

Indian Secularism – Distinctive Ideas of Jawaharlal Nehru

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Abstract

To Nehru, secularism meant granting of equal status to all religions in India. Secularism demands tolerance and close and active interaction among various communities in India. But when Nehruvian model of secularism had been put to practice, there were threats to this concept arising out of communal violence in present Indian context and hence Nehru's secularism has been criticized by several scholars. Irrespective of such criticism Nehru defined secularism as a means to strengthen national unity and to construct better and brighter India.

Key Words: Secularism, Rationality, Religious-plurality, National Integration, Dharmanirapaksata, Sarva-dharma samabhava, Religious tolerance

1. Introduction

The Indian state is secular in the sense that its constitution guarantees full religious liberty to all individuals and groups and forbids discrimination against any citizen on grounds only of religion, caste etc. At the same time it is not secular in the western sense of complete separation between church and state, for it reserves to itself the right to intervene in the interest of necessary social reforms in matters which customarily come under the preview of religion. Nehru did not make the mistake of defining religion in terms only of its communal or organised manifestation. Secularism was accepted as one of the fundamental bases for the development in India. The founding fathers of our constitution took it for granted that there would be tolerance in every aspect and sphere of our national life among all religions that prevail in our country. Secularism would thus mean an attitude of tolerance and peaceful co-existence on the part of citizens belonging to different faith and a policy of perfect neutrality and equality by the states towards all religious communities.

In this article we will try to analyse Nehru's concept of secularism, his ideas on religion, Nehru's views on secular state and his contribution to secularism in India. Attempt has been made to provide a glimpse into Nehru's vision of India with special reference to his views on secularism. Though the Nehruvian model of secularism was put to practice, there were threats to this concept even during this period. The ever present problem of communal violence tested the applicability of this model to Indian context and hence Nehru's concept of secularism has been subjected to criticism by scholars like Ashis Nandy, Partha Chatterjee, T.N. Madan, Akhil Beelgrami, and Achin Vanaik. Apart from all these criticism Nehru's idea of secularism occupies a distinct place in Indian context according to Neera Chandhoke. Nehru adopted various methods to foster national unity and suppressed separatist and

secessionist tendencies besides regional and communal fanaticism which has been recognised by scholars like Rajeev Bharghav.

1.1 Nehru's Concept of Secularism

Nehru is known as an architect of Indian secularism. The constitution of India contains his philosophy regarding the religious neutral state¹. Indian secularism, as propounded by Jawaharlal Nehru and incorporated in the Indian constitution contains the three main features –

First, our secularism is liberal in the sense that Nehru wanted it to combat communalism with social welfare politics while maintaining religious neutrality and ensuring religious equality and liberty to all minorities living in India.

Second, Indian secularism is not absolute in its character, that is, it is qualified in the sense that religious freedom given to all religions is subject to all the considerations of public order, morality and welfare of the citizens as such and the state authority may impose restrictions on any of the freedoms or rights guaranteed under Article 25 of the Indian constitution. It is for the judiciary to determine whether or not any such restriction is in consistent with the spirit of the constitution.

Thirdly, Nehru's concept of secularism is both dynamic and enlightened, as it allows the religion to play a part in social welfare. Nevertheless the Government of the day may change the personal law of any community or define it as it did in respect of the Sikhs and the Buddhists in the common interest of the country as a whole.

Nehru built the institutions and policies that would consolidate the nation. He knew fully well that our nation state could stabilise only if the secular polity divorced itself from all communal pulls and fanatic revivalism. A pluralistic and liberal society could survive by unifying the large cultural diversities. He understood that chauvinistic call for 'uniformity' was in reality a slogan, which sought to erase the minority cultures and their ways of life.

To Nehru, India was the centre of Hinduism as a unique expression of a 'cultural multiplicity' which lasted for thousands of years. In a reminiscent mood he wrote, "Hundreds of vivid pictures of this past filled my mind, and they would stand out as soon as I visited a particular place associated with them. At Saranath, near Banaras I would almost see the Buddha preaching his first sermon. Ashoka's pillar of stone with their inscriptions would speak to me in their magnificent language and tell me of a man who though an emperor, was greater than any king or emperor. At Fatehpur Sikri, Akbar, forgetful of his empire, was seated holding converse and debate with the learned of all faiths or curious to learn something new and seeking an answer to the eternal problem of man"².

Nehru's definition of secularism was four pronged: secularism meant first, separation of religion from political, economic, social and cultural aspects of life, religion being treated as purely personal matter. Second, dissociation of the state from religion, third, full freedom to all religions and tolerance of all religions and four, equal opportunities for followers of all religions and no discrimination and partiality on grounds of religion. Thus Nehru was a unique statesman, with an instinct for secularism. He strived for converting the country from the 'cow dung age' to an age of science and technology. He was opposed to superstitions, communalism and religious fanaticism. He always wanted that his countrymen should become rational and secular in their attitudes.

1.2 Nehru's Ideas on Religion

Religion is just an inner development of individual's personality. There is no concrete idea for religion. Religion has its own broader meaning; religion is a concept which relates to every individual, every community, and every nation. Religion involves value faith, morality and belief of a person. India is one of the oldest civilizations of the world and also it is one of the largest countries in the world. India unlike some other societies is not a homogeneous society, but it is a plural³ society. It is a multi-racial, multicultural, multi-lingual, multi-religious society. There are many religions, Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Judaism and Zorastrism in India. Every member of a particular religion takes pride in being a follower of that religion and to Nehru the secular nation means that the state shall observe neutrality with regard to all religions.

Nehru believed that the progress of man or the progress of nation was only possible by adopting scientific methods, tools and techniques. He admitted that some form of religious belief is necessary for the generality of mankind because religion has given a set of values to human life and religion prevents the growth of science in society, whereas science over looked completely the values and purposes of life. Nehru was very much a Hindu of the monastic⁴ tradition of Indian philosophy. This Indian philosophy stood for the values of oneness, harmony and unity. He was influenced by the religion of Lord Buddha as the principles of Buddhism were based on scientific approach. Here Nehru rightly said, "It is science alone that can solve the problems of disease, hunger, poverty and illiteracy of vast resources running to waste of rich country inhabited by a starving people". Organised religion means reactionary force which opposes progress hence Nehru did attempt a definition of religion, he ignored all communal manifestation and according to him the purpose of religion is to develop the inner consciousness of the individual. In fact he believed that the ideas of Hindu and Muslim culture would vanish at the touch of reality by which Nehru meant modern scientific culture and its product, the industrial civilization.

