion of Man* he says, "The idea of the humanity of our god or the divinity of man to the eternal is the main subject of the book" .in this book he quoted a number of *Baul* songs and he composed many songs in tune of *Baul* .³⁰

One can never account for the emergence of a genius, for genius is always something in the nature of an exception to the general rule. It is at the same time the function of genius to find expression for the emotions and ideas which stir in the unconscious and subconscious mind of the community. A bond is thus established between the genius and his people, and helps to explain the admiration and wonder with which the genius is greeted when the first flush of amazement is over. Men find in his words and actions an embodiment of the feelings and aspirations which they have dimly felt but could not express. The genius also benefits by such relation. He derives his strength and energy from the feelings and vague aspirations stirring in the mind of the common man. Tagore is typical of genius in both respects. His uniqueness is beyond question and at the same time he life is deeply attached with the common people whom he loved and lived for.

Tagore analyses the existential conditions of man in turns of care and anguish, fear and boredom and assert that life means living in the midst of all these. It is true that he speaks about the ultimate escape, more or less, in the manner of the ancient Indian thinkers. But they made distinction between the concern of philosophy and the ideal of

philosophical thinking. Philosophy is concerned with the existent individual living in the midst of the life-situations, but the ultimate ideal that it recommends is the redemption both of the individual and of the race.

Tagore asserts that an analysis of human aspiration clearly reveals that it is an ever-going, ever-progressing process. It is never satisfied with the goals of life. No satisfaction is final. It is always aspiring for more-for going higher and higher. Tagore calls this aspect of man "the surplus in man". Tagore comes to assert that everything concerning man depends ultimately on man himself, who can shape his own destiny. As such, he does not feel the need of relying upon any super-natural or spiritual powers. Thus this kind of Humanism becomes positivistic, secular and worldly in its outlook.

Swami Vivekananda

Another new school of *Hinduism* developed in Bengal under the influence of Ramakrishna *Paramahansa*. His approach was not intellect and he put much emphasis on simple devotion to God. This is of course in direct line with the *Vedanta*. His disciple Swami Vivekananda, declared himself a socialist, spread this *Vedantic* doctrine of *Advaita* in India and abroad and many Western countries now have branches of the *Ramakrishna Mission*. In the time when materialistic science was gaining ascendance Vivekananda introduced to the Western world the ideas of *Vedanta* which he called 'the science of the soul.' Swami Vivekananda known in his pre-monistic life as Narendra nath Datta, was born in an affluent family in Kolkata on 12th January 1863. His father, Vishwanatha Datta, was a successful attorney, with interests in a wide range of subjects and his mother Bhuvaneshwari Devi ,was endowed with deep devotion, strong character and other qualities. A precious boy, Narendra excelled in music, gymnastics and studies. By the time he graduated from Calcutta University, he had acquired a vast knowledge of different subjects, especially Western philosophy and history. Born with a yogic temperament, he used to practice meditation even from his boyhood, and was associated with *Brahma* movement for some time. At the advent of youth Narendra had to pass through a period of spiritual crisis. His mind was filled with doubts about the existence of god. It was at that time, he first heard about Sri Ramakrishna from one of his English professor at college. One day in November 1881, Narendra went to meet Sri Ramakrishna, who was staying at the Kali temple in Dakshineshwar. He straightaway asked the master a question which he had put to several others but had received no satisfactory answer; 'sir, have you seen god?'. Without hesitating for a moment Ramakrishna replied, " yes I see him as clearly as I see you, only in a much intense sense". Apart from removing doubts from the mind of Narendra , Sri Ramakrishna won his heart through his pure, unselfish love. Thus began a guru-disciple relationship which is quite unique in the history of Bengal.

After the death of Ramakrishna in 1886, he undertook an extensive travel of almost the whole of India, and thereby acquainted himself with the social and economic conditions of the country. He came to feel that India, in spite of its rich spiritual heritage and very strong cultural history, had not been able to root out poverty, weakness and social evils. He strongly felt the need of bringing about a spiritual revolution, which, he also realized, required a very strong spiritual leadership. At that very time he came to know that the *Parliament of Religion* was going to meet at *Chicago*. He decided to go there and to

participate in the meet. What happened there is today a household story, but this was a fact that the Parliament of Religions enabled Vivekananda to assume the spiritual leadership of the Indian people. He travelled extensively even in foreign countries and learnt about their good things. After his return, he founded the Ramakrishna Ashram at Belur, near Calcutta and started with great vigor, the work of social reform and service. In 1899, he undertook a second journey to the West and breathed his last on the 4th of July 1902, leaving behind an institution and a host of disciples to carry on forward the good work he had started.

During his lifetime, he was under the influence of *Brahmo Samaj* and it can be said that his strong feelings against the prevalent orthodox and superstitious rites were generated under that influence. He seemed to be influenced by the personality of Dayananda Saraswati. It can be said that Dayananda's emphasis on the indeterminate nature of reality and his practical insistence on the quality of fearlessness had left a deep mark on Vivekananda. Then, there was the *Gîtâ*, which, with its emphasis on "selfless work", was a source of constant inspiration to Vivekananda.

Vivekananda, to a very great extent, was a *Vedântist*. The deepest influence upon his thought is ancient *Hindu* philosophy-especially of the *Vedanta*. His basic belief in the essential unity of everything, that is, in the completely monistic nature of reality, owes its origin to the *Vedanta*. His doctrine of *Mâyâ*, again, is derived from the same source. The distinction between "an empirical point of view" and "a transcendental point of view" that he so often makes and to which he refers time and again in order to solve certain apparent contradictions of his thought, is borrowed from the *Vedanta*. It is true that Vivekananda always emphasizes the need of re-interpreting *Vedanta* in accordance with the demands and needs of the time; in fact, his philosophy itself is an attempt in the direction, but this remains a fact that some of the basic ideas of the philosophy of Vivekananda are derived from ancient *Hindu* philosophy-from *Vedanta*.

Vivekananda is influenced by *Buddhist* philosophy. There are three ideas in Vivekananda philosophy for which he remains indebted to *Buddhist* thought. The first is the idea of "mass-liberation", that Vivekananda envisages; it has a clear similarity with the *Buddhistic* ideal of bodhisattva. secondly, Vivekananda is impressed by the *Buddhistic* assertion that the raft with the help of which one crosses a river in storm, should be left for the use of others. *Buddha* himself, even after attaining *Nirvana*, kept on roaming about and helping others in their struggles against sufferings. Vivekananda frankly recognizes the

worth of such humanitarian and altruistic work. His own missionary zeal for service is influenced by this. Thirdly, some of the *Buddhist* ideals, like, *Samyak karmanta* and *Ajiva* have also inspired Vivekananda a great deal.

Along with these Indian influences, he also carried, on his thought, the influence of *Christianity*. He was impressed by the strength of character, the soul-force that the Man of the Cross possessed. He could see that it required a supreme spiritual strength to forgive the oppressor even in the midst of acute physical suffering. From *Christianity*, therefore, Vivekananda takes up the ideal of service and love. His conviction that man contains within him the spark of divinity and his optimistic belief in the possibility of man's redemption contain elements that greatly resemble the *Christian* notion of the kingdom of God.

But the profoundest influence, in the light of which every other influence was remodeled and shaped, was that of his master-Sri Ramakrishna *Paramahansa*. In fact, the story of the life of Vivekananda would have been entirely different, had he not come under the influence of Ramakrishna. It is said that Ramakrishna brought about a spiritual transformation in the personality and the mental make-up of Vivekananda. Swami Nikhilananda, speaking about this, says, "it was his master who had taught him the divinity of the soul, the non-duality of god-head, the unity of existence and one more great thing- that is the universality or harmony of all different religions"¹ it is true that Ramakrishna initiated him to spiritual discipline and meditation.

Vivekananda conceives the cosmos more or less, in Sankara's way. Sankaracharya believes that in reality there has never been any creation. From the transcendental point of view, creation, according to Sankara, is unreal. "*Jagat mithya*". Vivekananda not merely asserts the reality of the world, but feels that Vedānta does not intend to uphold that the world is unreal. He thinks that the word '*mithya*' has been misunderstood. There are many other scholars of Vedānta who also feel that way. They all feel that in Vedānta the word '*mithya*' has been used in a special sense. It means that which has no permanent value-that which is constantly changing and varying- that which is transitory and temporary. In this sense, it is not opposite to "*the real*". Thus Vivekananda feels that what Vedānta asserts is not the unreality of the world, but its *mithyatva*, it merely emphasises that *Jagat* cannot have any fixed or absolute character of its own.

This means that creation is not a complete process. World does not come out of god as a finished product. Creation, according to him, is timeless, having no beginning or end in time. The universe is just a manifestation—an expression of god and the question of time cannot be raised with respect to this. He says, 'it is not that this world was created the other day, not that a god came and created the world and since that time has been sleeping, for that cannot be. the creative energy is still going on. God is eternally creating. He is never at rest'²

That shows that Vivekananda has tried to combine the notions of 'creation' and 'evolution'. Usual theories of evolution find it difficult to explain the beginning of everything, even Darwin could not explain how the first living cells came into being. Vivekananda's theory of creation is able to explain the origin of the cosmos, and he explains the growth of the world in terms of evolutionary process. According to him, everything in nature grows from certain subtle form to its grosser form. The story of the world is the story of the unfolding of the rudimentary elements into their more clearly expressed forms.

Vivekananda has borrowed the doctrine of *māyā* from *Advaita Vedanta*, but his conception of *māyā* is not similar to that of Sankara. Like Sankara, Vivekananda believes that *māyā* is a power of the creator. but in *Advaita Vedanta*, *māyā* is the power that creates illusion. It is that divine *sakti* which has the capacity of deluding man into believing that the world is real. Vivekananda accepts this position. According to him *māyā*, does not necessarily mean being illusory or unreal in Vivekananda's philosophy, *māyā* is conceived just as a fact about the nature of the world, it seeks to express the essential characters of the world as it exists. If the world is false, then to abolish the system of exploitation of the rich and welfare of the oppressed people also have no means. He did not believe this type of *māyāvāda*. Vivekananda explains the nature of this fact in a very clear manner when he says "... *māyā*. is not a theory for the explanation of the world; it is simply a statement of facts as they exist, that the very basis of our being is contradiction, that everywhere we have to move through this tremendous contradiction, that wherever there is good, there must also be evil, and wherever there is evil, there must be some good."³ This description of *māyā* differs from the *Vedāntic* concept of *māyā* without contradicting it. the *Vedanta* says that *māyā* is the power of god through which the world-illusion is created. Vivekananda would add the power in itself is neither good nor bad, it is neutral. Therefore, *māyā* must have a neutral character. *māyā's* neutral nature can be

retained only if *māyā* is conceived as the name for the fact of contradiction apparent in the world.

Swami Vivekananda has harmonized between material and spiritual needs. He has given emphasis on both the sides. To him the doctrine of *Advaita Vedanta* not only quenches our spiritual thirst but it serves the needs of our day-to-day life too, which is also essential. To Sankara the whole world and an individual's body, mind, sense-organ, etc, become illusory after realizing *Brahman*. in *Advaita Vedanta* , an individual's body and materialistic world are therefore neglected. Vivekananda has given a new interpretation of *Advaita Vedanta* after considering its practical aspect. He has taken the human body and the material world as manifestation of divinity or as real as the divine. This philosophy the role of the body and mind is as important as the manifestation of the spirit. To him bread is first and thereafter comes religion or spirituality. Thus he has harmonized the material and spiritual worlds. To him both are to be considered

Vivekananda himself says that he has brought down the doctrine of *Advaita Vedanta* from the forest to serve an individual's day-to-day needs. He says, 'what we want is not so much spirituality as a little of the bringing down of the *Advaita* into the material. first bread and then religion' Vivekananda thinks that all the forces that are working in this body have been generated from food. If fasting is adopted our body gets weak leading to the loss of physical forces. Due to the gradual loss of physical force the mental forces become lost as a result of which we cannot think of undertaking any course of reasoning. To him, 'we have, therefore, to take care what sort of food we eat at the beginning, and when we have got strength enough, when our practice is well-advanced, we need not be so careful in this respect' {cws.vol.3.p-136}. That is why, he thought of amalgamating '*Islamic* body and *Vedantic* brain.' We generally try to convince ordinary persons about religion when what they actually need is food, dogmas or theories about religion will fall flat if their hunger is not appeased. For this we require a feeling heart this 'feeling' possesses us automatically if we consider others as our own and if we realize that all persons-rich and poor-are manifestation of the infinite. Swamiji has brought harmony between an individual's emancipation as well as that of others. Not only in materialistic thinking, but in spiritual pursuit also, an individual should not seek his own well-being and emancipation neglecting those of others. Swamiji's master, Sri Ramakrishna, had told him to be as great as a banyan tree so that many persons tormented by worldly woes could take shelter under him.⁴ It will make one to expand his personality and be one with the entire

world. An individual's personal emancipation or freedom is not really freedom if others who are non-different from him are not free. To Vivekanand, freedom or emancipation of others is not a selfish self-seeking endeavour or an act of cowardice or escapism. It is spiritual truth made living, made practical.

That the philosophy of Vivekananda is that of harmony is evidenced from the fact that extreme situations are not acceptable to it. If someone engages oneself in meeting the material needs without spirituality, it is not acceptable. On the other hand, seeking spiritual bliss oneself, without caring for the material help others need, is also not desirable. Vivekananda believed in the salvation of all and not in the salvation of a single individual.⁵ Ideals expressed by the notion of 'spirituality' were an integral part of the *Hindu* tradition and thus taken for granted. It was only in a dialectic situation that this 'spirituality' could suddenly come to prominence. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee comments, 'religion in its broadcast and legitimate sense in culture. if this be true, the most perfect religion is that which supplies a basis for the most complete development of culture...Hinduism alone is a perfect religion.'⁶

Vivekananda is the first to have introduced *Hinduism* to the West. His primary goal is to remove the Western misconceptions about *Hinduism*. Vivekananda laid great stress on India's adherence to the lofty principles of spirituality. The problem was one of promoting India's material well-being without jeopardizing her spiritual outlook on life. He states with emphasis that "we should give our ancient spirituality culture and get in return Western science, technology, methods of raising standards of life, business integrity and technique of corrective effort."⁷ The mission of Vivekananda has been the teaching of *Vedanta* as "reconciling spirituality and material advancement, faith and reason, science and mysticism, work and contemplation, service to men and absorption in god".⁸ Religion helps to unfold all that is best in man, "this is why religion is often described as a science of being and becoming, a science of physical and intellectual growth is not enough. There must also be the moral growth, growth in character. this success of man depended greatly on the growth of religion. religion inspired him, guided him, took him to the height he has reached. This is what gives religion its credibility. Spirituality is what flows from such a man. His whole life becomes a model for others to follow, a model of practical spirituality. In other words, it is the values and conduct that give meaning and significance to the term 'spirituality'. Religion is the science, spirituality is its achievement."⁹

According to Vivekananda the pragmatic and humanistic philosophy of the West would seem to wither away unless their roots struck deeper into the spiritual life of man. Modern science and technology dominated the minds of the great thinkers to such an extent that religion could hardly get due recognition by them. But Vivekananda realized that the ideal was religion and nothing but religion, and that is why all our urges and activities were considered as being regulated by religious principles. Therefore, Vivekananda advocates a religion that was adapted to the needs of the time. He was not a political philosopher like Hobbes and Rousseau. He had made religion the centre of national life. He advocated the synthesis of the material sciences of the West with the *Vedantic* knowledge of the East, the basic requirement on the part of the pupils being restraint, regard and reliance on their own capabilities. It has been said that "while in the West, Vivekananda presented religion as such major concern whilst in India he emphasized on the "religion of work." "He wanted to make '*Hinduism*' aggressive, active and proselytizing'.¹⁰

Vivekananda realized that ours was an age of spiritual crisis in human history. This crisis was the climax of the one sided growth of our modern rational scientific civilization. A theoretical understanding of this crisis, its causes and its remedies, was a necessary prelude to future progress of man and it required an examination of the entire process and methods of social development. Man, to-day needs an integral philosophy which would clarify the relation between individual and society, as also help in an integral evolution of the human race into a spiritual era. It is not out of the way to think that the 'spirituality' which according to Vivekananda, is the 'theme' or principal characteristic of Indian culture and civilization was not a revealed message or a product of a sudden inspiration but the result of centuries of striving, experiment, and assimilation. Out of the innumerable religions, "Vivekananda has tried to evolve one religion which is as broad-based as atheism, as intense as *Islam*, and of which the most distinguishing feature is that it tolerates everything except intolerance .¹¹

Vivekananda was not a mystic or a transcendentalist. He was not a materialist either, though he had deep appreciation for the rational core of western materialism. He was truly religious in so as he subscribed to the basis values that constitute the essence of the religions. Vivekananda has tried to see through the intellectual tensions between continued emotional allegiance to past dogmas and the new rational acceptance of

scientific beliefs. He found a viable sacred-secular formula designed to reconcile spiritual heritage and achieve socio-economic change simultaneously.

