

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. *Brahmānyā, Buddha* and *Jaina* religious books bear the proof for that. Similarly *Arthashastra, 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 *Sroutasutra, Dharmasutra, 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, pulaltya, 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*, became 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 India 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. *Sahamaramam* 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 *Smrities* ,*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 *Brahmans* 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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