1.3 Nehru's Views on Secular State

The term 'secular state' is commonly used in the present day to describe the relation which exists or which ought to exist between state and religion. Many aspects of our conception of the secular state are common to all the countries within the liberal democratic traditions.

The secular state means, a state which guarantees individual and corporate freedom of religion, deals with the individual as a citizen, irrespective of his religion, which is not constitutionally connected to a particular religion, nor does it seek either to promote or interfere with it. A secular state is therefore a state where citizens are not discriminated in any form or manner on the basis of their religion. Secularism may be an ideology⁵ and may be seen as such a way of life. However, it has to be seen essentially in the concrete process of nation building.

The underlying assumption of this concept is simply that religion and the state functions are basically different areas of human activity. It is not the function of a secular state to promote regulate, direct or otherwise interfere in religion. In a secular state all religions are in one limited respect, subordinate as well as separate from the state, as voluntary association of individual citizens. Religions and groups are under the general laws of the state and responsible for the proper discharge of civil responsibilities. In this respect religions are viewed by the state like other voluntary associations based on common, social cultural or economic interests. A secular state while granting basic fundamental rights, enjoins upon its citizen not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion, sex, caste etc. It also grants freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion subject to public order, morality and health. Simultaneously a secular state may also reserve the right of making provision for advancement of any socially backward community or of making any law imposing restrictions on religious practices in the interest of public peace and morality. A secular state thus always exists to safeguard⁶ the welfare of its citizens and provides them equal opportunities for the development of self. It does not recognize any other world beyond this world. Thus we can assume the following to be the characteristics of a secular state – no established state religion, tolerance to all the religions, discouragement to bigotry, equality of rights, welfare of people, no religious education by government, condemnation of religious dogma, no religion exempted from the laws of the secular state.

A true democratic society is one which adopts or practices the ideology of secularism and that state is called as a secular state, that is state shall observe neutrality in regard to all religion and there is no established⁷ religion. Secularism has come to India from the west. India believes in the aloofness of state from religion or a state which does not patronise any one or any religion. The modern idea of secular state was totally unknown to old India. Throughout the history of India there was Hindu politics, Buddhist politics and in the

medieval period the strong influence of Islam was there. But despite religious dominance of different religions, the states adopted the policy of religious tolerance which is one aspect of secular state.

In a country like India which has many faiths and religions, no real nationalism can be built up except on the basis of secularity. Secular state⁸ in India means a state which honours all faiths equally and gives those equal opportunities, that as state it does not allow itself to be attached to one faith or religion. Secular state does not mean that people should give up their religion, a secular state means a state in which state protects all religions but does not favour any one at the expense of others and does not itself adopt any religion as state religion.

The word secular conveyed to Nehru much more than the mere dictionary meaning, especially in the context of social conditions prevailing in this country. Thus a caste ridden society is not popularly secular hence Nehru desired to build a political structure in which the individual was not subject to any social inequalities imposed by religious diversity existed in the country, secularism was essentially a practical approach for maintaining social stability and harmony. Nehru's concept of secularism⁹ was as much a product of Indian situation and intimately linked with the idea of the good society. Nehru was concerned with secularism because he was convinced that organised religion and even the religious outlook were opposed to democracy. Religions generate a reactionary force opposing change and progress. Nehru's view of religion is based upon certain fundamental human values and looks upon science not merely as a means of material progress but as a quest for truth and search harmony with rather than mere control over nature. So Nehru was opposed to dogmatism and intolerance, associated with it of other opinions and ideas.

Western model of secularism that is state-church separation can hardly fit the Indian reality. One can hardly talk of secularism in the Indian context without referring to communalism – the two major religious communities; Hindu and Muslims fought against each other mainly for capturing political and economic power. Hence Nehru's secular spirit inspired him to establish a secular society based on justice and equality in an intensively way. Secularism was not only a political doctrine but a social one of revolutionary character which embraced all religions and all communities in India. Secular philosophy meant neither irreligion nor only material wellbeing, it contained spiritual elements also. According to Nehru, "Secular philosophy itself must have come from some background, some objective other than merely material wellbeing. It must essentially have spiritual values and certain standards of behaviours"¹⁰.

1.4 Nehru's concept of secularism has mainly four aspects

Firstly, Nehru always believed in a multi-religious¹¹ India and India is a common home to all those who live here to whatever religion they may belong,

they have equal rights and obligations. The most essential factors of secularism were granting of equal status to all religions in India. He thought that the right to perform religious ceremonies should certainly be guaranteed to all communities. He said that no religion should be deprived of its legitimate rights, should depend on the membership of religious group of community. It can fully understand the right to freedom in religion, to him it means equal respect for all faiths and equal opportunities for those who profess any faith.

Secondly, Secularism according to Nehru is that, state should follow a policy of neutrality in religious matters. Nehru was convinced that the government of free India must be secular, in the sense that government will not associate itself directly with any religious faith. Nehru always condemned in strong words any talk of Hindu raj or Muslim raj. He believed in people's raj¹² and for that, state expected to follow a policy of co-existence as far as various religions were concerned. If the state tried to transgress upon religious freedom, then that approach would be not only wrong in it but will inevitably lead to friction and trouble.

Thirdly, Nehru's secular state or secular philosophy also meant a certain mental attitude¹³ on the part of various communities. Particularly in India, with a variety of religious groups, it becomes most essential that they should develop an attitude, which can bring about harmony and a feeling of fraternity towards one another. He believed that from the religious point of view, it is the responsibility of the dominant community not to use its position in any way which might prejudice our secular ideal. He emphasized that any narrow and aggressive attitude on the part of the majority creates apprehension in the mind of minority communities. It was much better to displease a few persons to lose an election rather than fail in the ideals such was the firm faith Nehru had in secularism.

Fourthly, Nehru wanted secularisation in all areas of social life. Nehru recognised how deep religions have made their way into the social field such as marriage, inheritance, civil and criminal law. He thought that they lay down a complete structure for society and try to perpetuate them by giving religious sanction and authority. So, the existence of separate sets of laws governing different religious communities was not consistent with the ideal of a secular society. Nehru tried to evolve a uniform civil code¹⁴ for the whole Indian people irrespective of the distinctions of religions and caste by introducing many measures of social legislation. His ideal of secularism envisaged a political structure in which the individual was not subject to any social inequalities imposed by religious sanctions.