The highest goal of religion is self-realization which transcends all diversities. In so far as the sanctity of the highest goal is not violated, changes can be introduced in the substantive content of beliefs and practices. As a challenge to the West, there has been an effort to locate the sources of secularism within the *Hindu* tradition. This led to a variety of interpretations of both the secular ideals and the *Hindu* tradition. Both were transformed in order to produce a synthesis which may combine 'good' elements from either. A distinction between the secular and non-secular is often sought by separating the personal from the inter-personal and thought from action. One can be non-secular in one's beliefs but secular in one's actions. The secular and non-secular continue to co-exist in a presumed harmonious whole. At the highest level, the two coalesce in a single definitive ideal; the perfect religious man is supposed to be a perfect secular man. On an intellectual plane, sacredness without the secularist attitude is dubbed as obscurantism while secularism without the sacred attitude is equated with gross materialism. The two in conjunction are expected to produce attitudes and institutions.

India's encounter with the West has not altered the basic analysis of *Hindu* thought. It has only transformed the intra-religious tensions between ethical demands and human short-comings into a tension between the traditional mode of behavior and the Western rational ideal. The value of secularism is still conceived within *Hindu* religiosity. Secular rationality is supposed to be the outcome of religious beliefs. It is wrong to categorize Vivekananda as either secular or non-secular. The temptation to analyze his thought in terms of modernism and pluralism is irresistible. Though *Vedanta* was the pivot around which he revolved, He was categorically aligned with the modern forms seeking radical purification of *Hindu* rituals and institutionalization of religious freedom. Vivekananda's chief contribution is not the propagation of a secular ideal, notwithstanding his occasional writings on the intrinsic equality of all religions. His major preoccupation was reinterpretation of *Vedanta* in order to transform it from a metaphysical creed of renunciation into a living motive force of altruistic activism. He was thus secularizing the non-secular. His positive valuation of the non-secular has lent respectability to religious pursuits. In fact, his non-secularity is considered to be an indispensable component of the dominant Indian ideal. The Indian secular ideal is not taken as alternative to religion but as a form of secularity. The secular is inspired and carried out by the non-secular. The outer

limits are indistinguishable and the two are united in a transcendental unity of the *Hindu* ideal. Without the higher order of values, Vivekananda's thought may appear fragmented into unrelated parts. The contradictory elements in his thought reveal a psychological unity which is characteristic of India's search of the secular model. His secularity or non-secularity does not stand in isolation. The two are functionally inter-related.

Vivekananda begins with the formulation of a non-secular framework. He operates in a *Hindu* world, is obsessed with *Hindu* degeneration and seeks *Hindu* renaissance. His mission assumes a secular character not by renouncing its *Hindu* predicament. Theoretically, the door is open to anybody who believes in 'renunciation' and 'service'. The ideal is freedom of the self and service of mankind. The method is work and worship. *Hinduism* is not mentioned here at all. But in all this, the major sources of inspiration are *Hindu* ideals as interpreted by Vivekananda. The identity of religions is conceived in terms of *Pedantic* non-dualism. Beneath the acceptance of the equality of all religions, the notion of the ultimate superiority of *Vedanta* continues to lurk in the background. The aspect of non-secularity was inherent in Vivekananda outlook from the very beginning. It was brought forth in two ways. One was his acceptance that religion is central to Indian life and the other was his belief in the universal relevance of *Pedantic* ideals. With respect to the first, he maintained that India cannot be understood nor changed except through its religion. In his framework "religious life formed this centre, the key note of the whole music of national life in India".¹² At this level the adoption of *Hindu* paraphernalia is merely a tactical retreat to advance secular work. In addition to this there is little doubt that Vivekananda believed in the inherent superiority of *Vedanta*. He could foresee the equality of all religions in order to bring about the unity of mankind. But as a *Hindu* he unhesitatingly glorified *Hinduism*. "whether we call it *Vedantism* or any ism the truth is that *Advaitism* is the last word of religion and thought and the only position from which one can look upon all religions and sects with love. I believe it is the religion of the future enlightened humanity"¹³

He held that *Vedanta* alone was compatible with reason and modern science. The argument launched in favor was that it could cater to individuals to different stages of spiritual development. Vivekananda has identified *Vedanta* as "the kernel of all religions and abstract science embracing all methods"¹⁴ He went to the extent of maintaining that '*Vedanta*' is the rationale of all religions. "Without the *Vedanta* every religions is superstitious, with it everything becomes religion"¹⁵ In its empirical application, this belief

is purely non-secular and explicitly denies an equal and secular status to other religions. In upholding his own religious potentials, he encourages religious particularism and tries to bring the secular ideal with a certain type of *Hindu* religiosity. All through he suggests popularization of spiritual and secular knowledge among the masses, so that they can see the evil of the caste system and resist the humiliation and exploitation following the caste system with courage and conviction. He writes, "I am no preacher of any momentary social reforms, I am not trying to remedy social evils, I only ask you to go forward and complete the practical realization of the scheme of human progress. I only ask you to work to realize more and more the *Pedantic* ideal of the solidarity of man and his inborn nature."¹⁶.

G.C. Nayak in his essay "The transcendental Secularism" maintains that *Hinduism* as a religion can be secularized. He told, '*Hinduism* in its form has no specific object of worship, everything is holy, every value is a matter of ultimate concern, every bit of life personal or social is considered sacred.'¹⁷ His is a unique approach and his views are rooted in *Vedanta*. It is seen earlier how Vivekananda appears to be non-secular by clinging on to the *Vedantic* ideal in spite of maintaining the equality of all religions at the same time, of course, the *Hindu* religion may be termed as secular because of its unique kind of monism, having no binding, no specific object of worship or of ultimate concern as held by Nayak, but the very attitude of holding first on to it and accepting it as the kernel of all religions is non-secular.

Within *Hindu* tradition this type of non-secularity is closely related to the conventional separation of religion and politics. At the same time it must be borne in mind that Vivekananda was a Patriot. For him religion was a means, a vehicle for rousing and awakening the millions of India. The West separates religion from politics by granting the two spheres their respective autonomy and assumes a situation of mutual non-interference. In *Hinduism*, politics is a lower level manifestation of the same goal and, accordingly, the two are hierarchically related. The sphere of action is identical but the means of attainment are different. He thinks that, "the threat of British subjugation is visualized in terms of its effects rather than its political consequence."¹⁸ Freedom in his vocabulary is not political freedom but spiritual freedom from the bonds of ignorance. He often felt that the West in its secular triumph is violating their moral codes. Similarly India's real degradation is not its political subordination but its spiritual bankruptcy. Vivekananda cut himself off from any political involvement but in spite of it, his call for moral re-armament did become a vehicle of inspiration for revolutionary extremists who sought India's political freedom

through religious nationalism. Non-secular thought became a motive for secular action. Between the secular attainment of freedom and the non-secular realization of liberation, there was hardly any choice. In Vivekananda outlook the former was meaningless without its socio-economic counterpart. He felt that true freedom was freedom from imperfection. This can be attained when the pursuit of *mukti* is itself transformed into an instrument of service. This transformation leads to the well-known synthesis which seeks to combine the sacred and secular into a single frame of reference. Both sacred and secular become instruments of each other. The former is supposed to facilitate ethically appropriate secular behaviour. The latter was supposed to become a vehicle of sacred values. The most common form in which this ideology is expressed is the desire to retain India's spiritual heritage and surpass the West's material modernity. This desire to have the best of both the worlds has led to a separation of Eastern spirituality and Western materialism. It is generally in the context of such separation that one talks of India's contribution to world thought and culture. Vivekananda himself distinguished between the oriental and occidental and realized that each needed the other for an ideal synthesis. Each of these types has its grandeur, each has its glory. Vivekananda said; "To the oriental, the world of spirit is as real as to the occidental is the world of sense... the oriental ideal is as necessary for the progress of the human race as is the occidental, and I think it is more necessary..... therefore it is fitting that whenever there is spiritual adjustment, it should come from the orient".¹⁹ The excellence of secular achievements is treated by non-secular criteria. The two are either fused in co-ordination or carried on separately but simultaneously. In case of the former the spiritual operates on a higher level, its primary functions being the maintenance of ethical standards. In the latter, the 'spiritual' does not interfere with the secular. It is noteworthy that Vivekananda has taken recourse to both these solutions with reference to the first, he maintains that, "there should be provision for secular vocational education but it should be tempered with religious training".²⁰ The education of mission is supposed to consist of course in Western sciences as well as Indian religions. Mission workers are expected to be both secular and spiritual teachers. With respect to the solution he believes that secular and non-secular pursuits should be carried on with an equanimity that comes only to saints. He says, "You must try to combine in your life immense idealism with immense practicality. You must be prepared to go into deep meditation now, and the next moment you must be ready to go and cultivate these fields."²¹

Vivekananda's *Practical Vedanta* seeks to combine idealism with activism and renunciation with service. The two are not integrated. Each has its own autonomy and a distinctive point of reference. Worldliness and self-realization are considered incompatible. However, he who can carry both without harming either, 'true to the kindred points of heaven and home- is an ideal man'²² In order to make the secular and the non-secular consistent with each other, both needs to be modified in order to make proper adjustments. The scope of 'non-secular' needs to be broadened. The apparent conflict between the worldly *māyā* and the transcendental truth has to be narrowed down to a point where *dharma* no longer requires a withdrawal from the secular involvement. This was one of the most important contributions of Vivekananda. The *Vedanta* does not in reality denounce the world. the ideal of renunciation nowhere attains such height as in the teaching of the *Vedanta*. The ideal of renunciation, according to Vivekananda, is "giving up the world as we think of it, as we know it, as it appears to us and to know w it really is"²³ He wants the world to be deified, regarded as god, not to be rejected as *māyā*. In deifying the world, Vivekananda has introduced a qualitative change from perception to substance. The world becomes real in substance and not merely an ignorant perception. god assumes the form of "*Daridra narayana*"(to treat the poor person as God) and the worship of man becomes primarily a religious action. There is a suggestion of moving *Advaita* from forest caves to busy streets and turning the intricate mythology into concrete moral forms. We no longer remain the passive recipients of the will of god but are active instrument of his power. The popular interpretation of the doctrine of karma which identifies it with fatalism is rejected. Vivekananda in fact, sums up the *Pedantic* message in a single word 'strength'. The sanctification of the secular and secularization of the religious implies two related innovations. One is to dissociate prevalent religiosity from its pristine forms. The other is to isolate within pristine forms its essential and non-essential aspects. Vivekananda's attempt to modernize *Hinduism* admirably succeeded on both these counts.

Vivekananda attacks the corrupt form of religious behaviour institutionalized by exploitive *Brahmins*, the skeptic attitude of disbelief and disillusionment popularized by the educated Westernized elites, and the endless antiquated ritual practices observed by the ignorant Indian mass. He is critical of the absurd notions of purity and pollution and through this criticism, he attempts to attack the very basis of *Hindu* social institutions. He says, "we are neither *Vedāntists*, most of us now, nor *Pauranics*, nor *Tantrics*. We are just

'don't touchiest'. Our religion is in the kitchen. Our- god is the cooking pot, and our religion is 'don't touch me, I am holy'. This goes on for another century, every-one of us will be a lunatic asylum."²⁴ Vivekananda argues that such notions of pollutions can be shed away to regain the lost purity of *Hinduism*. He could see the inner contradiction between the original teachings of *Hindu* religion and its latter practices., "No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as *Hinduism*, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as *Hinduism*."²⁵

Despite Vivekananda's *Vedanta*-centricity, His *secularism* is indisputable. The religious pluralism is reinforced through his definition of *Vedanta* itself. He separates the religious *Vedanta* which has to be realized within oneself from different creeds and sects which have external relative validity for different communities. He accepts the truth of the bible for the *Christians* and of the *Korân* for the *Muslims*. The same truth is found in every religion and the good and virtuous have been produced by every creed. There is no point in leaving one's own religion in order to embrace another. People belonging to different religions of the world must assimilate the spirit of others and yet preserve their own individuality. He attacked all religions, including *Hinduism*, for promoting obscurantism. At the same time he upheld the achievements of all religions in so far as they inspired men to proper ethical conduct. About *Hinduism*, he frankly confessed, "Personally I take as much of the *Vedas* as it agrees with reason."²⁶ He was not apologetic and suggested deliberate alternations and additions in *Vedic* laws. His secular rationality, however, did not lead him to challenge the very validity of all metaphysical revelations. He says, "we want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the *Vedas*, nor the *Bible*, nor the *korân*, yet this has to be done by harmonizing the *Vedas*, *Bible* and the *korân*. Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of the religion, which is openness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best."²⁷ He was ready to forego any religious doctrine or throw away any ceremonial that acted as a barrier in his service to mankind. He was ready to forego *mukti* if it came in the way of his ungrudging service for mankind and the country. When the nature of his social service was criticized fearing that it may delude man from the spiritual domain, Vivekananda retorted, "You think *Jnâna* is dry knowledge to be attained by a desert path, killing out the tenders faculties of the heart. Your *bhakti* is sentimental nonsense which makes one important....who cares for you *bhakti* and *mukti*? Who cares what the scriptures say? I will go to hell cheerfully a thousand times, if I can rouse my countrymen, immersed in *tamas* and make them stand on

their own feet and he men, transpired with the spirit of karma Yoga."²⁸ He was bent upon serving and helping others even without caring for his own salvation. Here Vivekananda comes to approximate the pure secular ideal which seeks human welfare without any reference to divine authority. He is prepared to reject all sects and dogmas. He often spoke that a religion which tolerates and glorifies poverty cannot be a religion of man.

During his travel in India, he saw pathetic scenes of abject poverty which induces him to comment in the following manner, "I do not believe in god or religion, which cannot wipe the widow's tears or bring a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth"²⁹ Poverty was treated as a sin. Food came before god. In another context, playing football was considered more important than praying in order to reach heaven. Religious instrumentalities of limitless rituals, the various *vratas*, *danas*, and *pujas* common to a *Hindu* definition of ethical action, were dismissed as merely secondary details. Material advancement became for him a pre-requisite for progress. Service to humanity is regarded as the central idea and here no other gods are allowed. His secular rationality went beyond the constraints of reason. Even if it were unreasonable to equate man with god, Vivekananda did this in order to restructure and upgrade the norms of religious action.

Vivekananda's mission was designed to raise the level of religious consciousness to the height of secular ideals. The ideal in *Hindu* in Vivekananda's practical *Vedanta* is not a recluse looking after his own salvation. He is not a *sanyasin* operating above the norms of ordinary human beings. He is, in fact, immersed in the secular world pursuing secular goals in order to attain the desired level of religiosity. *Hinduism* becomes a creed of altruistic service. The secular and the non-secular are integrated to promote secularism in action and non-secularism in thought. In doing this, Vivekananda demolishes the dichotomy between secular science and non-secular religion. He questioned the unconditional obedience to authority. He emphasized: "To believe blindly is to degenerate the human soul. Be an atheist if you want, but do not believe in anything unquestioningly. Why degrade the soul to the level of animals.....stand up and reason out, having no blind faith. Religion is a question of being and becoming, not of believing. This is religion and when you have attained to that you have religion."³⁰

The sole mission of Vivekananda was to highlight and bring home the message of unity of faiths. He was a Universalist par excellence. He was a staunch critic of religious obscurantism but a champion of spiritualism. As a true *Vedantin*, Vivekananda preached

the fatherhood of god and the brotherhood of man. He was a great humanist, but his humanism was not confined to the domain of the human beings only. For him, not only man but also all other created beings and things are the expression of the one supreme consciousness. According to him, a religion which does not enable man to perceive the essential divinity and oneness of all created things and beings is no religion. For Vivekananda, it is the moral values or principles that constitute the life-breath of religion. The values that form the essence of religion are not merely humanistic but still more as they take cognizance of the interest and welfare of the whole of creation. The human welfare is, of course, incorporated and draws sustenance from the spiritual vision of oneness of all creation, animate and inanimate. Hence it would be more appropriate to label the humanism of Vivekananda as "Spiritual Humanism".

Vivekananda was a firm believer in education as an instrument of human betterment. He was greatly distressed to see the degradation in which the masses had fallen because of the denial of literacy and education of them. He was highly critical of the educational systems itself with its western bias and lack of attention to the development of the mental ability and moral character in its pupils. he wanted a thorough re-orientation of the educational system. he declared, "We must have life building , man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas. If education is identical with information, the liberties are the greatest sages of the world and encyclopedia's are the *rishis*, further he observed, '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.'³¹ Vivekananda observed, "if you really want to judge the character of man, look not at his great performances. Watch a man do his most common actions. These are indeed the things which will tell you the real character of the great man. Great occasions rouse even the lowest of human being to some kind of greatness, but he alone is really great whose character is great always-the same whatever be".³² According to him, 'intellectuality' is not the highest good morality and spirituality are the things for which we strive. He remarks, 'our woman are not so learned, but they are more pure".³³ He does not consider a man as educated if only he can pass some examination and deliver good lectures. The basis of all system, social or political, rests upon the goodness of man. No nation is great or good because parliament enacts this or that, but because its men are great and good. Vivekananda reminded that the notion lived in the cottage and therefore it was the duty of every educated younger to go from village to village and make the people understand their real condition, awake them from

their long slumber and advise them how to improve their own miserable lot. The sunken vitality of the helpless victims of social injustice was to be restored physically, intellectually as well as spiritually.