What actually prompted the constitution makers to opt for a secular state model for India was the problem posed by the religious diversity¹⁵ of the land, the protection of minorities, the unsavoury experience of partition of the subcontinent, and such other peculiar conditions faced by the country at the

time of constitution making. In 1976, the 42nd Amendment included the word secular in the Indian constitution. Till then secularism were inferred in terms of articles 25 and 26 which formed the core of religious liberty in India. Article 25 guarantees freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion, subject to public order and health. Article 26 guarantees freedom to manage religious affairs subject to public order morality and health.

Nehru fully agreed with Ambedkar, the father of our Indian constitution who said that democracy would be unreal and meaningless in the wake of rampant communalism and hence only a secular state based on equality and justice could fit to the Indian society. The constitution of India contains Nehru's philosophy about the religious neutral state¹⁶ contains the three main features –

Firstly, our secularism is liberal in the sense that Nehru wanted to combat communalism with social welfare, politics while maintaining religious neutrality and ensuring religious equality and liberty to all minorities living in India.

Secondly, Indian secularism is not absolute in its character, that is it is qualified in the sense that religious freedom given to all religions is subject to all consideration of public order, morality and welfare of the citizens as such, and the state authority may impose restrictions on any of the freedom or rights guaranteed under article 25 of the Indian constitution. It is for the judiciary to determine whether or not any such restriction is inconsistent with the spirit of the constitution.

Thirdly, Nehru's concept of secularism is both dynamic and enlightened and it allows the religion to play a part in the social welfare. Nevertheless, the government of the day may change in the personal law of any community or define it as it did in respect of the Sikhs and the Buddhists in the common interest of the country as whole.

Thus Nehru regarded secularism as the most essential feature of modern democratic society. Modern India could not go back to the narrow medieval concept of theocratic state. If India is to develop as a modern state, how could India believe in the theocratic conceptions of state which considers people of other's faith as something beyond its pale? Therefore, the secular state according to Nehru would not however imply in any sense that religion should cease to be an important factor in the private life of an individual. He wanted principally to uphold the cardinal of modern democratic practice where the state is separate from religion. Nehru's concept of secular state was a practical necessity in India as a solution to the problem of religious diversity which was a challenge to Indian unity, harmony and social stability. We have not only to live up to the concept of secular state proclaimed by Nehru, but make them apart of our thinking and living and thus build up a really integrated

nation. That does not mean absence of religion, but pulling religion on different planes from that of normal, political and social life.

1.5 Nehru's Contribution to Secularism in India

Nehru's secular spirit inspired him to establish a secular society based on justice and equality in an intensively religious country like India. For him secularism is not only a political doctrine, but a social one of revolutionary character which embraced all religions and all communities in India. It means a social structure where an individual would not be subjected to some hierarchical position in society on the basis of one's faith and religion. It means a certain mental attitude on the part of the individuals and groups, towards the members of other religious groups. Inter-group and inter-personal relations are not supposed to be affected by religion and religious considerations. The most essential feature of secularism according to Nehru was the granting of equal status to all religions in India. Individual has the right to attend any religious ceremonies and no religion has any special privilege and no community should be deprived of its legitimate rights on the basis of religion. Nehru's concept of secularism has four aspects.

Firstly, Nehru always believed in a multi-religious India. India is a common home to all those who live here, to whatever religion they may belong. They have equal rights and obligations. Ours is a composite nation. In modern plural society, the concept of personal faith and personal conduct must be respected. Secularism is a federal principle¹⁷ applied to a federal society for the welfare of the whole. So Nehru declared, "We are building a free secular state, wherein every religion and belief has full freedom and equal honour, who's every citizen has equal liberty and equal opportunity.

Secondly, the state should follow a policy of neutrality in religious matters. Nehru always condemned in strong words any talk of Hindu raj or Muslim raj rather he believed in people's raj and for that state was expected to follow a policy of co-existence as far as various religions were concerned. If the state tried to infringe upon religious freedom, then that approach would be not only wrong in itself but will inevitably lead to friction and trouble.

Thirdly, to Nehru, secularism also meant a certain mental attitude on the part of various communities, particularly in India, with a variety of religious groups, it becomes most essential that they should develop an attitude, which can bring about harmony and a feeling of fraternity towards one another.

Fourthly, the realization of the secular ideal depended largely upon the attitude adopted by the majority community, the Hindus, towards other minority communities. Repeatedly he emphasized that the Hindu must always remember that the interest and the wellbeing of the minorities are their sacred trust. If they fail in their trust, than they injure not only the country, but themselves. Any narrow and aggressive attitude on the part of the majority community would

create a feeling of an apprehension in the minds of the minority communities. According to Nehru it was much better to displease few persons to lose an election rather than fail in ideals – such was the firm faith Nehru had in secularism.

Nehru was determined to build an integrated nation after independence. India being an ethno-cultural¹⁸ mosaic provides scope for variety and diversity. At the dawn of independence, religion became a formidable force and led to the partition after considerable blood bath and painful migration on both sides of India and Pakistan. Even after the partition on narrow religious line and on two nation theory, the fact remained that we have the second largest Muslim population in the world next to Indonesia. Hence to preserve the unity and integrity of India Nehru advocated his theory of secularism which is suitable in highly diverse society with a long history of disunity.

2. Debates on Indian Secularism

The cornerstone of Indian democracy, secularism is a highly contested concept. It is contested because two different line of understanding are competing for ideological domination ever since independence and even before. (a) One side of this understanding was Jawaharlal Nehru who had a vision of separating religion and politics manifesting in the concept of ‘dharmanirpekshata’. (b) By way of contrast Mahatma Gandhi rejected the idea of separation of religion and politics and believed in the principle of equal respect of all religions manifesting in the concept of ‘sarva dharma samabhava’. The contest between these two different understanding of secularism was an issue of debate in the Constituent Assembly and later in academic circles in India.

Several critics of Indian secularism maintain that given the pervasive role of religion in the lives of the Indian people, secularism, defined as the separation of politics or the state from religion, is an intolerable, alien, modernist imposition on the Indian society. This, argument is a misreading of the Indian constitutional vision, which enjoins the state to be equally tolerant of all religions and which therefore requires the state to steer clear of both theocracy or fundamentalism and the "wall of separation" model of secularism. The critics point out the dichotomy, between Nehruvian secularism and Gandhian religiosity. What is distinctive to Indian secularism is the complementation or articulation between the democratic state and the politics of satya and ahimsa, whereby the relative autonomy of religion and politics from each other can be used for the moral-political reconstruction of both the religious traditions and the modern state. Indian secularism is one of the deeply problematic issues in contemporary Indian political discourse.

The most important contemporary challenge to Indian secularism has been mounted by the forces of Hindu nationalism, and from influential

academic writers, notably Ashis Nandy, T. N. Madan and Partha Chatterjee. Since the mid-1980s, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the "Sangh Parivar" have been insisting on a distinction between their own "positive secularism" and the "pseudo-secularism" of the Congress. According to them, "positive secularism," which would mean "justice for all and discriminations against none," should replace the prevailing "pseudo-secularism," whereby the word secularism is misused to denigrate the Hindu categories and symbols of the majority community and to justify the pampering of the minority communities.¹⁹ According to T. B. Hansen, the ideology of Hindutva and "positive" or "true" secularism amounts to the principle of rule by Hindu majoritarianism. He notes that it is a "peculiar co-articulation of brahminical ideologies of purity, romanticist notions of fullness and authenticity, and quasi-fascist organicism and celebration of strength and masculinity which characterizes the Rashtriya Swayamesvak Sangh (RSS) and its affiliated organizations.

According to Nandy, Nehruvian secularism, which separates state and religion, and which has been imposed on the Indian people, is part of a larger, modern, western package of scientific growth, nation-building, national security and development. These constitute a "modern demonology, a tantra with a built-in code of violence." Whereas secularism demands from the members of religious communities to dilute their faith so that they can be truly integrated into the nation-state. It guarantees no protection to them against the sufferings inflicted by the state itself in the name of its "secular, scientific, amoral" ideology of nation-building, security, development, etc. As a handy adjunct to these "legitimizing core concepts," secularism helps the state-elites to legitimize themselves as the sole arbiters among traditional communities, to claim for themselves a monopoly on religious and ethnic tolerance and on political rationality. To accept the ideology of secularism is to accept the ideologies of progress and modernity as the new justifications of domination, and the use of violence to achieve and sustain the ideologies as the new opiates of the masses²⁰.

According to Nandy, this modern Western rational-scientific secularism, which Nehru sought to impose on the Indian society, has failed either to eliminate religion from politics or to promote greater religious tolerance. Hence, it can "no longer pretend to guide moral or political action." Nandy therefore has no hesitation in calling himself an anti-secularist. By so criticizing secularism, Nandy does not mean to privilege the communalist ideology of either the majority or minority religious communities. To the contrary, these communalist ideologies are, in his view, the pathological by-products of modernity; they are the dialectical "other" or counter-players of modernity's secular state. He notes that khaki shorts of the RSS cadres are modeled on the uniform of the colonial police. According to him, the ideology of Hindu nationalist revivalism or fundamentalism, with its borrowing of the

models of semiotic religions and of the modern Western nation-state, is "another form of Westernization²¹" in the sense that it seeks to decontaminate Hinduism of its folk elements, turn it into a classical Vedantic faith, and then give it additional teeth with the help of Western technology and secular statecraft, so that the Hindus can take on, and ultimately defeat, all their external and internal enemies, if necessary, by liquidating all forms of ethnic plurality-first within Hinduism and then within India. Nandy draws a distinction between two conceptions of religion -

- (1) Religions as tolerant and accommodative faiths or folk ways of life and
- (2) Religions as politically constructed monolithic, communalist ideologies of sectarianism and intolerance. The former, he says, characterized the pre-modern and pre-liberal way of life in India, whereas the latter is a product of modernity's nationalism, statecraft, and developmentalism.

The next move in Nandy's argument is to suggest that it is the very package of modern nationalism and its statecraft and scientific developmentalism which generate and nourish religious communalisms, which the state elites combat by resorting to the use of the ideology of the secular or nonreligious nation-state. This counter posing of the tyranny of the modern secular state and the violence of modern communal organizations is, in Nandy's view, nothing but the internal dialectics of modernity's nation-state paradigm. By this reasoning, communalism can be the majoritarian or the minoritarian variety, and the secular state stand condemned as the perverse gifts or, rather, the inevitable products of Western modernity. In Nandy's view, the ethico-politically appropriate alternative to them lies in the non-modern, pre-secular conception of religions as accommodative, tolerant faiths or ways of life as was practiced, in exemplary manner, by Asoka, Akbar and Gandhi. They derived their religious tolerance not from secular politics but from Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism, respectively. Gandhi's religious tolerance, he writes, "came from his anti-secularism, which in turn came from his unconditional rejection of modernity." Accordingly, Nandy writes: "As far as public morality goes, statecraft in India may have something to learn from Hinduism, Islam or Sikhism; but Hinduism, Islam, and Sikhism have very little to learn from the Constitution or from state secular practices."²²

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

According to Nandy, Indian secular State has much to learn about morality from Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism while Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism have nothing to learn from the secular state in this respect. As an alternative to secularism Nandy pleads for the recovery of India's traditional religious tolerance²³. Nandy's critique of the ideology of secularism is against western state centered version which is adopted by India's westernized intellectuals. In this version of secularism religion should be abolished from the scientific management of the public sphere. In contrast is the non- western religion centred understanding of secularism that supports equal respect for all religions and suits South Asian realities.

To Nandy religion in South Asia has split into two, Religion as faith and religion as ideology. Faith means religion as non- monolithic, operationally plural way of life. Ideology means religion as sub national, cross national or national identifier of population protecting political or socio -economic interests. Religion as ideology is usually identified with one or more text and become the final identifier of the pure forms of religions and modern state prefers to deal with this form of religion. This idea is the product of modernity, statecraft and developmentalism. Secularism which is an imported idea from west does not use religion to link up different faiths or way of life which has its own principle of tolerance. The idea of secularism that give state the role of ultimate arbiter among different religions and communities is incompatible with understanding the role of religion in life of people in south Asia.