Vivekananda gave prime importance to the education of the masses. He asserted, "the chief cause of India's ruin has been the monopolizing of the whole education of the land, by dint of pride and royal authority, among a handful of men"³⁴ He further observed "If we are to rise again, we shall have to do it in the same way, that is by spreading education among the masses".³⁵ He considers that, "The great national sin is the neglect of the masses and that is one of the causes of our downfall. No amount of politics would be of any avail until the masses in India are once more well educated, well fed, and well cared for. They pay for our education, they build our temples, but in return they get kicks. They are practically our slaves. If we want to regenerate India, we must work for them".³⁶ Vivekananda formulated the most modern idea about social education. "If the poor boy cannot come to education, education must go to him. There are thousands of single-minded, self-sacrificing, *sanyasis* in our country going from village to village, teaching religion. If some of them can be organized as teachers of secular things also, not only preaching but teaching also. Suppose two of them go to a village in the evening with a camera, a globe, some maps etc, they can teach a great deal of astronomy and geography to the ignorant. By telling stories about different nations, they can give the poor a hundred times more information through the ear than they can get in a life time through books. But this requires an organization."³⁷

Vivekananda preached "Religion of realization, we may study all the books that are in the world, yet we may not understand a word of religion or of god".³⁸ His was a practical religion. He declared, "It will not do merely to listen to great principles, you must apply them in the practical field, turn them into constant practice, service of the poor was the best religion"³⁹ Vivekananda had great regard for all religions. "...let us take in all that has been in the past, enjoy in the light of the present and open every window of the heart for all that will come in the future. Salutation to all the prophets of the past, to the great ones of the present and to all that are to come in the future".⁴⁰

In *Vedanta* philosophy, human beings are covered with five-sheaths-the physical, vital, mental, intellectual and the spiritual, with the last one forming the core of character. Every soul, according to Swamiji, is potentially divine and everyone's goal is to manifest

the divine within .spirituality is the manifestation of this divinity already in man. Shri Ramakrishna, the guru of Swamiji, used to say that the Bengali synonym of man is *Manush*, *i.e. man+hush*, which symbolizes a mind with spiritual consciousness. This self-actualization is possible only through spiritual education. Education should involve all domains of health that is, physical, mental, social and spiritual with a ethical culture. But spirituality, which is the eternal principle that inspires every religion, must form the innermost core of education system. "What is the use of polishing the outside when there is no inside, "he said, the ultimate aim of all training is to make a man. In today's world this spiritual consciousness translates itself as values of unselfishness ethics, compassion, tolerance, security and harmony to develop peace and democracy. As mother Teresa later explained, 'We should help a *Hindu* became a better *Hindu*, a *Muslim* to become a better *Muslim*, a *Catholic* to become a better *Catholic*'. {<https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/quotes/mother-teresa-on-equality-before-god>} Thus, in order to improve the quality of humankind, to eradicate socio-cultural dogmas, and to promote humanity, education must take its roots back into the science of spirituality. To counterbalance the unequal socio-economic growth in India, he prescribed, "...before flooding the land with socialistic or political ideas, first deluge the land with spiritual ideas. If you attempt to get secular knowledge without religion, I will tell you plainly, vain is your attempt in India, it will never have a hold on in the people."⁴¹ However, it is important to remember that for him, being religious meant leading life in such a way that we manifest our higher nature, truth and goodness in our thoughts, words and deeds.

During his travel all over. India, Swami Vivekananda was deeply moved to see the appalling poverty and backwardness of masses. He was the first modern religious *guru* to understand and openly declare that real cause of India's downfall was neglect of the masses. He realized that the immediate need was to provide food and other necessities to the hungry millions. For this they ought to be taught improved methods of agriculture, village and set up industries. Vivekananda grasped that the crux of the problem lies in poverty of India. This has escaped the attention of most social reformers. He realized that owing to centuries of oppression, the downtrodden masses had lost faith in their capacity to improve their lives. It was necessary to infuse into their minds faith. For this they needed a life -giving, inspiring message. Swamiji found this message in the 'principle of Atman', the doctrine of the potential divinity of the soul, taught in *Vedanta*. He saw that in spite of poverty, the masses clung to religion. But they had never been taught the life-

giving principles of *Vedanta* and how to apply them in practical life. Thus the masses needed two kinds of knowledge: secular knowledge to improve their economic condition and the second is spiritual knowledge to infuse in them faith in themselves and strengthen their morality. The next question was how to spread these two kinds of knowledge among the masses-"Through universal education"-this was the answer that Swamiji found ultimately. In Swamiji's words, "...travelling through many cities of Europe and observing in them the comforts that even the poor people had, I used to shed tears what made the difference? 'education' is the answer I got."⁴² He stated emphatically that if the Indian society is to be reformed, education has to reach to every nook and corner, rich and poor. He said that the sense of dignity rises in a man when he becomes conscious of his inner spirit and it is very purpose of education.

Every society has its outer sheath called knowledge and an inner core called culture. The culture of India has its roots in her spiritual values. The values are to be imprinted in the minds of the students through the study of the epics like *Rāmāyana*, *Mahābhārata*, *Gītā*, *Veda and Upanishads*. Swamiji has taught Indians how to master Western technology and nurture Indian spirituality. Swamiji has taught Indian how to adapt western humanities to Indian ethos. He made the Western people realize that they had to learn much from Indian spirituality for their own well-being. He showed that, in spite of her poverty and backwardness, India had a great contribution to offer to world culture. He was India's first modern educational and cultural ambassador to the West. He was the first modern religious leader in India to speak for the masses, formulate a definite philosophy of service, and organize large scale educational social service system.

The tremendous explosion of information without commensurate wisdom, and immense power not tempered with compassion, tolerance, ethics or humanity has made today's education a potential source of disaster. Today's education not only neglects training of mind but also negates all spiritual values. Brains are stuffed with information only. This obscures assimilation of information into knowledge and knowledge into wisdom. A moving storehouse of information is more encouraged today than cultivated humanity. He conceived civilization as manifestation of the divine within all individuals of the society. Unfortunately, till date, no society has made much progress into it. Morality is more lacking amongst the educated privileged few. Gentleness, comparison, tolerance have disappeared.

One of the most significant contributions of Swami Vivekananda in the modern world is his interpretation of religion and spirituality as the core of education. Swamiji met the challenge of modern sciences by showing that religion is as scientific as science itself, religion is the science of consciousness. as such, religion and science are not contradictory to each other but are complementary. This universal conception frees religion from the hold superstitions, dogmatism, conflicts, ethnic confrontations and intolerance. It makes spirituality the highest and noblest pursuit- the pursuit, of supreme emancipation, supreme knowledge and supreme bliss.

Vivekananda's concept of 'potential divinity of the soul' gives a new concept of universal humanity. Today, the degradation of man has been going on space, as witnessed by the enormous increase in broken homes, immorality, violence, religious conflicts, wars, addiction, crime etc. Vivekananda's potential divinity of the soul prevents this degradation, divinizes human relationships, and makes life meaningful and worth living. Swamiji has laid the foundation for 'spiritual humanism', recognizing his contribution, UNESCO in 1973 has declared him as one of the eminent educationists of the world.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

The thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi will help to understand the nature of Indian secularism. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, one of the most articulate and influential figure of the twentieth century, a politician by heart, and a philosopher by trade, a prophetic figure of the modernizing India, a figure who has left behind a legacy of such reputation that even after 69 years of his death, we are still compelled to remember him. He is remembered for his actions and India followed his ideal because of his sheer force of will. He is considered as one of the most debated individual in Indian history. Mahatma Gandhi was born at Porbandar on the 2nd of October 1869, in a family of *vaisya*. His ancestors were *vaisya* by cast and *vaisya* by trade. For some time his father was the prime minister in the court of Rajkot and Vankaner. Other than his rich cultural heritage, there was another strong influence that was inflicted upon young Gandhi, and that was his family's orthodox religious beliefs, which he inherited to some extents. Although his parents were orthodox vaisṣṇavas, they were enlightened enough to give all the necessary arrangements for giving modern education to their children. He was raised in a mixed, but balanced set-up, he was introduced into religious and moral traditions, and yet his mind was sufficiently open to the changing needs of the time.

His educational career was uneventful. This is really strange for a person like him under whom the fate of an entire nation depended, although there are popular fables about his student life, and the stories demonstrate the abstinence of a young and honest child, who refused to cheat on tests despite his teacher's encouragement and who abstained from meat-eating and smoking. These anecdotes are scarcely challenged for their genuinity, and have now become a part of Gandhi's persona, hence believed to be true. These experiences had a good effect on him, as they aroused in him an ever-present moral sense. In 1888, he was sent to England for legal studies, after taking a vow in the presence of his mother not to touch meat, and not to keep in bad company. This vow would later on become a symbol of penance, and help to convince him that sincere determination for doing anything good was bound to success. This belief of him often contradicts with his *Satyagraha* policy, but then, the times were hard and needed desperate measures, and no one had the time to criticize the person who showed the light in time of crisis.

After completing his legal studies, he headed out to practice law in South Africa, where he would earn his first medals as a social activist along with some criticism. He

witnessed there various acts of racial discriminations committed by the white people that changed the entire course of his life and actions, and started his conquest to conquer evil by love. He started passive resistance by openly defying immoral laws and thus started putting to practice his moral and religious ideas. He was accused of fighting only for the aristocrat Indians, and only uses the slave class to power up his protests. But it's true that he failed to bring up the demands and their rights to free lives in his times during South Africa. He stopped his campaigns after the protests began to turn violent, frequently, and earned a good character certificate from the British Government.

After his unique experiments in South Africa, and his experiences with South American moral and political adventures, he returned to India with a vision to unchain his own country with his newly acquired techniques of *Satyagraha*. His unshakable faith in his methods and in the goodness of his character was bound to make a mark on the minds of the Indians.

Origin of Gandhian Philosophy

Gandhi did not have any training in academic philosophy, he inherited most of his religious beliefs from *Vaiṣṇava* cult, and his deeply theistic upbringing made him to believe in the idea of an all-powerful God.

Now to understand the dual character of Gandhi we must look back to an age old question that has been continuing in the arena of Indian philosophy for centuries. The question 'Is an omnipotent and omnipresent God at all necessary?'

The great Advaita Vedantist Śankara stressed upon the reality of *Ningana Brahman*, which convinced him that the world which apparently looks real, is metaphysically just an illusion created by ignorance of individuals, and if the reality is essentially one, if the perception of many is the product of an illusion-producing ignorance, then both creator and creation become unreal, hence the creator ceases to exist, and the creations are not creations.

The Vaiṣṇava thinkers on the one hand, accept the reality of the world, and therefore they are the believer of the creationism. According to Advaita, reality is an attribute, indeterminate Brahman, and salvation lies in the knowledge of reality, and reality cannot be approached in the devotional manner, because devotion pre-determines the interpersonal relations. On the other hand, Vaiṣṇavas are determined theists, and for them

God became a personal God. They feel that the cold and dispassionate way of knowledge will fail to establish the relationship with God. According to them God has to be felt, realized, and therefore the way of feeling and devotion is the only way of salvation. But like most puritans they don't deny the importance of knowledge altogether. And because of this simple path Vaiṣṇava cult became very popular in India, because they showed a path of salvation that can be taken up by any man, irrespective of their academic excellence.

Gandhi's philosophy of god was deeply theistic in nature; it is true that Gandhi talks about *nirguna* character of the real, but it is only because he feels that the academic distinction between 'saguna' and 'nirguna' is irrelevant for the belief and practice of a true believer which narrows down his actual belief. And God is needed not merely for the satisfaction of reason and intellectual curiosity, but also for providing strength and solace, and a faith in god must enable an individual to be in peace with the world.

"...He is no God who merely satisfies the intellect, if He ever does. God to be God, must rule the heart and transform it."¹ Gandhi said. And this is only possible when an inter-personal relation is conceived and God is thought of as a person.

While discussing Gandhian philosophy we often come across a tangled problem that directly address the reconciliation of the irreconcilable, truth is an impersonal principle, but God is directly conceived as a person by Gandhi. So how can the two be identified?

An answer can be found in one of his own speeches, he says "In my early youth I was taught to repeat what in Hindu scriptures are known as one thousand names of God. But these one thousand names of God were by no means exhaustive. We believe- and I think it is the truth- that God has as many names as there are creatures and therefore, we also say that God is nameless, and since God has many forms we also consider Him formless, and since He speaks to us in many tongues, we consider Him to be speechless and so on... if it is possible for the human tongue to give the fullest description, I have come to the conclusion that for myself, God is Truth."²

So, according to him God is a name or a category for the universal reality which appears to defy all descriptions, and God is described as truth, and Truth is not an attribute of God, but God alone is Truth. But later on he changed his statement to be 'Truth is God'.

These two statements may seem similar but this fine change caused by the juxtaposition of subject and predicate, change the meaning almost wholly. Just like ‘All men are mortals’ and ‘All mortals are men’ do not imply the same things, the aforementioned statements face the similar difficulty. Gandhi later explained his changed stance by the statement “But deep down in me I used to say that though God may be God, God is Truth above all. ...But two years ago I went a step further and said Truth is God. You will see the fine distinction between the statements, viz. that God is Truth and Truth is God. And I came to the conclusion after a continuous and relentless search after Truth: ...¹³

This statement shows there was a very strong motive behind bringing out the change, one of the many is that the word Truth is not as ambiguous as God. And although a logical mind can easily dismay the idea of an Omnipotent and Omnipresent God, but it is impossible for a modern mind to defy Truth, because if one defies Truth then one defies every logic, and crosses the boundary that separates the sane from the insane.

To understand Gandhian philosophy, we have to first understand the time in which he lived in, and that time is responsible for his unique philosophy. It has been mentioned before that Gandhian philosophy is closely related to the changing needs of the time, and his philosophy was a very important part of his politics. The times were hard, and he needed someone who may shelter all the thinking minds of India irrespective of their religious beliefs. And at that time most of the sharper minds were foreign educated, and an atheist trend was on the rise. Gandhi readily understood that it was as important to shelter atheists, as the other communal majorities, and for that he needed an idol that even the atheists could not deny. The answer was already before him for him to reach out and take it. So the new statement “Truth is God” came into existence. He even went out to say ‘I don’t care for God, if He is anything but Truth.’

What is Truth? In the logical sense of the word ‘Truth’, truth is considered to be a property of judgment, but in the metaphysical context Truth is conceived differently- it is considered as right knowledge, as knowledge that corresponds to reality. In Indian context Truth is conceived a self-illuminating as revealing itself. Gandhi somehow combined all these meanings of the word ‘Truth’ and then came up to identify the Truth with God.

Now one may raise questions: How can the two identified with each other? Truth is the picture of reality grasped by Human mind. How can the picture of the reality be identical with the reality itself?

In answer Gandhi said “ My uniform experience has convinced me that there is no other God than Truth ... the little fleeting glimpses, therefore, that I have been able to have of Truth can hardly convey an idea of the indescribable luster of Truth, a million times more intense than that of the sun we daily see with our eyes. In fact, what I have caught is only the faintest glimmer of that mighty effulgence.”⁴

But all these fancy, celestial, and surreal references fail to hit on the main point. A blind man may only touch an elephant’s trunk and deduce the elephant to be a giant snake, and that can be the truth to the blind man, but we, who can see, can easily say that, that is not the whole elephant. And just like that, only because we see the whole elephant, we cannot say that we know the whole truth about that elephant. The whole truth is unachievable, and will remain only a farfetched target unless we harness the concept of infinity. So, for us truth is only what we know, and what we know is regularly increasing every second. Although we are getting closer and closer to the whole truth every second, we can never really achieve it. Hence, according to Gandhi’s logic, God becomes unachievable.

Proof of God

For every question that unsettled his position, Gandhi came up with a distinctive, disoriented answer, ‘the inner voice’, ‘the voice of conscience’. Adding more to the list, Gandhi often ridicules ‘reason’ as the tool of finding the big answers. He writes “Rationalists are admirable beings, but Rationalism can be a hideous monster when it claims omnipotence for itself. Attribution of omnipotence of reason is as bad a piece of idolatry as the worship of stick and stone believing it to be God. I plead not for the suppression of reason, but for a due recognition of that in us which sanctifies reason.”⁵

Now before we proceed, it is important to understand what reason is. **Reason** is the capacity for consciously making sense of things, applying logic, establishing and verifying facts, and changing or justifying practices, institutions, and beliefs based on new or existing information. It is closely associated with such characteristically human activities as philosophy, science, language, mathematics, and art and is normally considered to be a definitive characteristic of human nature. Reason, or an aspect of it, is sometimes referred to as rationality.

So we can see that reason is not something that is hungry for worshippers in an all-devouring manner. Reason is used to verify the practices that are currently believed to be true, and constantly criticize them, a position similar to the intellectuals in a democracy. And criticism has to be fierce, unforgiving, unbiased, free from all manipulations, and pure. So in a way the meaning of rationality is purity. And every attempt to limit or censor rationalism is a fundamentalist approach. Fundamentalists believe only what they think is true and every other answer as untruthful, and they harbor these notions without any practical proof, and often their philosophical thoughts are fragile and based on their fundamentalism. And if we exclude all the other arguments, we can safely say that censoring rational thinking is equivalent to censoring common sense, censoring our individuality.

Gandhi is convinced that 'Truth' can only be known through inner realization, and God's knowledge can only be revealed in a serene and sacred state. It is true Gandhi does not oppose rational thinking, but he only acknowledges it as long as the parameters of criticism are favorable to the idea of existence of an omnipotent and omnipotence entity.

Now let us talk about some of those proofs of the existence of such deity. According to him, we exist, our parents have existed, and their parents have also existed, so who originated this chain reaction? As an answer, he offers God, he portrays God as the universal 'parent', displaying resemblance to the 'the casual proof'. Now if we want to believe what he says, we have to take a very stern step, and that is to completely ignore 'Evolution'.

As a theological proof, he says that there are universal laws that are governing the universe, and if there are laws this vast there must be a very fastidious governor. "I subscribe to the belief or the philosophy that all life in its essence is one...This belief requires a living faith in a living God who is the ultimate arbiter of our faith." ⁶

But the proof that appears to convince him the most is the Moral proof. He seems to believe that the voice of our conscience carries a dependable testimony of God. It creates an exalting feeling when a good deed is done, and pricks in case of a bad deed. He explains this as being the embodiment of God's will.

He offers a kind of 'pragmatic proof' where he says the wants and needs of every human being cannot be fulfilled with materialistic things, even after every fulfilled wish

humans wish for something more, something inexplicable, and he describes this to be the longing for God.

But after everything the main standpoint of his clearly indicates that proofs can never serve the function of creating faith in the existence of God, because every proof given by him can easily be mistaken. For the universal laws do defy themselves, for there are men and women so twisted that they have lost the voice of conscience, or never had it, and for the insatiable longing can be satisfied with art, music, literature, and by various other means, because every form of art searches for truth in its own way. And by nullifying proof, and reason, he nullifies every other argument, thus confining religion in a room, making it an entity that can very easily induce claustrophobia.

Gandhi conceives God as all-pervasive, everything that moves, and does not move, everything that exists is God to him. “There is an indefinable mysterious power that pervades everything. Feel it, though I do not see it. It is this unseen power that makes itself felt and yet defies proof, because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses.”⁷ He writes.

Gandhi often describes God as ‘Love’. The implication is not fully understandable unless we properly understand Gandhi’s concept of Love and Ahimsā. God is said to be present in everyone and by a gradual process of extending love, we can love everybody hence God. This kind of Love demands a certain kind of sacrifice, a sacrifice of egoistic and selfish ways, and to love and do good for others. He writes “I have but shadowed forth my intense longing to lose myself in the external and to become merely a lump of clay in the Potter’s divine hands so that my service may become more certain because uninterrupted by the baser self in me.”⁸

It is quite hazardous for a Nation if its prime leader harbors a wish to give up his own free will in the hands of a God. In a position like that the Nation always remains in close vicinity of the danger of religious fanaticism, especially in a country like India where there are countless diversities of God, and where the religious people show an even greater diversity, it is not very surprising if the two gods decide to clash among each other. From modern Indian History it is evident that uniting all the people under the banner of God was quite a risky gamble, which has not worked out for us very well. And the divine potter’s hands are starting to suffocate us more and more every day. The existence of God is a congenital debate of mankind, but what is very prominent that: If there is a potter we are

eloquent in corrupting It's hands, and what is a proper way of living today, tomorrow it can be twisted into bitterness to create a communal adversary.

God and Nature

Gandhi does not like to either raise or answer the question regarding the 'why' of the creation, according to him the Nature is an expression of God, and it is both real and finite, real because it is the creation of God, and finite because it is not God himself. Gandhi gathered some research and studies about the universe, and comes to conclusion that there is a Law governing every movement and every development in every corner of the universe. "All things in universe including the sun and the moon and the stars obey certain laws. Without the restraining influence of these laws the world would not go for a single moment."⁹ This statement comes from a view that a certain order or harmony is in existence, and it prevents the universe of all the destructions. The force for him is nothing but God, and the laws are nothing but the workings of God.

There are certain laws of physics, there is no doubt about that, but as far as 'we' know, it's not their job to preserve the harmony of the world, the Laws of physics work to maintain balance in the universe. And it is quite evident from recent scientific developments that celestial hazards do occur, so the so called prevention from disaster does not seem very prospectors.

It may be remarked that the world exhibits a gradual process- a continuous process of growth. What is the final end towards which this continuous process is approaching? According to Gandhi, it is God himself, who is perfect and ideal of everything. He is the beginning and end.

If God created the universe, then the universe is not itself God. And if the end result of the universe is God, then will there be two Gods at the end? Or are there many Gods, from each other? If according to Gandhi there cannot be two infinite entities, then how is it possible for more than one God to exist at the same time? These are the questions that Gandhi provides no answer for.

Nature does not merely appear to him as poetic charm. He perceives it as a field of action or '*Karma-sthala*' where man can discipline his soul by leading a moral life. He advises that humans should go back to nature. According to this philosophy Man's only objective is disciplining the soul by leading a proper life and anything we achieve during

our lifetime does not affect the universe. But if we view the surrounding scenario, it will be clear that it is the humans who by their greed, affecting our planet.

Gandhi's view on Nature is the following: The world is finite, it is finite because it is not infinite, it is not infinite because there cannot be two infinities. He says the discordant notes that we find around the universe do not negate its reality, but proves its finiteness. Even if we neglect the idea of the Natural laws that he mentioned earlier, and his claims that the laws prowess on maintaining the harmony in the world, which directly contradict his later views, we can easily raise another question. If the world is not finite because there cannot be two infinities, then even god is bound by a rule, otherwise he could have created an infinite world, according to that God is not omnipotent, and if God is not omnipotent, then he does not control everything.

Gandhi led India, taking his inspiration from an all-powerful God, if his idea of God is faltered then all his actions seem bewildered, and this bewilderment is all we see in our surroundings. Gandhi talked about the sanctification of reason, the over sanctification has completely corrupted the insight of the religious fanatics of our country. What Gandhi tried to use as a unifying banner is now falling apart, and it is clear that religion will not bring India together; it seems the Gods of different religions do not like each other anymore. We need something more than God, something more powerful than an omnipotent and omnipresent entity, something that is not omnipotent and omnipresent. We need 'us' who are not infinite, who are crooked, defected, imperfect, because so is our country. A perfect God cannot nourish our imperfect country; we who understand her imperfection can, because we know how to overcome those imperfections. God never had any imperfection, so it is natural he wouldn't know how to overcome them.

***Ahimsā* as a theory**

"I have nothing new to teach the world, Truth and Non-violence are as old as the hills. All I have done is to try experiments in both on as vast a scale as I could. In doing so I have sometimes erred and learnt by my errors. Life and its problems have thus become to me so many experiments in the practice of truth and non-violence...in fact it was in the course of my pursuit of truth that I discovered non-violence."¹⁰

'*Ahimsā*' as a way of leading life is interweaved in Indian culture from ancient times. It first came into existence extensively with *Jains*. Jainism had a far more strict on

Ahimsā than Gandhi. According to Jainism himsā of any kind was forbidden. They are hardcore vegetarians, and abstained from even the tiniest demonstration of *himsā*. Even an act of killing mosquitoes and insects was against their religion. And not only did they not commit *himsā*, it was their moral duty not to permit any outburst of *himsā* in their surroundings.

Gandhi on the other hand, understood the unavailability of such ideologies, and acknowledged that even to sustain a benign life one has to commit certain acts of *himsā*. In the process of eating, drinking, walking, and breathing we commit countless acts of *himsā* without knowing it.

It is true that *Ahimsā* is not one of Gandhi's ideological creations, but it is true that Gandhi emphasized on certain aspects of *Ahimsā* that any of his precursors have not done before. And although it is true that the word existed before, the undeniability of Gandhi's contribution to the word *Ahimsā* is commendable.

“*Ahimsā* and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of a coin, or rather a smooth unstamped metallic disc. Who can say, which is the obverse, and which the reverse? *Ahimsā* is the means; Truth is the end. Means to be means must always be within our each, and so *Ahimsā* is our supreme duty. If we take care of the means, we are bound to reach the end sooner or later.”¹¹

Ahimsā has both negative and positive aspects like every other thing. While negative aspects deal with our constant struggle to live with an ideology that our inhabitant does not always permit, and different situations when *Ahimsā* should not be seen as a vice, positive aspects deal with the meaning of *Ahimsā* and how it should be implemented in practical life.

According to him, to kill or to injure a living being with the intention of anger, pride, hatred, and selfish consideration is the direct form of *himsā*, and should be condemned and not practiced under any circumstances. But as Gandhi says “Taking life may be a duty. We do destroy as much life as we think is necessary for sustaining our body. Thus, for food we take life, vegetable and other, and for health we destroy mosquitoes and the like by the use of disinfectants etc., and we do not think that we are guilty of irreligion in doing so... for the benefit of the species we kill carnivorous beasts...

even man-slaughter is necessary in certain cases.”¹² Here he gives reason that a man must be killed when he is not sane and poses great threat, and malice for the rest of the humankind. Human beings may be killed to relieve them from sufferings, but this should be the last refuse only when there is no way to save that person’s life.

But the positive aspects of *Ahimsā* are vibrant, and lively, though *Ahimsā* is very closely related to suffering.

According to Gandhi *himsā* can never bring peace to the world, and however corrupt the subject of the *himsā*, and no matter how noble the practitioner of the *himsā* is, it should be condemned, because history records whenever brute force has been used against evil, the user has often fallen prey to the same evil.

Gandhi describes *Ahimsā* as evolution, according to him at the beginning, we were mainly collection of body and a trivial soul, but during our evolution the soul has developed, and that soul or the spirit is the direct embodiment of *Ahimsā*, even though the soul has no body. That is why the spirit cannot be wounded. We need to commit *himsā* to some extent to sustain our body, and the process of decreasing the amount of *himsā* committed by us is the process of *Ahimsā*.

The main theme of *Ahimsā* dictates that we should never harm our enemy, no matter whatever the case may be, and wait for our enemy to realize their mistake, and then forgive them when they do. But that does not mean one has to submit to the will of the Evildoers to practice *Ahimsā*, on the contrary practitioners of *Ahimsā* should be resilient, and strong. *Ahimsā* is often related to cowardice, but in reality the practitioners should have the strength to overpower their opponent so that they can save their lives if a decisive moment like that should come, and choose not to do so. Here it may seem that the evildoer holds the power to control the situation, but in reality it is the practitioner of *Ahimsā* who is strong, because he or she does not bend, and stick his/her principals.

Gandhi related this profound faith in the opponents and in their union with God. According to him, every being is usually one, and we all share the same origin. And the inner strength required to practice *Ahimsā* can only be achieved through an unshakable belief that is God. The ability to think of an adversary as a fellow-being is unachievable without a firm belief in God. Here a lack of faith in mankind, and its conscience can be

noticed, as it is clearly demonstrated that the strength and compassion can only be achieved through God.

But to think of a morally fallen being as a human being takes more strength, and if we negate God from the equation, the only thing that remains is compassion for the human kind, and faith in human kind, which somehow goes unnoticed if an all-powerful God is assumed as the source of our compassion.

Gandhiji's philosophy and his life were inseparable. He was not a system builder in an academic sense. He was not a political philosopher. For all this his sayings were pouring from his deep feelings and sincere realization of the truth. Gandhiji's thought is equally a philosophy of self-transformation. His philosophy is not only simultaneously political, moral, and religious. It is also traditional and modern, simple and complex. The two cardinal principles of Gandhiji's thought are truth and nonviolence and his politics influenced by these two principles very much.

National movement drew upon widening circles of Indian and imported material while becoming increasingly innovative, particularly under the leadership of Gandhi's creative genius. The emergence of M.K.Gandhi in Indian politics was regarded as very important event. In 1919, India's national movement was lagging due to lack of leadership which could involve general masses of the people in the struggle for freedom. He came to the forefront of the national movement by organizing a nation-wide mass movement against the *Rowlatt* Acts and other similar laws aimed at suppressing the national movement. It was Gandhi who made masses of the people active participants' in the movement and converted the national movement from its narrow middle-class base into a movement engulfing the whole nation. He became the Congress Supremo in 1920 and converted it from an 'elite' organization into a mass organization, which accepted his socio-political views, and his program and strategy and tactics in the freedom struggle.

Gandhiji's ideas and thoughts and methods were a curious amalgam of Western and indigenous and traditional. While learning much from the West-methods of civil disobedience and passive resistance from Thoreau, he made a deliberate turning back to the indigenous and traditional. He advocated "Swadeshi", by which he meant the use of indigenous and local institutions as well as Indian-made goods, and fostered the use of traditional spinning wheel, *Charka*. He called for *hartals* for the cessation of business activities, a traditional means of persuading the authorities to modify what the protesters

regard as oppression. The means of solving social and political conflict he invented is known the technique of *Satyagraha*, a technique of conflict and conflict resolution that has enjoyed for ages both wide familiarity and social acceptability in India.. It is the weapon of self-sacrifice for those whose weakness precludes them from using violence successfully. The *Satyagrahi*, the one who insists upon the truth, is a moral actor in conflict and a powerful one. As major parts of Satyagraha, Gandhi invoked Hindu and Jain concepts such as *Ahimsā* (non-violence) and *tapasya* (self-inflicted suffering). (pp-69) Gandhiji employed his *Satyagraha* technique to mobilize for the national movement. He mobilized many people to protest against British India. However, though Congress under Gandhiji's leadership mobilised tens of thousands of *Satyagrahis*, it did not want to fight but to negotiate and it negotiated on behalf of a mass movement for Indian Independence.¹³

Gandhiji led three extended campaigns involving increasingly large number of people drawn from all classes and strata and communities of society-Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-21); Civil Disobedience Movement (1930, 1931-32) and finally the Quit India Movement, 1942. The Non-Cooperation Movement instigated the Indian people not to cooperate with the British Raj and instead adopt the programme of *Swadeshi* for the realization of *Swaraj*. The Civil Disobedience Movement which started with the historic *Dandi* March influenced people not to pay back taxes to the alien rulers. The Quit India Movement demanded the British to leave the country.

Even though Gandhi reigns the decades from 1919 like a colossus, dominating the ideology of Congress and of Indian nationalism, there were other leaders like Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, who made their mark on Indian nationalism. There were socialists and communists. Their activities and *Kishan Sabhas* helped to retain for the national movement the adherence of the unprivileged, notably the working class and peasant groups. There was the Muslim League and a Muslim nationalism that denied any common nationhood with Hindus. Though some Muslims were attracted by growing success of Congress and the secular ideology, the Muslim League, encouraged by 'divide and rule' policy of the British Raj, drew increasing number of Muslims into the separatist movement in the 1940s. The Muslim separatist movement was aided further by the Hindu *Mahasabha* and its belief that with *swaraj*. India should become a Hindu nation of which non-Hindus, particularly Muslims, would be citizens on Hindu sufferance. There were other movements; an untouchable movement led by Ambedkar who denied that touchable Hindus were related to untouchables in any way other than on the principle of hierarchy,

purity; the Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu which wanted its own state. During the latter decades of the British Raj there were also localized rebellions of poor peasants and tribals (*subalterns* as they have come to be called) who produced their own leaders or took leadership from outsiders affiliated to outside organizations and ideologies. ¹⁴But all these movements which marched under the banners of caste and class, tribe and religions had ultimately to come to terms with the national movement, a controlled movement of the middle classes and rising capitalist class under the characteristic leadership of Gandhiji.

The struggle of the Indian people for liberation reached a higher phase in 1945-46, when the British Government could no longer plead that the exigencies of the war demanded the withholding of India's freedom. Over the issue of the release of Netaji Bose's Indian National Army prisoners, unprecedented demonstrations were held in Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi and other cities. The mutiny of Royal Indian Navy in 1946, opposed by Gandhi and Congress, showed how the spirit of revolt ('non-Gandhian') and impatience with subjection had penetrated the Armed forces. Enormous working class upheavals demonstrated most spectacularly in Calcutta on July 29, 1946, extensive peasant uprisings in different parts of the country and the heroic struggle of people in princely States, without any assistance from the national leadership, from Kashmir to Travancore underlined the same thing. The British, exhausted militarily and economically during the Second World War and realising that India could no longer be governed in the old way, sought agreement, held conference at Simla (1945-46) with national leaders, sent first a parliamentary delegation and then the Cabinet Mission which parleyed with every important group. Ultimately, the failure of the Congress and the Muslim League leaders to come together to build a United India and the Muslim League's determination to form a separate state for Muslims, Pakistan, produced a calamitous situation of civil war between the two communities. And the Labour Government of Britain came out with the parliamentary legislation on Indian Independence. And it is in terms of the Indian Independence Act of British Parliament, India was divided into two dominions- Dominion of India and Dominion of Pakistan- on 14-15 August 1947 which would make their own constitutions by their separate Constituent Assemblies established for the purpose.¹⁵

Mahatma Gandhi often referred to as the spiritual father of Indian secularism. He was even been inaccurately and unjustly called a secularist. His vision, as has been noted so often, was holistic, with religion as its constitutive principle-as the source of value for judging the worth of all worldly goals and actions. Religion here means, altruism (

sevadharma), self-assurance arising from inner conviction (*atmatushti*), and the putting of one's faith in saving grace of God (*Rama nama*). Like religious *pictishts* generally, he believed that God permeates every fiber, nook and corner of human experience. This for him was a timeless principle and yet he was very sensitive to the conditions and demands of particular times and places.