Nandy discuss two different meaning of the word in modern India, the first meaning of secularism demarcate two distinct sphere, public life and private life and one's religion is not admitted in public life. According to Nandy, one can be a good Hindu or a good Muslim within one's home or at one's place of worship but when one enters public life, one is expected to leave one's faith behind. This ideology believes that public realm is dominated with vision of science and universal and bringing religion may lead to potential threat to modern polity. Pitched against this is the non -western meaning of secularism that believes in the principle of equal respect to all religions. Implicit is the idea that public sphere must have space for continuous dialogue among different religions because each include within it "an in house version of the other faith, both as an internal criticism and as a reminder of the diversity of the theories of transcendence"²⁴. This version of secularism is compatible with Indian understanding of secularism but India's westernized intellectuals have opted for abolition of religion from the public sphere. Nehruvian secularism which separates state and religion is a part of modern western package of scientific growth, nation building, national security and development. These according to him constitute a 'modern demonology a tantra with a built in code of violence'. The idea of secularism creates rigid separation of two spheres – state and religion. Religion enters politics through different means in the form of ideologies and instrumentalized religious exclusivism. Thus even threat of

Hindu right has to be coped with religious and not secular means through reactivating traditional forms of tolerance. Secularism is also insensitive to politics of culture and believer is treated as person with inferior political consciousness. In this process traditional culture based on tolerance is eroded and tendencies of extremism increases and generates communal politics. Thus he suggests Gandhian path of inter-faith dialogue.

Like Nandy, T. N. Madan maintains that religious zealots, who contribute to fundamentalism or fanaticism by reducing religion to mere political bickering, are provoked to do so by the secularists who deny the very legitimacy of religion in social life. According to him is because Nehru's secularism denies the immense importance of religion in the lives of the people of South Asia. Secularism is in this region an impossible credo, an impracticable basis for state action and an impotent remedy against fundamentalism or fanaticism. Ruling out the establishment of a Hindu state as an utterly unworkable proposition, Madan concludes that "the only way secularism in South Asia, understood as inter-religious understanding, may succeed would be for us to take both religion and secularism seriously and not reject the former as superstition and reduce the latter to a mask for communalism or mere expediency."²⁵ He commends Gandhi not only for emphasizing the inseparability of religion and politics but also for opening up avenues of inter-religious understanding and of a spiritually justified limitation of the role of religious institutions and symbols in certain areas of contemporary life.

Madan also criticize the idea of secularism though does not dismiss it absolutely. He cautions against unproblematic adaption of secularism in south Asian realities. Coding Bankim Chandra Chatterjee Madan argues how translations are difficult because words can be translated but it is difficult to translate an idea that the word denotes if that idea does not exist among people in whose language translation is required. The idea of secularism as transferred to countries of South Asia also poses many difficulties. South Asia is a multi-religious society and the majority of people living in this region are active adherents of some religious faith. While Secularism is impractical for State action because Buddhism and Islam have been declared as State religion, Policy of equidistance is also difficult to maintain since religious minorities do not share the majority's view of what this entails for the State. It has failed to bring under control divisive forces which resulted in the partition of the subcontinent in 1947 and also failed to counter religious fundamentalism. Madan argues that it was possible to privatize religion in the West because of developments internal to Christianity such as reformation that facilitated the process. Whereas in South Asia major religious traditions do not assume any radical antinomy between the sacred and the secular. Religion covers all aspects of life and its impact is totalizing in nature thus it was impossible to restrict it to private domain. Religion as the doctrine of overarching ends is the most important

factor in the lives of the people of India and South Asia. Religion gives meaning to lives of most of the people and also determines their place in society. Thus to impose secularism on believers is wrong in the words of Madan "an act of moral arrogance and political folly"²⁶. Religion and the belief of people must be taken seriously and should be given its place in society as non-religions because denial of legitimacy to religion in society of believers provokes fundamentalism on the part of religious zealots. Through religious pluralism inter religious harmony could be established. Secularism and religious faith must be recognized to be compatible with each other. The alternative conception in Madan's views is Gandhism because it has the possibilities of inter religious understanding.

Though Nandy dismiss secularism altogether Madan suggests that state practices of secularism have to be based on the recognition of religious practices. This has to be buttressed by discovering and strengthening the internal resources of religious pluralism and tolerance. Since India's civil society is deeply religious Nehru's concept of secular ideas poses a problem as state project. But in the end both theorists ground their understanding of tolerance in largely undefined and unarticulated lived practices. That these practices may have changed or degenerated in the context of competitive electoral politics and an equally competitive market economy is something that they would rather not take into account.

Partha Chatterjee too finds that the ideology of secularism is not an adequate or appropriate political perspective for meeting the challenge of Hindu majoritarianism. In his view, the official model of Indian secularism and the present campaign of the Hindu right for setting up a "positively" secular state have brought India to a "potentially disastrous political impasse."

Turning to the recent shift in the ideological articulation of Hindu nationalism, Chatterjee points out that its present championing of "positive secularism" is meant not only to deflect accusations of its being anti-secular but also to rationalize, in a sophisticated way, its campaign for intolerant interventions by a modern, positively secular state against the religious, cultural or ethnic minorities in the name of "national culture" and a homogenized notion of citizenship²⁷. In this role, writes Chatterjee, the Hindu right in fact seeks to project itself as a principled modernist critic of Islamic or Sikh fundamentalism and to accuse the 'pseudo-secularists' of preaching tolerance for religious obscurantism and bigotry. The quandaries generated by the career of the secular state in India and the potentially disastrous nature of the new politics of "positive secularism" lead Chatterjee to the conclusion that the theory and practice of the secular state cannot bring about what, according to him, is really needed in India, namely, the toleration of religious, ethnic and cultural differences.

In so denouncing secularism, Chatterjee is in agreement with Nandy. They share the view that the politics of interventionist secularization is part of the same practices of the modern state which promotes religious communalism or religious intolerance. While Nandy's "anti-secularist manifesto" of religious tolerance is couched in terms of the non-modern, pre-liberal philosophy, symbolism and theology of tolerance in the everyday faiths of Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Sikhism, Chatterjee's search is for a "political" conception of tolerance as part of a non-Western form of modernity in India²⁸. Finding that the liberal-democratic state can only recognize individual rights, and not the collective rights of cultural or religious groups, Chatterjee directs his intellectual efforts not to secularize the state in the name of any universalist framework of reason, but to defend minority cultural rights and to underscore the duty of the democratic state to ensure policies of religious toleration.