Bikhu Parekh asserts in an insightful and thought-provoking discussion of Gandhi's political philosophy that, "there was hardly a *Hindu* religious category and practice to which Gandhi did not give a wordily and secular content". In other words, "Gandhi secularized *Hinduism* as much as it was possible to do within a spiritual framework..."¹⁶ The emphasis upon the word 'within' is Parekh's and it is of crucial importance. It signifies that the relationship of the sacred and secular- of *dharma* and *artha*, or religion or politics- is 'hierarchical, according to T.N.Madan. The latter category is opposed to the former but also encompassed by it. So, T.N.Madan holds, Did Gandhi, then, secularize religion or did he sacralise politics-- both positions have strong adherents. Regarding point of view, Margaret Chatterji's comments, "Gandhi seems almost a secularist, but judged by his handling of concrete issues, notably the communal (Hindu-Muslim) problem, he was not secularist, if by this we mean an attempt to prune away all religious considerations from political matters."¹⁷

Politics were sacralised by Gandhi, they became the *dharma* of the age (*yugadharmā*) and consequently the state was revalorized, for its constitutive principle is power or coercion. In his conception of the moral or perfect society, Gandhi was very careful with his use of words. He emphasized that its enduring basis can only be the moral caliber of the individuals who constitute it. He extended the principle to the relationship of the citizen to the state. According to Gandhi, the state, itself, is a moral, impersonal, distant, coercive and even violent. Though Gandhi's views on the modern state became less negative over time, he never up-to-date this institution.

In Madan's view, a Gandhian would have to say that secularism has run into difficulties in India because the modern states ruling is too heavy with us, and intrudes into areas of life where it has no business even to peep. That state is best which governs the least. The ideal to strive for is that of morally sensitive individuals actively promoting civil society.¹⁸ In conversation with a Christian missionary in September 1946, Gandhi said, "If I were a dictator, religion and state would be separate. I swear by my religion, I will die for

it. But it is my personal affair. The state has nothing to do with it. The state would look after your secular welfare, health, communications, foreign relations, currency and so on, but not your or my religion. This is everybody's personal concern"¹⁹ Before his death, he commented; the state should undoubtedly be secular. Everyone in it should be entitled to profess his religion without any hindrance, so long as the citizen obeys the common law of the land.²⁰ Gandhi was totally against the idea of a state religion or state support for any religion.

In the period of British rule in India, two types of reform movements in Hinduism emerged. One is the reform, which called for changes in the cultural practices and values of Hinduism on the pattern of the primordial tradition of the Vedas, and second is the postulated synthesis of new cultural norms and values with the traditional norms and values. Among the reformers we may mention the names of Raja Rammohan Roy, Rabindranath Tagore, Vivekananda, and Mahatma Gandhi. Vivekananda and Gandhi did not reject the basic ideal-typical cultural themes of Hindu and non-Hindu cultural values and religious beliefs.

In August 1947, the British Raj came to an end with the transfer of power to two independent Dominions-India and Pakistan, through division of the Indian sub-continent. At that moment Gandhi and other Congress leaders had no hesitation to reject religion as the determinant of a nation, though they recognized a group with a common religion as a cultural and communitarian minority. In the post-1947 period, the ideological and political struggle against communalism has been severely vitiated by the tendency of secular parties and individuals to be associated with and enter into to compromises with the different communal parties and groups. And this is one of the causes of the crisis of Indian secularism. The next chapter will try to analyze the crisis of secularism in Indian society

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Chapter-4

Crisis of Secularism in Present India

This chapter tries to unveil the crisis of secularism in present India. India mainly faces two types of crisis: One is Ideological and the other is Real. Priority is given here to the ideological crisis first.

Secularism is the official ideology of the Indian state. The goal of the founders of the Indian republic was to establish a modern state that was democratic and secular. But neither the founders nor their successors have precisely defined what '*secularism*' is ; In political discourse and in competitive politics *secularism* is viewed as an antidote to religious fundamentalism, politicization of religion and *communalism*. With the demolition of *Babri Masjid* in December 1992 and the communal holocaust that gripped many parts of the country, the whole political spectrum seemed to be divided into secularists and non-secularists but the latter represented by *Bharatiya Janata Party* dubbed the former as 'pseudo-secularists', i.e. *secularism* in favour of *Muslims*. To counter BJP brand of *secularism* and *Hindutva* ideology it is not enough to claim that India is a secular state. It is necessary here to unveil what *secularism* means and re-examine the relevant provisions of the constitution, the policies and practices of the state, and the performances of the political parties in the light of *secularism*.

Secularism is a Western Ideal, a gift of the European enlightenment of the 18th century. The idea of secularism is supported by the history of the entire Renaissance that brought into being a secular Europe. Prior to the Renaissance that is in mediaeval Europe, religion cast a pervasive influence on the life of man and society so much so that life became completely stagnant. The Renaissance removed this awesome barrier against human progress. It replaced faith by reason in man's attitude and approach to his life and world around and inspired him to discover the strength of his vision and launch continuous adventures in the world of the unknown. Thus it defied the limits imposed by religion. However it did not discard religion. It only freed it from prejudices which covered man's vision and tried to raise the status of humans as a social and political animal.

The advancement of science and technology and the process of industrialization would not have disrupted the culture and way of life of the people of India if its old and well tested philosophy of values had been retained and given importance by the state in the

post-independence era. It could give a sound direction to the process of change and modernization which was consistent and in harmony with the great culture and spiritual tradition of India. But the rulers of India after Independence imported the idea of *secularism* from the west which was alien in this soil and imposed it on the country.

There are three key articles which are responsible for the constitutional foundation for a secular polity: [1] Article 14 guarantees all citizens as citizens the right of 'equality before law' and 'equal protection of laws'. Here the question of religion is not relevant; [2] Article 15 prohibits the state to favour any religion or members of any religious community over others; [3] Article 25 gives everyone the right, within justifiable reason, to profess and practice any religion or none. But the Indian state, as Justice *Gajendragadkar* said, 'does not own loyalty to any particular religion as such, it is not irreligious or anti-religious; it gives equal freedom to all religions'¹

In the absence of formal definition, the essential ingredients of Indian *secularism* are-[a] recognition of religion and beliefs as private and personal aspects of life, [b] liberation of the civic polity from religion-dominated politics; [c] domination of common civil laws, as made and modified by representatives of the citizens; [d] recognition of equal status and opportunity for men and women irrespective of caste, colour and creed; [e] fraternity of citizens as citizens and not as members of the primordial ascriptive groups; [f] acceptance of scientific temper and inquiry involving rejection of dogma. Thus viewed, secularism is an instrument of social change and political modernization. It is a positive concept and a dynamic ideal as is manifested in several provisions of our Constitution. But over the years there has been a distortion of the true spirit of *secularism* by its practitioners²

In view of the hard facts of India's social situation, our constitutional secularism deviates from the Western notion in two respects. First, the constitution takes a positive and affirmative view of religion as a social force, and even encourages, within limits, the practice as well as preaching of denominational religions by all religious communities. Second, the constitution empowers the state to make legislation with regard to the religious practices of any community which are pernicious and exploitative and constitute a threat to the unity and integrity of the state. Thus, the constitution specifically outlaws the practice of untouchability, although it was a religious practice to some sects. Indian secularism, then, is an ideal and reality. The state is not completely separated from religion, though

there is no 'established' state religion. Indian secularism is dynamic, it is an instrument of social change.

The nature of secularism in the political as opposed to ecclesiastical sense requires the separation of the state from any particular religious order. These can be interpreted in at least two different ways. The first view argues that secularism demands that state be equidistant from all religion, refusing to take any sides and showing a neutral attitude towards them. The second insists that the state must not have any relation at all with any religion. The equidistance must take the form, then, of being altogether removed from each.

In both interpretations, secularism goes against giving any religion a privileged position in the activities of the state. In the broader interpretation, there is no demand that the state must stay clear of any association with any religious matter whatsoever. Rather, what is needed is to make sure that, in so far as the state has to deal with different religions and members of different religious communities, there must be a basic symmetry of treatment. On this view, there would be no violation of secularism for a state to protect everyone's right to worship as he or she chooses, even though in doing this the state has to work with and for religious communities. In the absence of asymmetric attention, working hard for religious freedom does not breach the principle of secularism.

The important point is that the requirement of symmetric treatment still leaves open the question as to what form that symmetry should take. For example, the state may decide that it must not offer financial or other support to any institutions with any religious connection. Alternatively, it can provide support to all institutions, without any way discriminating between their respective religious connections. While the former may appear to be, superficially, 'more secular', the latter is also politically quite secular in the sense that the state, in this case, supports hospitals irrespective of whether or not there are any religious connections and through this neutrality, it keeps the state and the religions quite separate.

It is the broader view that has been the dominant approach to secularism in India. But this, it must be recognized, is an incomplete specification. *Secularism* excludes some alternatives, but still allows several distinct options related to the unspecified distance at which the state should keep all religions, without discrimination. There is thus a need, in

dealing with religions and religious communities, to take up questions that lie 'beyond' *secularism*³

In practice, secularism has lost its dynamic aspect and become distorted by the policy makers of the state and its practitioners. The government of India has the constitutional obligation under Article 44 as one of Directive Principles, to establish a 'uniform civil code', applicable to the entire country. Such legislation was considered necessary to displace sacred rules of different religious communities from Indian family life (such as marriage, divorce, succession and women's rights) by rules that were secular. But contrary to this constitutional mandate, the Government of India has established a uniform civil code for all '*Hindus*' (including *Sikhs*) in the country, while leaving Muslims with their own system of Personal Law. The result is the official distinction of the population of the country on the basis of religion. By this policy and practice the state has virtually abolished the vital distinction between the political and religious identities of its citizens and has thus grossly deviated from the path of *secularism*. Indian *secularism* was further diluted when the *Congress* Government led by *Rajiv Gandhi* surrendered to the *Muslim* fundamentalists and incorporated into the secular civil law the *Shariat's* rule in order to nullify *the* Supreme Court's decision which established a uniformity of maintenance entitlements for *Hindu* and *Muslim* divorcees. The Court's decision was a bold step toward placing our constitutional secularism on the right track, but our political secularists undid that decision to nurture *Muslim* "vote bank". This approach clearly helps to rise the *Hindu* communal forces. It has created a clear gap between the profession and practice of secularism in this country. This situation has now started having its evitable reparations on the *Hindu* mind.

It is true that like the Western democratic states, the secular democratic state of India has rightly kept itself aloof from the religion of the law. 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 etc. So, the people in the secular India enjoy religious freedom practically in the same way as they have enjoyed it before. It is its external aspect. But the deeper or internal aspect of *Dharma*, which shapes human mind and behavior, mainly consists of the perennial truths and values, for which *Artha* and *Kamā*, were not given an independent status in the empirical life of man, has come into direct clash with the secularism of India. The state has compartmentalized the life of the individual and of community into the religious and the secular. *Dharma* has constituted the

foundation of the life of the individual and the community in India from the very beginning, it conditions and directs human conduct and behaviour. The laws of the state cannot make men moral, they fail to mould and develop the character of the people. This function has been performed by *Dharma* throughout the ages. The secular state of India has given no place to this ethical and spiritual religion in its constitution. So, India today is facing a serious crisis, it is the crisis of values.

T.N.Madan convincingly argues that the paradigms of modernization from the west are believed to have 'universal applicability, the elements, which converged historically, that is in unique manner to constitute modern life in Europe in the sixteenth and the following three centuries have come to be presented as the requirements of modernization elsewhere, and this must be questioned,' 'Paradoxically', notes *Madan*, 'the uniqueness of the history of modern Europe lies, we are asked to believe, in its generalization of modernization that 'prescribe the transfer of secularism to non-Western societies without regard to the character of their religious traditions or for the gifts that these might have to offer'.⁴ *Ashis Nandy* observes that when the modern Indians "project the ideology of secularism into the past and assert that *Ashokā* was 'secular', they ignore that *Ashokā* was not exactly a secular ruler: he was a practicing Buddhist even in his public life. He based his tolerance on Buddhism, nor on secularism. Likewise, the other symbol of inter-religious amity in modern India, Akbar, derived his tolerance not from secularism but from Islam: he believed that tolerance was the message of Islam. And in this century Gandhi derived his religious tolerance from Hinduism, not from secular politics." Disavowing the legitimacy of importing secular principles from West,⁵ *R.S.Mishra* finds the merit of Christianity as having the organising power in well-established churches which could withstand the hostile onslaught of nonreligious and antireligious modern ideologies and movements. Hinduism was never blessed with such organizational power, and yet it did not fall apart due to its *Varnasrama dharma* and the waves of Muslim domination. This is the essential cultural unity of India despite *religio-cultural* diversity. *Mishra* sees the danger of *dharma*, the essential component of Hinduism-being put under fire. He writes: "*Dharma* can in no case be conceived as a private matter or as an affair of the individual, as the secularist would have us believe. It is vitally concerned with community and its peace and prosperity. It is the non-religious secular ideology that treats *Dharma* as a private matter of individual...To leave *Dharma* or religion at the mercy of the individuals will only mean an end of it...People have to see that their rulers are governed in

their conduct and behaviour by the higher moral and spiritual principles of *Dharma* so they may not start behaving in a demonic way".⁶

So, for *Mishra*, *secularism* in India deserves to proceed from the premises that uphold the radically different nature of *Hinduism*, unity in diversity and not the principle of uniformity; "It constitutes its weakness as well as its strength. *Dharma* has not been accorded its due place by the Indian polity, which has also overlooked the ethical and the spiritual in its constitution. The indifference to *dharma* and what it can mean to the public at large have resulted in a serious crisis of values for the nation. The contradiction between *dharma -nirpekshata* (neutrality to religion) and *sarvadharmasamabhava* (harmony of religions) is evident, for they cannot be conceived as equivalents". *Mishra* emphatically notes that 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. It does not turn the nation to a theocratic state, for universal *dharma* is without, whereas the former constitutes the meaning and truth of human life, individually', *Mishra* would, thus, infer that "the sovereign state of India can no more afford to maintain a policy of neutrality or an attitude of indifference towards *dharma*, which has moulded and shaped, in a considerable measure, the culture of humanity." So, more than secularism in its undifferentiated incarnation, it is the making *sense of the secular*.⁷ It has created a clear gap between the profession and practice of secularism in this country. This situation has now started having its evitable repercussions on the Hindu mind.⁸

So, any secular ideology, social or political which ignores religion, *Dharma* altogether, cannot touch the mind and heart of the people of this country which is religious through and through. The great thinkers and social and political leaders of India before independence were fully aware of this fact. But it was ignored altogether by the secular political leaders of the post-independence era. A country like India which can feel legitimately proud of its great and rich cultural, philosophical and spiritual heritage, cannot live and prosper on the basis of borrowed ideologies that are completely foreign to its genius and spirit. This hard truth has never been understood and appreciated by the secular rulers and political leaders of India. And the result is that this ancient land finds itself involved in deep crisis in different ways today.

The Indian state, modeled after the liberal democracies in the West, is the harbinger of religious conflict in India because of its conception of toleration and state neutrality.

'*Secularism*' in India now takes the form of fighting against the so-called *Hindu* fundamentalism.

Real Crisis of Indian secularism

Communalism and communal-type movements and ideologies are very much with us today and this feature is interwoven to such an extent that not only during the periods of 1999 to 2004, it continues in some form or other in several states even to-day. Indian society continues to provide objective social, economic and political bases as also ideological and cultural soil for the rise and growth of such movements. Since the late 1950s, the country has been repeatedly disturbed by a group of communal, regional, linguistic and caste riots. Communal and caste appeals are used on a large scale for electoral as well as non-electoral political mobilization of the people. Today, *communalism* is the most serious challenge facing Indian society and polity. It marks, on the one hand, the growth of forces of national disintegration which constantly threaten the unity of the Indian people, and, on the other hand, the growth of barbaric force. Moreover, it is a problem facing the entire Indian society. Historical problems generated over decades and generations do not have short-term or instant solutions. Such solutions- pacts, compromises and accords and electoral alliances by secular parties, often tend to worsen the problem. Communalization of Indian society has been a prolonged process which has been going on for over 100 years; de-communalization should be treated as a process.

Here the role of the state counts. While the colonial state was a major prop of communal forces, the independent Indian state has so far been largely secular as well as opposed to *communalism* except during the short period 1999 to 2004. But the quality of the *secularism* of the Indian state and most of the political parties has had varying degrees of weakness. In fact, their secularism has seldom been very sturdy. Moreover, *communalism* has made serious inroads into the state apparatuses. Many of the officials of the government and middle-level leaders have openly or secretly compromised with or even supported communal forces and sometimes themselves practiced *communalism*. Neither the Central and State Governments nor the political parties, especially the ruling *Congress* Party, have fought *communalism* scientifically or with enthusiasm and commitment. They have often permitted and sometimes encouraged the intrusion of religion into politics. They have opportunistically compromised and even allied with communal parties and individuals; with the *Muslim League* in *Kerala* and the *Akalis* in

Punjab. Similarly, several secular groups and parties did not hesitate to join hands with the *RSS-Jan Sangh* in 1967-69 and in 1977-80 and in 1999-2004 with the *BJP*. They are continuing to do so the with *BJP* in *Bihar* and *Orissa*. But it is still very important that they have themselves not been communal. This fact has been a major obstacle in the path of *Hindu* communalism, preventing its burgeoning, and is responsible for keeping India basically secular. But it has not prevented the growth of *communalism*, especially in its ugly, barbaric form of communal riots.⁹

The social, class character and base of *communalism* have undergone a major change after 1947. In the colonial period, *communalism* represented in the main the interests of the *jagirdari* classes and strata, moneylenders and merchants, sections of the petty bourgeoisie, and colonial rulers. The colonial factor as a prop of communalism has by now virtually disappeared. The *jagirdari* classes and strata have been disintegrating and merging with the capitalism farmers and rich peasants, who constitute a strong base of *Sikh communalism* in *Punjab*., and who tend to support *communalism* and casteism in other parts of the country too as a means of keeping their hegemony over the poor peasants of the same caste or religion. Moneylenders and merchants still constitute a major social base of *communalism* all over India. With the creation of *Pakistan* and the gradual abolition of the *zamindari* system and landlordism during the last 30 years, *communalism* seldom now represents, except in *Punjab*, a distorted form of class struggle. There is however a tendency for the rural class struggle between agricultural labourers and rich peasants-capitalist farmers and landlords to take on the forms of caste and communal struggles. This is particularly so in *Punjab* today. Similarly, though the struggle among the capitalist strata and groups in once again beginning to take on a communal form in a few areas, its main form still is that of regionalism. The struggle of the rural bourgeoisie against the urban bourgeoisie sometimes takes casteist forms, though its main form is the ideology of peasants. The Indian intelligentsia continues to be on the whole anti-communal or at least not pro-communal, though it is not able to stand up to the communal forces once they enter a vigorous phase as the example of *Punjab* and *Gujarat*.¹⁰

Apart from the petty bourgeoisie, whose ranks are being rapidly replenished by the children of the peasantry and working classes, *communalism* has failed after 1947 to get significant support from any major social class or stratum. In particular, it cannot be said that it has been getting or is likely to get in the immediate future from the Indian bourgeoisie, the type of strong social support it derived from the *jaigirdari* or semi-feudal

classes and strata and from colonialism. The Indian bourgeoisie continues to feel, as it did not before 1947, that it needs national unity and integration and that *communalism* operates against the economic, social and political development of India along capitalist lines. Its role in the spread of both *communalism* and casteism is minimal, being confined to certain socially reactionary sections and individuals. Its dominant sections and class leaders do not yet feel that the class can survive only with the help of *communalism*. Therefore, any analysis or strategy of political and ideological struggle against *communalism* which is based upon treating it as the ideological instrument of the capitalist class would be incorrect and is therefore likely to be politically in fructuous. At the same time, it cannot be said that this attitude of the capitalist class towards *communalism* would remain forever. World historical experience from *Japan* to *Germany* indicates that communal type fascist ideologies tend to serve as the second or last line of defense of a capitalist class faced with political and economic crisis and threat of expropriation or overthrow. Any long-term strategy against *communalism* must therefore take account of such a possibility. In other words, it cannot be dogmatically asserted either that the Indian bourgeoisie at present backs *communalism* or that it would never do so in the future.¹¹

Unfortunately, while the left has taken correct ideological and political positions on *communalism*, casteism, regionalism, etc; it has not been able to play the desired role. In fact, it has not even made a serious analysis of these complex phenomena, being satisfied with a few simple formulae. One reason has been its general weakness in Indian society and politics. But more important has been its relative neglects of the problem and its tendency to compromise with casteist and communal forces especially those emerging from among the minorities. This is perhaps the immense economist and economic reductionist bias from which the left in India has always suffered. This bias leads it to underestimate and even neglect, at least in practice, serious and complex study and analysis of *communalism* as well as struggle against it in the realms of ideology and culture. It underestimates the role that a new radical consciousness has to play in the creation of a new society. Consequently, the very cultural, social and ideological backwardness of the masses repeatedly hits back and holds up and even pushes back not only the struggle on unifying the nation but also the struggle for transformation of society and the efforts to constitute all-India social classes, including the working class.

Professor *Ramachandra Guha* describes these conflicts in such an unique way which deserves to be quoted at length. According to him," these conflicts run along many

axes, among which we may-for the moment- single out four as pre-eminent. First, there is *caste*, a principal identity for many Indians, defining whom they might marry, associate with and fight against. '*Caste*' is a *Portuguese* word that conflates two Indian words, *jati*, the endogamous group one is born into; and *Varna*, the place that group occupies in the system of social stratification mandated by *Hindu* scripture. There are four *Varnas*, with the former '*Untouchables*' constituting a fifth (and lowest) strata. Into these *Varnas* fit the 3,000 and more *jatis*, each challenging those, in the same region, that are ranked above it, and being in turn challenged by those below.

Then there is *language*. The Constitution of India recognizes twenty-two languages as 'official'. The most important of these is 'Hindi', which in one form or another is spoken by upwards of 400 million people. Others include Telugu, Kannada, Tamil, Malayalam, Marathi, Gujarati, Oriya, Punjabi, Bengali, and Assamese, each of which is written in a distinct script and boasts many millions of native speakers. Naturally, national unity and linguistic diversity have not always been seen to be compatible. Indians speaking one tongue have fought with Indians who speak another.

A third axis of conflict is *religion*. A vast majority of the billion-plus Indians are *Hindus*. But India also has the second largest population of *Muslims* in the world-about 140 million (only Indonesia has more). In addition there are substantial communities of *Christians*, *Sikhs*, *Buddhists*, and *Jains*. Since faith is as fundamental a feature of human identity as language, it should scarcely be a surprise that Indians worshipping one variation of God have sometimes quarreled with Indians worshipping another.

The fourth major axis of conflict is class. India is a land of unparalleled cultural diversity but also, less appealingly, of massive social disparities. There are Indian entrepreneurs who are fabulously wealthy, owning huge homes in London and New York. Yet fully 26 per cent of the country's population, about 300 million individuals, are said to live below the official poverty line. In the countryside there are deep inequalities in landholding in the city, wide divergences in income. Not unexpectedly, these asymmetries have fuelled many movements of opposition.

These axes of conflict operate both singly and in tandem. Sometimes a group professing a particular faith also speaks a separate language. Often the low castes are the subordinate classes as well. And to these four central axes one should perhaps add a fifth that cuts right across them that of *gender*. Here, again, India offers the starkest contrasts. A

woman served as prime minister for a full fifteen years, yet in some parts of India female infanticide is still very common. Landless labourers are paid meagre wages, the women among them the lowest of all. Low castes face social stigma, the women among them most of all. And the holy men of each religion tend to assign their women an inferior position in both this world and the next. As an axis of discrimination, gender is even more pervasive than the others, although it has not so often expressed itself in open and collective protest."¹²

Communalism did have a basis, however, partial and perverted in the social existence of the petty bourgeoisie. Communal propaganda was not utterly disconnected with social reality. The communalist could impose his interpretation of the reality on the middle class individuals because it seemed to conform to their experience or reality as they were then living it. Of course, the extent of benefit from *communalism* was larger the higher one went up in the social scale and the fewer became the competitors; the upper middle class individuals benefited far more than the lower middle class individuals. *Communalism* was likely to benefit the aspirants for the High Court judgeship, the university chair or vice-chancellorship, or the directorship of a hospital much more than those trying to become *chaprasis* or clerks, though the latter would also improve their life opportunities to a certain extent. Of course, in the long run, the latter are more likely not to be beneficiaries but victims of *communalism*. In any case, it is clear that the role of the individual interest in middle class politics may not be under-rated.

During this period, the spread of education to the middle and rich peasants and small landlords extended the boundaries of the petty bourgeoisie to the rural areas. The newly educated rural youth, denied opportunities on land whether as landlords or peasants because of colonial underdevelopment. The youths started to move toward towns in large numbers in search of jobs. Moreover, the landed or jagirdari upper classes were threatened by economic crisis and slow disintegration which they tried to overcome by entering the urban job market and fighting for or against the system of reservations and nominations. This development gradually widened the social base of communalism to cover the rural areas. While before 1947, this development affected largely the landlords and rich peasants, it has proceeded much faster among all sections of the peasantry in post-independence India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, creating a vast potential field for communal and communal-type movements which burst out every now and then with immense fury.

Communalism was not as many writers have argued, basically the consequence of a backward (*Muslim*) middle class trying to level up for positions with an advanced (*Hindu*) middle class. It was the middle class mentality which helps them to compete among themselves in a tight economic situation and forming '*sections*' and '*groups*' to enhance their capacity to do so successfully or to improve their chances in the competition. Similarly, in post-Independence India, not only the *backward* middle classes of *Telangana* but the *advanced* middle classes of *Andhra Pradesh* have produced separatist movements. In *Maharashtra*, the social base of the *Shiva Sena* is educationally one of the most advanced petty bourgeoisies. In *Kerala*, both the backward *Ezava* middle classes and the *advanced Nair* middle classes have produced caste-communalism. In *Panjab*, there is both *Hindu* and *Sikh communalism*. In *Bihar* both the '*backward*' and the '*forward*' caste petty bourgeoisies have fought furious battles.¹³

For various historical reasons, economic and educational disparities between groups formed around religion, caste, language or region did develop on a local or national plane. It was also necessary that these disparities be removed. But *communalism* went further and tried to make these disparities the very basis of politics. On the other hand, the removal of these disparities was often neglected by the nationalists in the name of nationalism and national integration. The price of this neglect was the growth of communalism and communal-type ideologies and movements.

With modern mass politics, simultaneously, it is necessary and urgent to have a cultural revolution or complete modernization which would simultaneously incorporate the humanist and rational elements of the traditional culture in India, India, more than any other country, needed all-round radicalism, based on a socially radical mass *ideology* and not merely on political radicalism. Otherwise, even mass politics, depending on the *existing* backward social and cultural consciousness of the masses, hide this reactionary aspect that they would tend to strengthen socially backward ideologies and outlook and, instead of uniting the people, further divide them.

For this purpose, it is always easier to build up a movement on existing consciousness than to generate a new consciousness. The radical process was slow, difficult and not having a ready-made consciousness to appeal, so, the national leadership, especially, Extremist phase found it easier to appeal to the existing religious consciousness to build more advanced and secular consciousness, but which unconsciously left space for

communalism and casteism and indirectly influenced their own thinking and writing. Generally, each and every ideology has some basic elements. *Communalism*, as a ideology, is constituted of several elements. Consequently, being secular, a person may have some communal elements in his or her temperament and personality and a particular mix of some these elements may lead to full-blooded *communalism*. But it be possible that communal elements do exist in an overall secular personality and may not yet amount to *communalism*. It would be wrong to brand such a person as *communist*. But if these elements are not eliminated, it will create a crisis situation. And that was what happened in *Punjab*. This crisis situation already made its havoc in *Punjab* during 1982-84 especially after *Operation Blue Star*, in *Delhi* and other parts of India during 31 October-3 November 1984, in *Bombay* in 1991 and 1992, and in *Gujarat* in 2002. It is on these elements that the *Viswa Hindu Parishad* or opponents of the *Shah Bano* judgement or proponents of *Babri Masjid* or perpetrators of *Gujarat pogroms* play. .¹⁴

It seemed that all types of communalists believe in a common ideology. We cannot expect that liberal communalists do fight with extreme communalism as per ideology is concerned. Only the secular persons and forces can be waged the ideological struggle against extreme *communalism*. During 1981-84 with *Akali* liberal communalists like *Sant Longowal*, *Prakash Singh Badal* and *S.S. Barnala*, opposed *Bhindranwale*. It was only the Communists and secular Congressmen like *Darbara Singh* who had the courage to oppose extreme *communalism*.

Muslim communalism damaged the national unity before 1947 mainly and the after effect since 1947, the *Hindu communalism* poses the fascism, whose main target is secular forces. The existence of *Minority communalisms* should not detract from the fact because it is very dangerous. It hands over a minority to communal leaders whose politics are invariably harmful to the interest of the members of the minority concerned. So we should not ignore or adopt a tolerant attitude towards the *minority communalism*. *Minority communalism*, unless one struggles against it, makes the struggle against *majority communalism* very difficult. Because the different *communalisms* feed on each other and any strengthening of one inevitably strengthens the other. So they have to be fought simultaneously otherwise we have to faced the case like *Punjab* repeatedly. The extreme *Sikh communalism* cannot be successful in creating *Khalistan*, - that would not be permitted by the rest of the country. The real danger was and is that of *Hindu communalism* burgeoning forth-as happened in early November 1984. The secular forces and the state

can opposed the extremist violence by making an appeal to the strong sentiment of the Indian people for national unity and declaring. But the passivism of extreme violence by the forces and the state proved that *Hindu communalism-fascism* alone could keep this country united and strong and protect the *Hindus of Punjab* from terrorist violence. It is our experience since the 1920s all over the country and also in *Punjab* since 1948, that if we are soft towards minority *communalism*, we tend to become passive against majority *communalism* also. Therefore, to avoid *Hindu communalism-fascism*, it is very important to oppose minority *communalism* to the great extend.

If we address the majority *communalism* as fascism, then it is logically derive that minority *communalism* is separatism. Minority *communalism*, if accepted the view that they are perpetually and inevitably threatened by a majority, then firmly believe that they must stand on its own legs. But politically or constitutionally, cannot satisfy the spokesman of this theory because they believe that the most cast iron guarantee has to be implemented by a state of majority prevails. In the Indian context, once the twin notions of communal identity and politics based on communal identity are accepted, minorities can exist in the long run either through the mediation of an outside power or through a separate state of their own. It is therefore not accidental that *Muslim communalism* before 1947 first wanted perpetuation of *British* domination as a safeguard of '*Muslim*' interests and later moved on to separation. Similarly, during 1982-84, *Sikh* communalists repeatedly appealed not to democratic secular opinion for defense of '*Sikh*' interests but either to the *United Nations* or to an autonomous or independent *Panthic* .i.e., *Sikh* state.¹⁵

The reiteration of minority communal themes can pose in terms of the growth of *Hindu* fascism. But when of this dangers, the apologists and components of *Muslim* and *Sikh communalism* have been putting forward the dangerous theory that *Hindus* can never be solidified around *Hindu* 'identity' or *Hindu communalism*.(368) Another reason for the relative weakness of the *Hindu communalism* was the lesser weight of the *jagirdari* elements among *Hindus*, among whom the modern intelligentsia and bourgeois elements rapidly rose to positions of social, economical, political and ideological hegemony. Among *Muslims*, the *jagirdari* and bureaucratic elements still predominated. In this sense, the backwardness or weakness of the '*Muslim*' middle class contributed to the growth of *Muslim communalism*. But why the *Hindu communalism* could not go so deep in among the masses? The answer is, it failed to link up with religion. As a political movement, it not remained at the level of '*Hindu religion in danger*', but just '*Hindus in danger*'. On the

other hand, *Hindus* were as involved in communal riots as *Muslims* because the riots occurred around a religious issue. But the major reason was the much weaker religiosity among Hindus. Hindus were not so Orthodox because of their different religious sects. Different castes had different concepts of dharma. Therefore a very weak responses to the religious emotion and the cry of Hinduism is in danger. Moreover the priestly class was virtually absent, so the task of the Hindu communalists was doubly difficult. They had to *create* the Hindu religious identity. But because of sectarian diversity and inner divisions, it was difficult to have any religion-based unity. He therefore, found it expedient to adopt a definition of who was a *Hindu* that was not religious at all. While the *Muslim* communalists had only to transform the *Muslim* religious identity into *communalism*, *Ulama* could issue *fatwas* to propagate political causes, but make appeals through the so-called *Sankaracharyas* proved to be complete flops. Even the *shuddhi* campaign divided *Hindus* and here arose the question for its validity. *Sanatanist pundits* was dead against with the *Hindu Mahasabha's* efforts to integrate the *Scheduled Castes*. Luckily, *Hindus* have not been solidified into a community only because of the strong presence of secular leadership from *Dadabhai Naoroji* to *Gandhiji* and *Nehru* and the existence of a strong secular intelligentsia. It would be foolish to rely on such a theory for a guarantee of future well-being. In support of this it may be commented that *Hindu communalism*, in its various forms, has always had a strong presence in India., whose outstanding examples were the *Hindu* communal fury in *Delhi* in early November 1984, or in *Bombay* in 1991 and 1992, or in *Gujarat* in 2002. Today the opposition to *Hindu communalism* is beginning to weaken on a large scale. In modern India, it is the first time, when a significant section of the intelligentsia is beginning to support morally of a *Hindu* religious identity or the *BJP* succeeded in forming a government at the Centre in 1999. But it should be realized that even this limited *Hindu communalism* would pose a massive social and political danger .¹⁶

The constitution of India acknowledges the concept of minorities in *Article 29* and *30* which mainly deals with the fundamental rights. In *Article 29*. (1) It is said that any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same and (2) No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them.

Article 30. (1), All minorities whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

Clause; (1A) has been inserted by the constitution of 44th Amendment Act, 1978. In it, in making any law providing for the compulsory acquisition of any property of an educational institution established and administered by a minority, referred to the clause (1), the State shall ensure that the amount fixed by or determined under such law for the acquisition of such property is such as would not restrict or abrogate the right guaranteed under that clause.

(2) The State shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language.¹⁷

According to T.N Madan , " Although it seems perverse to me to place an interpretation on these constitutional provisions to the effect that only the minorities have such rights, mischievous politicians have not been reluctant to cite them as evidence of 'minorityism'"¹⁸. Dr. B.R.Ambedkar did not exactly help in removing such doubts. Ambedkar commented in the *Constituent Assembly*, "The minority have loyal accepted rule of the majority which is basically a communal majority and not a political majority. It is for the majority to realize its duty not to discriminated against to minority. Whether the minority will continue or will vanish must depend upon this habit of majority. Only when the movement the majority loses the habit of discrimination against the minority, the minority can have no ground to exist". Professor V.V.John, a distinguished Indian intellectual, being a Christian, demanded for the protection of *human rights* rather than minority rights. According to him, the leaders of the minority communities practiced *selective secularism* and demand for *Hindus* ,what they do not themselves practiced.¹⁹ One ingenious argument in this regard is that minority *communalism* is a halfway house to *secularism*.