According to Chatterjee to assess the proper relationship between the state and the religious, ethnic and cultural groups, we need to go beyond the "state sovereignty vs. individual rights. Following Foucault, he maintains that the specifically modern form of power, which cuts across "the liberal divide between state and civil society," exercises itself through forms of representation and through technologies of governmentality, that is, the self-disciplining of its subjects. He notes that this modern form of power is characterized by "an immensely flexible braiding of coercion and consent"²⁹. Hence, according to him, the secularization of the state cannot be taken as a non-coercive or power-free politics of pure (secular) rationality. Rather, under modernity, the religious, cultural and ethnic communities as well as the secular state are to be seen as institutional sites or strategic locations of the politics of identity and difference. This being so, according to him, arguments for a universal framework of governance based on so-called pure secular-rational grounds (e.g., the principle of the equal rights of all regardless of their religion or caste) which ignore their context of cognitive-political struggles over issues of identity and difference. Hence, Chatterjee calls for a conception of tolerance which recognizes that there will be political contexts where a group could insist on its right not to give reasons for doing things differently provided it explains itself adequately in its own chosen forum. In other words, toleration here would be premised on autonomy and respect for persons, but it would be sensitive to the varying political salience of the institutional contexts in which reasons are debated.

Contrary to Nandy's non-modern, religious conception of tolerance, Chatterjee directs his search to finding a 'political' conception of tolerance which will set out the practical conditions in order to demand and expect tolerance from others. According to him, if a religious community seeks to gain or preserve its autonomy and respect from other groups or from the state, it must conduct its own affairs through representative public institutions insofar as those affairs are not confined to simple matters of innocent beliefs or holy rituals. Those affairs or practices of any religious group which have a regulative

power over its members must rest on the publicly secured consent of those members. In other words, writes Chatterjee, "even if a religious group declares that the validity of its practices can only be discussed and judged in its own forums, those institutions must have the same degree of publicity and representativeness that is demanded of all public institutions having regulatory functions"³⁰.

According to Chatterjee the duty of the democratic state is to ensure policies of religious tolerance within the constitutional vision. So is the case with the principles of respect for persons and of the consent of the governed, which he rightly takes to be the basis for the toleration of religious differences. The activity or policy of giving equal tolerance to all religions is not a strictly religious activity or policy. It is also not and a moral political activity in which the end is taken to justify any means adopted for its realization. It is rather a moral-political activity or policy, which is predicated on the relative autonomy of the political and the religious from each other. It assumes not only that a pluralism of religious and or nonreligious beliefs is ineradicable under the conditions of modernity but also that political institutions and political policies can be constructed and operated in different ways and for different purposes from those of religious institutions or religious doctrines. Indian secularism cannot be said to be situated entirely outside the problematic and thematic of the Western discourse on secularism. The problematic relationship between religion and politics in the West had its analogies in India too. What we mean is that despite important philosophical or metaphysical differences between them, both European Christianity and Indian Hinduism legitimized, in their own ways, analogous systems of social inequalities during the pre-modern period. The latter was complicit in the "social construction" of the social evils mentioned above, namely, sati, untouchability, etc. Hence, an ethico-political reform of the socio-religious sphere was taken to be an integral part of the Indian movement for swaraj and sarvodaya. Government has also intervened in the matters of conversion. In the constituent assembly conversion as an issue was discussed and the constitution grants right to propagate but the word conversion was not included. After Independence different State government made these acts to prohibit force, fraud and inducements for conversion. When matter relating to conversion was discussed in the Court, Supreme Court differentiated propagation of religion from conversion and viewed it as contrary to freedom of conscience.

According to Chatterjee in post independent India the model of secularism adopted by India's westernized elites implied exclusion of Indian alternative to Western secular modernity. It also introduced direct involvement of state in religious and social matters especially in Hindu religious matters. Chatterjee problematize implementation of secular principles in Indian realities. If secularism is interpreted as strict separation of religion and politics this can prove fairly compatible with the discrimination against minorities. If secularism

is interpreted as equidistance from all religious groups then its practice in India raise some doubts because State has intervened selectively in personal laws of different communities making laws to reform Hindu personal laws but the same reformist agenda has been absent for other communities like Muslims, Christian and Parses. Hindu right describe this as appeasement of minorities. Chatterjee refers to the exceptionality of India though he does not call for a new version of secularism. Chatterjee is in favour of idea of political tolerance that incorporates autonomy and respect for persons and accommodates different reasons coming from different cultural and traditional institutions. He seems to be in agreement with the idea that minorities resist homogenization from outside but may introduce democratization within the community.

According to Achin Vanaik idea given by Nandy and Madan is based on traditional idea of embedded self and support a form of religious communitarianism. Despite theoretical insightfulness the 'anti-secularist', legitimizes politics of religious identity. According to Vanaik, Nandy's idea of replacement of secular state and secular public morality with religion based public morality of tolerance is dangerous. While for Nandy Secular state is imposed from above on traditional society Vanaik in his thesis proposes that traditional beliefs and practices are responsible for undermining the secular state and democratization of society. The root cause of religious communalism is religion itself. The struggle against religion should not be limited to setting up a state equally tolerant of all religions but extend to the secularization and diminution of religion in civil society. To secularize civil society religious influence, importance of religious identity in everyday life and increasing privatization of religious commitments has to be reduced. Secularism means three things - right to freedom of worship, primacy of citizenship and non-affiliation of State to any religion. The secular State must separate state and religion, secularize state laws and policies. Recognizing due importance of Gandhian legacy Vanaik argues that though Gandhi did not separate religion and politics his role was remarkable in giving principle of equal respect to all religions. But many of Gandhi's perspectives were against modern conception of secularism. Secular democracy requires rights centered relationship between individual and society. Vanaik interprets Gandhi's mixing of politics with religious idioms of ahimsa trusteeship etc. as a strategy of class accommodation³¹ for preventing any socialist revolution against capitalism. Gandhi mobilized masses in the Indian national movement but this contributed to a conservative though anti communalist, religious nationalism in contrast to a secular, democratic and egalitarian nationalism.

Akkel Bilgrami criticize Nehruvian form of secularism but reject Nandy's views on secularism also. He criticizes Nandy for practicing both nostalgia and skewed historiography. While Nandy is right in arguing that different religious traditions have their specific source of the realization of a tolerant way of life his ideas of the rise of Hindu Nationalism is oversimplified.