After partition, the *Muslim* fundamentalist organization, *Jamat-i-Islami* (Hind) accepted the conditionally secular form of government 'in the present circumstances', but rejected secularism as an ideology. It described its decision quite explicitly as one dictated by 'utilitarian expediency'²⁰ Similarly, Sikh fundamentalists also used to say that religious tradition is not separated with politics and if the State of India is not acknowledge it, then India must lost her identity of secularism.

The notion of minority status has special right but many governmental actions based on political expediency have given it currency. *Ramakrishna Mission* members in Calcutta misused this idea to get themselves recognized by a court of law as a non-Hindu minority. This decision was set aside by the *Supreme Court* in July 1995. The leaders of minorities raise cries of alarm that India is fast transformed into a *Hindu* country, and their counterparts among the *Hindus* fall apart and accuse the government of *minorityism*. There are variations and ramifications within majority-minority politics. Thus, the violent student agitation of 1990 against reservations demanded that 50 percent to be the cutoff point for the minority, who are not scheduled caste or scheduled tribe, nor or other backward classes against a majority of allegedly uniformly non-privileged people, although many among them were by no means economically deprived. It cannot be denied that there exist the exploitation of certain castes and communities at the hands of privileged classes over the centuries down to this day. The idea of reservation quotas was intended to be a temporary protective measure for thirty years (Article 334) only and understood it as non-discriminatory State policy, though not fit well with the idea of *secularism*, particularly if it threatens to become permanent vested interests. The hope that compensatory discrimination will transform communal groups into components of a pluralistic society in which invidious hierarchy is discarded while diversity is accommodated in a kind of 'principled eclecticism' is far from being realized'. (*Gallanter*, 1984 p 561)

The new Hinduism or syndicated Hinduism is different from the indigenous Hinduism both in scale and scope. It is not the creation of a new sect but it is a new religious form seeking to encapsulate all the earlier sects. The creation of this syndicated Hinduism is more for political purposes than the religious one; hence it is called political Hinduism too. The Muslim and the Christians regarded Hindus as "the other" as Hindus regarded them as *mlachas*. Inevitably, the new Hinduism was unavoidable in the nineteenth and twentieth century. The neo-Hindu movements in the twentieth century, particularly after independence, were given a political edge which remains recognizable even today. According to Romila Thapar, this development was responsible for the emergence of the present day syndicated Hinduism, which is being pushed forward as the sole claimant to the inheritance of the indigenous Indian religion. The religious expressions of the syndicated Hinduism are directed more to the rural rich and the urban middle-class to bring into politics a uniform monolithic *Hinduism* to serve its new requirements. Under the guise of a new reformed Hinduism, an effort is being made to

draw a large crowd and to speak with the voice of numbers. The appeal of the syndicated Hinduism has always a political purpose.

According to Romila Thapar, the syndicated Hinduism or 'Hindutva' has presented a new concept of Indian Nationalism. According to this concept, the Hindus being the majority and being the heirs and successors of all the glamorous things of the past, are entitled to exercise authority, precedence and domination over others. We are told that anyone, including non-Hindus, can be Indian provided he accepts Hindu gods and denounces non-Hindus as foreigners. Hindus are more patriotic than non-Hindus. The latter, in order to prove their nationalistic zeals, must profess their loyalty to the majority community and join the Hindus in the patriotic duty of demolishing those places of worship which were set up by the non-Hindus, over the Hindu temples. Hindu nationalism threatens those non-Hindus, of facing the wrath of Hindus, who refuse to follow the above line. Those fundamentalist religious leaders who talk of 'Hindutva' and 'Hindu Nationalists' have no faith in the judiciary and have disrespect for the established institutions. They maintain that the Lok-Shakti is greater than the Rastra-Shakti. (Thaper, Romila, Seminar, No, 313, Delhi, September 1985.)

The proponents of new *Hinduism* talk of 'positive secularism'. They consider the pampering and protection of Muslims and granting rights and special privileges to the minorities by the state as 'pseudo-secularism'. Positive secularism, according to them, envisages the coming together of all the religious communities bound by a uniform code of conduct, rights and responsibilities. They, thus, want that a 'civil code' be enacted by the government which may be uniformly applicable to all people in India, irrespective of their religion and caste. They do not want separate marriage and property laws to be made applicable only to Hindus or only to Muslims or Christians. They believe that this will be an ideal democratic solution to communal conflicts. They do not believe that this will submerge the distinct religious and cultural identity of the minorities in the larger majority community. Rather, they believe that such policy will do away with the religious superstitions and obscurantist customs and irrational and regressive practices among all the communities and develop a scientific temper which should be the cornerstone of secular states.

Another major *crisis* is the problem of *Kashmir Valley*. Through the Article 370 ,(19) the Constitution gave to *Jammu* and *Kashmir* a special status, making it impossible

for the parliament to make laws for this State without the concurrence of its legislature in respect of subjects other than those mentioned in the of *Accession* or corresponding to them. This specific legal context was soon overthrown by political considerations; the *Kashmir Valley* with its *Muslim* majority was vital to secular India's interests as a token of the repudiation of the *two-nation* theory which was the basis of *Pakistan*..Since *Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah*, the acknowledged leader of the majority of *Kashmir Muslims*, had explicitly rejected this theory, the position of Indian leadership did not seem then unreasonable. But gradually *Kashmiri Muslims* came to be seen hostages, and a special status was needed for retaining the State within the union for still newer considerations. Article 370 is now said to protect '*Kashmiriyat*' or '*Kashmiri* identity. But why the *Kashmiri* identity needs special protection-is difficult to understand of a *non-kashmiri*, unless it is taken to mean *Kashmiri Muslim* identity and brought under the title of minority rights and privileges.²¹

Between 1947 to 1990, the Chief ministers of *Kashmir* were *Muslims* but they have not been of like minded regarding the nature of the State's relation with the Union . Although the representation of *Muslims* in the bureaucracy and the professions and the overall economic situation, had improve considerably, yet a secessionist movement erupted there in the mid-1980s. It turned violent in 1989. Well trained and heavily armed militants, supported by *Pakistani* authority, are being fought by the security forces and there is blood-shedding on both sides. As a reaction of it , Dr *Murli Manahar Joshi*, in January 1992, arranged 'unity march (*ekta yatra*). In the Valley itself, most of the *Kashmiri Pundits* have fled their homes and live in *refugee* camps in *Jammu* and *Delhi*, or with relatives outside the Valley. They are another example of non-privileged minority. Not only *Hindus*, but those *Muslims* too, who do not seem to be in full agreement, are the targets of fundamentalists and secessionists. In fact, many *Muslims* are reported to have been killed than the *Hindus*.

It is notable that, the militant secessionism of *Kashmiri Muslims* is not pure *Islamic* fundamentalist, but more inspired by *Muslim-Kashmiri* religion and ethnology and celebrated *Urs*. There have been clashes between *Islamic* fundamentalists and devout *Kashmiri Muslims*. But after the Iranian Revolution, they are more inspired by *Islamization*. The character of *Kashmiri* separation is against pan-Indian secular nationalism. In this context, the silence of *Muslim* political leadership in India about the happenings in *Kashmir* underscores the tragic fact that all is not well with *Indian*

secularism. Therefore, to accommodate *Kashmiri* nationalism within the Indian State without imposing a very severe strain upon Indian secularism is not so easy. A restatement of *Kashmiri* aspiration in terms of cultural pluralism and administrative decentralization of which a national State would be seen as the guarantor is not yet in sight.

The destruction of the *Babri* mosque in *Ayodhya* in December 1992 is an unnatural incident in Indian secularism. It was done by the right-wing Hindu extremists. It was an unprecedented and crippling blow to Indian secularism. The events leading up to the demolition are well known. There was a widespread sense of foreboding, yet the Indian state, at the state and national levels, became an accomplice, through acts of omission and commission. In this act of betrayal of both traditional culture pluralism and modern secularism prevail. As Prime Minister *P.V.Narasimha Rao* put it, the demolition posed a 'grave threat' to the institutions, principles and ideals on which the constitutional structure of the Indian republic has been built' (quoted in Larson 1995;p-273). The communal riots that followed (in January 1993) in different parts of the country, particularly the cities of *Bombay* and *Surat*, far away from *Ajodhya*, were widely described as anti-*Muslim* pogroms. *Muslim* gangsters and their counterparts had a counter attack in *Bombay*. These events revealed the fragility of Indian *Secularism*. We may consider casteist politicians as the soldiers of *Indian secularism* simply because in certain situations they establish alliances with *Muslims* against upper caste *Hindus*. The most dangerous aspect is the coming to power of the ultra extremists *Shiva-Sena*, in coalition with *BJP* in *Maharashtra*. Nothing is more inimical to the spirit of *Indian secularism* than the vituperations of the former *Sena -chief Bal Thackeray*, against non-*Maharashtrians* and those *Muslims* whom he considers anti-national.²²

The end of the crisis of Indian *secularism* is not yet in sight. While not giving to way to the feeling of helplessness and hopelessness, in facing the communal challenge, the starting point has to be the realization that the way out is going to be a long journey. In this respect, *Bipan Chandra's* view is that," the national leader would have found it easier to engage in a resolute struggle against *communalism* if the centre of gravity of its social and ideological base had been shifted from the petty bourgeoisie to the mass of the peasantry and the working class; or secondly, if it had possessed control over the social condition so that the petty bourgeoisie could be rescued from the socio-economic dead-end which led it

to take to communal politics. The third alternative was to undertake an intense educative ideological and political campaign among the petty bourgeoisie strata.²³

It is necessary to show to the common people, both the majority and the minority, the real face of their anxiety, frustration and fears and to bring out the falsity of the communal analysis and solution. More concretely, the actions of the majority had to help the minority to realise that its religion and particular social and cultural traits would be safe, and that religion should not and would not be a factor in determining economic and political policies.²⁴

In India, it was necessary and urgent to have a cultural revolution or complete modernization with modern mass politics, which would simultaneously incorporate the humanist and rational elements of the traditional culture. India needed all-round radicalism based on a socially radical mass ideology and not merely on political radicalism. Otherwise, even mass politics, depending on the existing backward social and cultural consciousness of the masses, hide this reactionary aspect that they would tend to strengthen socially backward ideologies and outlook and instead of uniting the people, further divide them.²⁵

The medieval period had witnessed a synthesis and gradual development of a cultural rapprochement among the *Hindus* and *Muslims* in different parts of the country. The popular religion with an unorthodox form had been bringing the common people together socially and culturally. There was an adaptation of the converted *Muslims*, who carried with them into new religion with old religious and social belief and practices. The common popular culture and ways of life tended to prevail. Marriage and other social customs and practices tended to be uniform, or at least mutually influenced, in both their good and bad features. *Hindus* and *Muslims* shared common holy places, and saints or *dargas* etc. Some elements of the caste system, for example, food, taboos, marriage had become common to both and also celebrated *Durga Puja*, *Diwali* etc. together by common people as well as ruling classes in the eighteenth century in *Avadh*, *Bengal*. Common literary tradition had developed based on secular heroes and heroines or common religious characters, symbols and *myths*.²⁶ It is our duty to progress the process of the evolution of a composite culture initiated during the medieval period. When we look at the problems that currently concerns India, and are seemingly new addition to the problems we have had before, we see a pattern. Every news that breaks the air now a day's directly point at only

one direction; our recently acquired habit; getting offended too easily. Although it is not true that this problem is entirely new, and India was a model of tolerance before, but it can fairly be said that; we knew how to not get offended every time we see something that deviates from the way we see the world. It will be unethical to say that this recent practice is hampering our freedom of speech, or our religious freedom, but it is also true in modern India expressing our views is getting more and more tedious every day. For every uncommon philosophy continues to offend ample amount of people, and every independent thought is deeply scrutinized before they are permitted to breath in the free air, and the situation is getting worse every day.

Asis Nandy, renowned sociologist and clinical psychologist, calls himself "an anti-secularist" and argues that ideology and politics of secularism has exhausted its possibilities in India. He even asks for a different conceptual frame which he visualizes at the border of Indian political culture. He locates the cause of new religious violence in secularism and modernity. A 'gift of Christianity ' and child of modernity and colonialism secularism is a product of Western science and rationality and function as the ideology of modern State which according to Nandy is a source of most contemporary problems. Nandy's rejection of secularism is rooted in a twofold critique of modern culture and society and critique of secular state.

According to Nandy, Indian secular state has much to learn about morality from Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism, while Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism have nothing to learn from secular State in respect. As an alternative to secularism Nandy pleads for the recovery of India's traditional religious tolerance. Nandy's critique of ideology of secularism is against Western state centered version which is adopted by India's Westernized intellectuals. In this version of secularism religion should be abolished from the scientific management of the public sphere. In contrast is the non-Western religion centered understanding of secularism that supports equal respect for all religions and suits South Asian realities.

Nandy defines religion in South Asia has split into two; Religion as faith and religion as ideology. Faith means religion as non-monolithic, operationally plural way of life. Ideology means religion as sub-national, cross national or national identifier of population protecting political or socio-economic interests. Religion as ideology is usually identified with one or more text and become the final identifier of the pure forms of

religions and modern states prefers to deal with this form of religion. This idea is a product of modernity, statecraft and development. Secularism which is an imported idea from West does not use religion to link up different faiths or way of life which has its own principle of tolerance. The idea of secularism that give state the role of ultimate arbiter among different religions and communities is incompatible with understanding and role of religion in life of the people in South Asia.

Since Idea of secularism create rigid separation of two spheres, religion enters politics through different means in the form of ideologies and instrumentalized religious exclusivism. Thus, even threat of Hindu right has to be coped with religious and not secular means through reactivating traditional forms of tolerance. Secularism is also insensitive to politics of culture and believer is treated as person with inferior political consciousness. In this process traditional culture based on tolerance is eroded tendencies of extremism increases generating communal politics. Thus, he suggests Gandhian path to interfaith dialogue.

As a psychologist, he says, "Indian tolerance is based on faith. Akbar and Asoka never heard of secularism. One was a Muslim, whose Islam was liberal, and the other a Buddhist, whose Buddhism was also liberal". So, he suggests that the ideas of Akbar and Asoka would be more accessible to people rather than concepts of secularism, which have come in for some criticism. He asks 'what's the point of using a term that dissociates itself from people?'²⁷

Democracy as we know it, not solely dependent on the election procedure we indulge ourselves in every few years, although the structure of the democracy is solely dependent on the voting of Indian citizens. But to nurture the idea of democracy and to keep it alive instead of letting it become a dry and lifeless, the sole purpose of the democracy should be fulfilled, that is; the freedom to say what an individual wants, and how the individual wants it. History vouches for us when we say every idea in history has offended a surprising amount of people, but if the offended people were given the power to decide the fate of the idea we would have no philosopher today, neither do we have any political theorist, not novels, nor any kind, we would not have anything that makes us human, and keeps us that way. Maybe this recent trend has been given birth by the rampant information flow of social networks, and the way everyone has the notion that they have to represent something, anything, and everything, idea that questions what they

stand for are put in front of the firing squad. This is a medieval way of thinking, and for the sake of everything humanity stands for have to be countered.

It is true that this phenomenon has not come into existence into one day, and orthodox people have always existed, starting from the ancient days, and this disease cannot be cured in one day. This is worldwide phenomena now and everything from Islam phobia to genocide falls under this, displaying different intensities of the main problem we have today apart from hunger, illiteracy, and climate change, that is intolerance. Intolerance is booming like a plague and shows no sign of subsiding. Rampant religious indoctrination, far right capitalist approach to life, seeing money as the only scale of measuring people have lured us into believing that we can choose not to be offended, that a joke can be made without stirring out deep sentimental symbolism, that religion like everything else is vulnerable to criticism, and we can choose to stay passive about these things not indulge ourselves into heated arguments over things that don't affect our lives in any way if we look from the other side. But why is India so important in this argument? When it is a worldwide occurrence, why India is so special, and what valuable input can India offer that can somehow, even if it does not solve the problem, reduce the criticality of the question.

The question may seem very hard, but the answer on the other hand presents itself very easily. In India we have lived centuries after centuries living together in harmony with so many other sects, and so many other philosophical schools that we have forgotten what we used to represent in the first place, and we all have become a homogeneous mass of collective consciousness, India no longer represents a single idea, but a collection of ideas, that were originated from different parts of the world, and have their profanity among other ideas. India, if not always, but from a fairly long time has been a epitome of the idea of democracy.

It is true that India have had its fair share of conflicts, maybe more than an average, but most of those conflicts were politically motivated, and had very little to do with religious and ideological intolerance, except from some very dark ages of religious intolerance India had to suffer, the common people of India almost always lived in harmony. It changed under British rule, British empire feared the harmony among the peasants in India, and deriving fear from some peasant uprising British government used the strategy 'divide and rule' trying to incinerate communal differences among the

peaceful Islamic, and Hindu people living side by side. The fresh communist revolution probably played a big part in their fear of common people, having nothing but their will power, and the desire to overthrow an oppressive ruling system. Whatever the case may have been, they remained unsuccessful, but little by little they built up the difference and hate among the different communities that we see today. Of course the oppressive cast system of the time helped them, and the questioning living standards provided to *dalits* are not something that can be looked past. But it's not fair to accuse the British empire for every problem we have today, while it is true that they oppressed us for nearly two hundred years, and created a lot of bad blood among the uncountable diverse India, it is also true some self-imposing intellectuals and political leaders took the chance and used the communal power against India, and created what we know today as cast politics or politics of religion.

When we look at the biggest problems we see today, and at the same time look at the problems that our government acknowledges we see a big leap between them, government does not acknowledge insurgency as the same level as terrorism. While Maoism continues to grow in India and begins to take a formidably fearful form, Indian government is somehow indifferent to the problem, desperately trying to muffle the uprisings with armed forces and brutality, in response Maoists also continue to reply with brutality and violence. Government is indifferent about the problem because the middle class, the driving power of any nation is indifferent to, this is mostly because extreme left revolts do not affect them directly, most of the affected regions are poor, and are occupied by *dalits* or so called 'low casts'. This is an obscene phenomenon. While the government likes to think about these activities of temporary and marks them as romanticized revolutions, but the truth is the Maoists are here to stay. This problem can only be eradicated by eradicating poverty, hunger, corruption, cast oppression, and illiteracy. Which is far easier said than done.

Modern idea of secularism does not only concern religion, but any kind of discrimination based on religion, social status, ethnicity and cast. And for this reason the idea of secularism will have to take a big role in solving this problem.

In India we have never seen a secessionist movement motivated by language, unlike the Bangladesh liberation, or recent secession demands of Catalonia from Spain. All of these separation movements are led by oppression, or the feeling of un-belongingness.

That is true in the north east and that is true in Kashmir. While the number of states in India keep on multiplying sporadically, the 'Unity in diversity' we take so pride of continues to weaken.

Another predominant problem is the exponential financial growth of India, which continues to contrast the uneven distribution of wealth, while the number of billionaires in India continues to grow; people in obscure places continue to starve. People are being evacuated of their ancestral lands and factories are being constructed which most of the times do very little to benefit the locals, specifically the peasants. A growing sense of un-belongingness is on the roll. And this is doing a great deal to threaten our unity as Indians.

Problems are many and solutions continue to be ambiguous. The young people are discouraged to join politics, which is creating a stagnant environment in the political hierarchy, while young politicians are most of the times less prone to corruption and are ideological, they are very few in numbers. If there is a solution to this corrupt stagnation it most certainly lies among young people. Young Indians continue to show great potential in every sector of life but somehow they remain unaffected by politics. But the situation is gradually changing, and a great many students are starting to take interest in politics, for one can stay blind for only a certain amount of time. And these young political enthusiasts of India show great potential of curing our middle class of its blindness. But we see a trend of denouncing this youth, they are often written off as immature and are not taken seriously, but as they continue to multiply in darkness, it is entirely possible that before we know it the Indian politics will be overtaken by a hoard of youthful ideological leaders, one can always hope. But to do they will have to walk great lengths and cross great hurdles, all we can do is stay behind them, we who understand what is right from wrong, we, who could never gather up the courage to change the world should be kind to them, and guide them when they deviate from the path, for they are young and need our guidance, for they are the reason we still bet on the future.

The growing intolerance of Hindu fundamentalism that we continues to see inflaming in front of our very eyes is nothing but misdirected youth, who did not have the chance to learn about respect and reason before they were taken away by the fundamentalists. If someone chooses to pursue fundamentalism by all means they should have the freedom of doing so, but they should do that after learning the truth about our country, our country, and our communities, they should be served the undistorted history

of our country and not something politically influenced fictitious history that benefits some political factions, for when one knows the truth and one understands his or her enemies or one loses his or her enemies, and all he or she gains is a group of people who have a different socio-political opinion than him or her. In this cause philosophy can be of great help, if young people are taught philosophy from a very young age and they are taught to think without prejudice, they will know how to extract the truth even if the society refuses to provide them that.

India, a birthplace of scholars and great minds, and we her citizens, and her children are now facing severe problems. We are suffering from hate-politics and this has surrounded us. We are now self-centered. But India, the birthplace of potential, and tranquility, India the storehouse of spirituality of the world will endure as we believe in unity. We have faced countless numbers of invasions, and innumerable atrocities. We have welcomed our invaders. They became assimilated with us. Like every other crisis India will be able to survive this phase too. We, the citizens of India belong to this country, and we may have differences, but the unity of India is our prime concern.

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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 religions 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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Review Article

'Ahimsa' and 'Anekanta' in Jaina ethics and their relevance in 21st century

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Abstract: 21st century is a time when people are becoming more conscious about their identity both ethnically and culturally. It is no doubt true that the sense of ethnicity make people know their heritage strongly but at the same time this also brings strife and violence at different levels. Against this perspective, Mahavira's teachings, particularly the two jewels of his thought, the principle of '*Ahimsa*' and the principle of '*Anekanta*' appear to have universal relevance as well as practical significance. This theory has its relevance in modern environmental ethics too.

Key words: Jainism, ethics, *Ahimsa*, *Anekanta*, culture

Jainism is one of the oldest living religions of the world. The Mohenjodaro culture, the Vedic literature and the pre- Mahavira periods exhibit remarkable traces of the existence of Jainism in this country. In the royal family of Ksatriyas, Mahavira, a great hero, (24th Jain Tirthankara) was born in the old Republic of Vaisali. He was born more than 2500 years ago, (599-527 BCE) (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahavira>).

Mahavira proclaimed- "enemies are within us and not without, real conquest is the conquest of petty self, all absolutism is false, relativity is the truth, violence and lust will solve no problem. '*Ahimsa*' and '*Anekanta*' are the real answer to the problems that people are facing in this world. War against internal impurities must be won with the weapon of renunciation and asceticism" (Dwivedi, 1975); with this, a new faith was born, a new religion that has given a new sense and direction to our struggle. The world has won many a battle through violence and conquest of nature but is now facing a grave situation. We face extinction through thermo-nuclear weapons due to personal and organized violence. Lord Mahavira's message which is still relevant in this 21st century can save us from universal suicide that we are facing in today's society.

The basic tenets of Jainism can be epitomized in two words; namely '*Ahimsa*' and '*Anekanta*', the two principles of peaceful co-existence – philosophically and socially (Bhattacharya, 2004). There is no denying the fact that if we accept '*Ahimsa*' as the regulative principle of our conduct and '*Anekanta*' as the beacon light of our outlook, barbarism and exploitation, obstinacy and cold war in their subtle and gross forms can come to an end. It is no exaggeration to say that '*Ahimsa*' and '*Anekanta*' are the greatest contribution of Jainism to world thought in general and Indian thought in particular. No other religion in the world has worked out the principles of '*Ahimsa*' in the minutest details and no other philosophy has brought out the profoundest ramification of '*Anekanta*' as Jainism. Thus if '*Ahimsa*' is the flower of Jainism, '*Anekanta*' will be its crown. One can not flourish without the other. Whatever different shades of meaning these two terms may have, '*Ahimsa*' is the principle of respect for life and '*Anekanta*' is the doctrine of open mindedness, it is based on the conviction that a thing is constituted of diverse aspect and its proper understanding requires the consideration of as many aspects as possible. The comprehension of a thing from different points of view develops in us a catholic outlook necessary for peaceful co-existence.

'*Anekantavada*' is one of the most important and fundamental doctrine of Jainism. It refers to the principles of pluralism and multiplicity of viewpoints, the notion that truth and reality are perceived differently from diverse points of view, and that no single point of view is the complete truth.

The origins of '*Anekantavada*' can be traced back to the teaching of Mahavira. The dialectical concepts of '*Syadvada*' (conditional viewpoints) and '*Nayavada*' (partial viewpoints) arose from *Anekantavada*, providing it with more detailed logical structure and expression (Lamba, 1975). The Sanskrit compound '*an-eka-anta-vada*' literally means 'doctrine of non-exclusivity or multiple viewpoints' ('*an*'- not, '*eka*'- one, '*vada*'- viewpoint), it is roughly translated into English as 'non-absolutism'. '*An-ekanta*' (uncertainty, non-exclusivity) is the opposite of '*ekanta*' (*eka*+*anta*) 'exclusiveness, absoluteness, necessity' (or also 'monotheistic doctrine') (<http://www.jainworld.com>).

'*Anekanta*' is an epistemological tool for understanding the nature of reality. In Indian philosophy, epistemology is usually related with ontology. The Jains in their search not only evolved their own sense of understanding to know the nature of reality in their diverse aspects but were also concerned about the nature of valid knowledge. The concept of '*Anekanta*' helps one to accept a pluralistic approach to reality without discarding other religious systems and in this way to maintain a smooth functioning of the secular system.

By virtue of this doctrine of '*Anekanta*', Jainism has been able to appreciate the viewpoints of others in the field of philosophy. What is decried by it, is the one-sided obstinate

approach to a thing which is at the root of all disagreements. Open-mindedness fosters magnanimity and balance of mind. Thus '*Anekantavada*' along with its corollaries of '*Nayavada*' and '*Syadvada*' supplies us the necessary basis for easing national and international tensions and for developing the attitude of intellectual honesty in an individual. '*Anekanta*' does not mean compromise or doubt or uncertainty; but it means that 'truth' is many-sided; and one must be tolerant enough to understand the view-point of others. '*Anekanta*' is an idol in the intellectual field. '*Anekanta*' says that no ism can be condemned as absolutely wrong. Every statement has an intermixture of right and wrong. We have to adopt, an attitude of neutrality towards two apparently contradictory statements. It is not a case of indecisiveness but a case of clear understanding of what is right and what is wrong in a statement. We would find that there is no occasion for dispute, if we look at things from this angle (Bhattacharya, 2004).

'*Ahimsa*' in Jainism is a fundamental principle forming the cornerstone of its ethics and doctrine. It is the virtue of all virtues in Jain system- "*Ahimsa paromo dharmah*" (Paul, 2002). Though '*Ahimsa*' is a core value in other systems also, but Mahavira's contribution is unique as he explicates the nature of life and living through six main categories of life forms: earth, water, fire, wind, vegetation and mobile beings with two or more senses. The term '*Ahimsa*' means "non-violence", "non-injury" or absence of desire to harm any life forms. Vegetarianism and other non-violent practices and ritual of Jains flow from the principle of '*Ahimsa*'. According to Adian Rankin, the concept of '*Ahimsa*' is so much intertwined with Jainism that it conjures up images of ascetics who cover their mouths and sweep the ground before them with small brushes to avoid injuring the most minuscule forms of life and Jain-owned animal sanctuaries where even the sickest and most deformed birds and beasts are protected and cherished. These overt manifestations of an ancient faith challenge the comfortable and near-universal-assumption of human precedence over other creatures (Rankin, 2006).

The Jain concept of '*Ahimsa*' is quite different from the concept of non-violence found in other philosophies. In other religious traditions, violence is usually associated with causing harm to others. On the other hand, in Jainism, violence refers primarily to injuring one's own self – behavior which inhibits the '*Soul's*' own ability to attain moksa or liberation (Rankin, 2006). At the same time, it also means violence to others because it is this tendency to harm others that ultimately harms ones own soul. Furthermore, the Jains have extended the concept of '*Ahimsa*' not only to humans but to all animals, plants, micro-organisms and all beings having life or life potential. All life is sacred and everyone has a right to live fearlessly to its maximum potential. The living beings do not have any fear from those who have taken the vow of '*Ahimsa*'. According to Jainism, protection of life, also known as '*abhayadânam*', is the supreme charity that a person can make.

The principle of '*Ahimsa*' recognizes that every individual irrespective of caste, colour and creed is an end and has a dignity of its own; consequently one should treat all human beings accordingly. No man should be deprived of availing himself of the opportunities of advancement. The movement of life to the plane of '*Ahimsa*' signifies that the idea of domination over others and of being dominated by others is to be relinquished in the domain of politics and economics; and the principles of freedom of progress and equality of opportunity be recognized for all people, whether in Europe or America, Asia or Africa. The deeper significances of '*Ahimsa*' consist of the elimination of war, which has harassed mankind since the dawn of civilization. The easing of tensions and cessation of conflicts among states, the maintenance of universal peace and the promotion of human welfare can only be effected by suffusing world's atmosphere with the spirit of '*Ahimsa*'. Thus the principle of '*Ahimsa*' implies- "life should be elevated altogether from the plane of force to that of reason, persuasion, accommodation, tolerance and mutual services" (Lamba, 1975). The virtue of truth, non-stealing, continence and non-acquisitiveness are just the extension of '*Ahimsa*' to different modes of human existence. With the practice of these five virtues, an atmosphere of security, freedom, equality and proper distribution can be created in human society.

'*Ahimsa*' or non-violence is a negative word; it indicates the negation of that which is unnatural as against that which is natural. It means that non-violence is the negation of the unnatural and at the same time the affirmation of that which is natural.

Jaina philosophy preferred the negative term to a positive term like love or compassion. In this point of view, Jain approach is peculiar. It asserts that we cannot speak of the positive aspect of love in our present state of mental make-up. We live a life, without a taste of what is natural. Unfamiliar as we are with the positive aspect of non-violence, if one speaks in positive term, we are likely to be misguided. If we speak of love, we can think of one form or the other of attachment only. It was, therefore thought fit by Jaina thinkers to speak in negative terms like non-violence or non-attachment rather than using the positive term like love and compassion, though, they also occasionally use positive terms like affection or compassion (*karuna*). This emphasis on negative terms however should never be taken to mean that the Jainas conceived of non-violence as a void state of mind, where there is no love. Non-violence is as natural as good smell to a flower. Flower emits good smell unmindful of the fact, whether the smell is desirable to others or not and whether those who receive it are grateful or not. It emits smell equally to one who plucks and crushes it. The flower emits good smell equally not only for its friend and foe but also when it is alone and there is none to receive its smell. Its good smell is not conditional- it is unconditional and unmindful of its surroundings (Bhargava, 1975).

The Jainas have very important contributions to the field of religion, philosophy, literature and art. But these academic strivings did not deprive them of attending to the call of social and national duties. They seem to be aware of the fact that without social upliftment and national security nothing worthwhile can be achieved. The Jaina monks have always directed the attention of people to individual and social values which are essential for the establishment of a rational social order. Since they move from one place to the other, they are capable of making contacts with the large number of people with the result that to a very great extent they could persuade them to regulate their physical needs in tune with the principle of '*Ahimsa*'. Some of the Jaina monks because of their austerity and learning attracted the attention of kings. Jainacandrasuri prevailed upon Akbar to Issue '*Farman*' prohibiting the slaughter of animals for seven days every year in the month of '*Asadha*' (Upadhye, 1975). The most significant illustration of the influence of '*Ahimsa*' is that of Mahatma Gandhi who calls Rajacandra his Guru in inculcating in him the spirit of '*Ahimsa*'. Mahatma Gandhi can be rightly called an incarnation of Mahavira (Lamba, 1975).

It is often thought that Jainism has carried the doctrine of '*Ahimsa*' to its logical conclusion and has thus made it impracticable for the ordinary layman. It is true that Jaina monks are expected to observe this vow in an extreme form. The monks of the Swetambara sect even keep their mouths covered for fear of breathing in minute insects which cannot even be seen with naked eyes. However the rules of '*Ahimsa*' for a layman as prescribed by Jainism are by no means impracticable or unreasonable. Jainism no doubt prohibited deliberate and calculated injury to any being or wanton slaughter of animals. For the layman, it has made three exceptions (Bhargava, 1975). A householder or a housewife has to keep his or her house neat and clean and the body and soul together. For this, the house has to be swept, the grain has to be grounded or pounded and finally cooked, and water has to be stored in jars. If all this involves unintentional killing of minute creatures, there is no violation of the principle of '*Ahimsa*'. Similarly, though one should not adopt a profession like that of a butcher or fisherman which is founded on '*Himsa*' or killing of animals, one may sometimes be led to unavoidable injury to animals even in other professions. A farmer, for example, has to protect his crop from pests. This kind of injury to life is also not regarded as a violation of the principle of '*Ahimsa*'. The third exception which Jainism has made for the layman is the injury which one inflicts on another being in self-defense. If somebody attacks you and you injure or kill the aggressor in self-defense, you do not violate the principle of '*Ahimsa*'. When these three exceptions are taken into account, the Jain concept of '*Ahimsa*' remains by no means impracticable. We can in fact, call it a precious contribution not only to Indian culture but also to the well-being of the entire humanity.

Philosophy and religion of Jainism have a great impact on Indian culture. The main tenet of Jainism is 'Anekantabad'. Literal meaning of 'Anekantabad' is that objects are infinite in their qualities and modes of existence, every doctrine is partial and even Jainism is not absolute. Only the *kevalis* can comprehend objects in all aspects and manifestations; others are only capable of partial knowledge. Difference of opinions start when we begin with a partial truth taking it is an absolute one. Tolerance of others' opinions is an example of Jain 'Anekantabad', which is one of the main characteristics of Indian secularism.

From the very beginning of twentieth century, ethical values are being ascribed on ecology centric discussions. The Norwegian philosopher *Arne Naess* in his book, "Deep Ecology" spread out the idea that all of nature matters and deserves equal consideration (Bhattacharya, 2009). His thoughts are similar to Mahavira's teachings. There are mainly two aspects of his "Deep Ecology" theory- shallow and deep. Shallow theory is known as anthropocentric because they only care about mankind. But the bio-centric ethics based on deep ecology is called non-anthropocentric which carries a motto of reverence for life. And it is unethical if one tries to disturb the natural balance of nature.

The views that the modern environmental scientists are sharing in this twentieth first century are the views that has been preached by *Mahavira, the Jain Philosopher about 2500 years ago*. Mahavira may be regarded as modern 'Viswamanab' whose teachings are still equally relevant today.

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