According to Bilgrami Nandy's anti secular proposal have flaws in it because the condition for different religious traditions and communities has changed in modern India. In Bilgrami's opinion Nehruvian secularism stands in a conceptual and political space that lies outside the sphere of substantive political commitments. Secularism did not emerge as the product of a negotiation and dialogue between religious communities. It was adopted from above as an Archimedean point. If it would have been the result of debate and understanding of different communities then different groups would have subscribed to it. Presence of different communities in State is important and these communities could play very important role in designing secular principles. Bilgrami presents the model of negotiated or emergent secularism³² which is based on moderate religious persons embracing principle of secularism not on the basis of universalistic rationality but on their own internal value system. Secularism should also incorporate clarification of those principles that belong to illiberal religious persons also. Instead of seeking neutral common agreement communities should contribute to a secular outcome for different reasons from within their different substantive value economies. Instead of being imposed it should emerge from bottom up incorporating moderate political voices and assumptions of different communities. In his later writings he calls this liberal model post classical liberalism. He is also critical of contextualization of secularism including Taylorian proposal of redefinition. He proposes various conceptions of secularism may complicate the issue thus theoretically it is important to uphold unified definition of secularism.

3. Relevance of Nehru's Secular Model in Contemporary Indian Society –

Nehru's notion of secularism dharammirpekshata did not mean a state where religion is discouraged. It rather meant a State where people have freedom of religion and conscience and freedom for those as well who have no religion. Nehru himself said it is perhaps not very easy to find a good word for 'secular'. Some people think it means something opposed to religion. That obviously is not correct. What it means is that it is a state which honors all faiths equally and gives them equal opportunities, that as a state, it does not allow itself to be attached to one faith or religion, which then becomes the State religion³³. Nehru's secularism was understood as freedom of religion or irreligion, no state religion and due honour of all religion equally. Different articles of our constitution define the Secular character of the State. Constitution guarantees freedom of religion to individual, also to religious denomination, guarantees equality of citizenship, equality of opportunity in public services, no discrimination in educational institutions, no communal electorate, although there is provision for reservation of seats for Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes , no special taxes for promotion of religion, no religious instructions in state educational institutions. Through principle of sarva dharma sambhava Gandhi tried to bring people from different religions

together. It was also a way to form mass movement in a religiously divided plural society. Gandhi also realized and recognized value of religion in people's lives and believed in equal respect of all religions. The difference in opinion of two stalwarts Gandhi and Nehru on Secularism was even visible in Constituent Assembly Debates.

Donald E Smith in his work "India as a secular State" published in 1963 provides elaborate and logical analysis of Indian Secularism. He gives a theoretical outline of a secular state that involve three connotations—Freedom of religion, citizenship and right to equality and separation of State and religion. This understanding incorporates three distinct interrelated set of relationship concerning State, religion and individual. In relationship between individual and State religion is excluded and individual is viewed as citizen. In a relationship between Individual and Religion State is excluded. Third is the relation between state and different religions and Secularism entails mutual exclusion of state and religion. Considering this important framework of secularism according to Smith while freedom of religion and equal citizenship has been duly incorporated in the Indian Constitution, State right to intervene in religious matters compromise these two principles in an important way. Hindu temple in Khajuraho India, incorporating a Hindu spire, a Jain cupola, a Buddhist stupa and a Muslim style dome, in place of the usual 'shikharas' (peak).

Thus India has some but not all features of a secular state. In Smith's view³⁴ heritage of Hinduism that has characters conducive to secularism, presence of different minority groups as well as legacy of national movement under the leadership of Gandhi and Nehru provides prospects for strengthening secular State. However consolidation of Secular state is problematic one due to caste and religious loyalties that may take ugly turn of communal rivalry and conflict and second aid to groups based on communal stratification. State interference in Hindu religious institutions to reform them and continuance of personal law is also opposed to the principle of secularism. India had to resolve whether non sectarianism or non- religiosity is the true meaning of secularism. Despite these problems in Smith's views India is a secular State.

According to Neera chandhoke to understand secularism it is important to situate it in the wider conceptual context of which it forms part and unravel its meaning in relation to meaning of equality, freedom and democracy. Indian version of secularism is rooted in the principle of sarva dharma sambhava which requires equal respect for all religions. The premise of equality of all religions is problematic in multi religious society where religious communities are divided on the basis of majority and minority and some minorities are weak and extremely poor. In this background the idea of secularism as equality of religion when employed by Hindu right put pressure on religious minorities. She employs the principle of substantive equality to ensure both inter group and

intra group equality and defends protection of minority rights. This principle demands to recognize institutionalized inequalities in society and to rectify them, employ measures to benefit the least well off that may include accommodating minority rights. Neera Chandhoke offers a normative theory of minority rights based on the shift from secularism to the universal principle of moral equality.

According to Chandhoke, Nehru's idea of secularism 'dharmanirapekhta'³⁵, preferred that the state would not be influenced by religious consideration in policy and decision making. Yet Nehru was convinced that in the Indian context religion could not be banished from the political and public spheres. Indian secularism is related to the constitutional values of democracy and fundamental rights. Thus secularism is important for India because (a) it enables people of different religions to live in civility with respect for all faiths, (b) it is a part of democracy which grants equal rights, (c) it safeguards democracy by limiting the powers of the majority and (d) it protects the equal rights of minorities to citizens. Nehru's secular ideal is important for India because it regulates the relation between the state and various religious groups on the principle of equality that the state shall not discriminate against any religion. Otherwise people will be subjected to oppression and denial of their right to freedom of belief. The majority is to be told that it does not have the right to control the country and the minority is to be assured of equal treatment. Thus secularism is the only alternate to destructive communalism.

Nehru's doctrine of 'dharmanirapekshata', implies that the state would not be influenced by religious considerations in formulating its policies. But Nehru realized that policy making could not be separated from the domain of religion and that religion could not be banished from the political and public sphere. The violence that followed after the partition of the country proved that religion had become an intrinsic part of political life. Nehru made it clear that secularism did not mean a state where religion is discouraged, instead it means freedom for all religion, including the freedom for those who have no religion. For Nehru, the word secular was not opposed to religion. It is a state which honours all faiths equally and it does not allow any religion to assume the status of the state religion. Hence Chandhoke points out that Nehru's concept of the secular state implies (a) freedom of religion or irreligion for all, (b) the state will honour all faiths equally and discriminate against none and (c) that the state shall not be attached to one faith or religion which becomes the 'State religion'. Rights of the minority community were secured by article 29 and 30 and Ambedkar, the chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution made it clear that the rights of the minorities should be absolute and unconditional and not subject to any other considerations.

Chandhoke made it clear that Nehruvian concept of secularism in the Indian context implies that everyone has the freedom to practice their religion. This right is guaranteed in article 25 of the fundamental rights. In fact we do not need to proclaim secularism in order to grant religious freedom. This freedom forms a part of the Fundamental Rights. But the principle of secularism goes further and establishes equality between all religious groups. The concept of secularism also distances the state from the sphere of religion that is there is no state religion. This assures the minority a legitimate place in the country. At the same time the majority groups would not be privileged in any manner. Thus the concept of secularism in India has the following components – (a) the state shall not attach itself to any one religion which will thereby establish itself as the state religion, (b) all citizens are granted the freedom of religious belief. Hence the state will ensure equality among religious groups by ensuring that one group is not favoured at the expense of the other. Similarly the minorities will not be discriminated in any way.

Secularism discussed by Bhargava is the principled or non-sectarian distance between State and religion. State's excludes religion for some purposes and include it for some other but it is always guided by non-sectarian principles constituting set of values that incorporates equal dignity for all. Within contextual secularism if there is any conflict then State relies on minimalist procedures to control or remove controversial ideals. The policy of principled distance entails a flexible approach on the question of inclusion or exclusion of religion and the disengagement of the state, which depends on the context, nature or current state of relevant religions. This means that religion may intervene in the affairs of the state if such intervention promotes freedom, equality or any other value integral to secularism. Principle distance allows for differential treatment. It may even require state intervention in some religions more than in others, considering the historical and social condition of all relevant religions. For example suppose the value to be advanced is social equality this requires undermining in part caste hierarchies then it may be required of the state that it interfere in caste ridden Hinduism much more than say Islam or Christianity.

According to Bhargava secularism is fully compatible with the defence of differentiated citizenship rights and secularity of the state does not necessitate strict intervention, non-intervention or equidistance but any or all of these as case may be. Indian constitution presents vision of contextual secularism³⁶ and exclude religion for some purposes example exclude separate religious electorate and include it for example personal laws for religious communities. But different institutions have practiced other two versions of secularism at different times. For instance in the Shah Bano case courts followed hyper substantive secularism and parliament by refusing to participate in Muslim personal law practiced ultra-procedural personal law. Bhargava criticize Nandy and Madan thesis on secularism and writes, modern secularism

arose because the resources of tolerance within traditional religion had exhausted their possibility. According to Bharghav features that make Indian Secularism distinctive is -

- i) Multi value character—it values religious liberty, equality, peace and toleration.
- ii) Constitution respects and recognizes Community specific rights
- iii) Principled distance - It is not mutual exclusion of State and religion. It accepts a disconnection between State and religion at the level of ends and institutions but does not make a fetish of it at the third level of policy and law.
- iv) It uniquely combines an active hostility to some aspects of religion with an equally active respect for its other dimensions.
- v) It attends to the issues of intra religious oppression and inter -religious domination.

Hence through the writings of D. E. Smith, Neera Chandhoke, Rajeev Bharghav Nehruvian model of secularism 'dharmanirapekshta', or maintaining neutrality towards religion occupies a distinct place and becomes relevant in contemporary Indian society.

4. Conclusion

Secularism is invaluable for a society like India which is characterized with religious diversity. Secularism regulates the relationship between the State and various religious groups. In a secular State, all groups are treated equally and the State is not aligned to any religion. No person shall be discriminated against on the ground that he or she belongs to a particular religion. The concept of secularism is derived from the principle of democracy. Secularism becomes meaningful only when it refers to democratic equality. No society is secular unless it is committed to democratic principles of freedom and equality. But secularism is meant to regulate inter-group relations. Within the group, individual members may be treated unjustly as in the case of women's rights within religious communities.

Secularism allows us to live in some measure of civility. It compels people to respect other religious beliefs. Secularism is a part of democracy which grants to citizens equal rights. It protects democracy by limiting the power of the majority. Secularism protects the equal rights of the minorities. Secularism is therefore desirable for a plural society like India. Irrespective of critical analysis by scholars like Ashis Nandy, T.N. Madan, Partha Chatterjee, Achin Vanaik, Akhil Beelgrami, the distinctiveness and relevance of Nehru's secularism in contemporary India can be summarised in the following ways.

Firstly, Nehru regarded secularism as the basic law of Indian nationhood. It grew as an integrative process. He believed that the territorial integrity, political stability and national identity in a country like India with multi-faceted diversity can be achieved only through secularism. According to Nehru, secularism does not mean indifference to religion. It only means that the state as such is not identified with any particular religion but tolerates every religion, appreciates every religion, respects all religions —Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, etc. He used every single opportunity to impress upon the people the danger of mixing religion and politics. He was a vehement critic of communalism and fundamentalism of both Hindus and Muslims. Communalism, he believed, could not only weaken the very fabric of a society but also threaten its very existence. He was of the view that for proper functioning of democracy and growth of national unity and solidarity, communalism must be eliminated from India's life. Due to his deep concern for the minorities Nehru constantly strove to find ways to root out the fear and distress of the minorities and wanted the majority to be generous. The spirit of tolerance has been the landmark of our secular attitude and outlook and the tolerance arises from our attitudes and from our past conditioning and mental outlook. Secularism stood against blind faith, belief, dogma, bigotry, superstition, exploitation and preservation of vested interests. Thus Nehru visualised a secular state as one in which every group and every individual had the full freedom to function according to his own way either culturally or in matters of religion. It was Nehru's vision that shaped the Constitution of India in such a manner that it should provide for a secular state. Four aspects of Nehru's secularism which would suit to India's caste ridden society are - grant of equal status to all religion, opposed to any special privileges to any religion, religion and belief has full freedom and equal honour, all citizens has equal liberty and equal opportunity.

Secondly, Nehru's secularism implied neutrality of the state in religious matters. He mentioned that the future government of free India must be secular in the sense that the government will not associate itself directly with any religious faith. He was opposed to the association of the state with any particular religion because it divided the citizens into two classes—some having more opportunities and others having less.

Thirdly, Nehru viewed secularism as a mental attitude on the part of various communities which could bring about harmony and feeling of fraternity towards one another. He fully realised that the success of secularism in India would depend on the attitude of the majority community towards the minorities. He, therefore, exhorted the Hindus, who constituted the majority, to remember that the interest and well-being of the minorities are their sacred trust. If they fail in their trust, then they injure not only the country but themselves. He also expected the minorities to be tolerant and advised them not to adopt an attitude which could be detrimental to the integrity and unity of India.

Finally, Nehru's concept of secularism implied the existence of a uniform civil code for the people of India. He considered the existence of different sets of laws governing different communities as inconsistent with his ideal of a secular society.

Today, the secular ethos for which Nehru strived hard throughout his life is facing a multi-prolonged challenge from the hydra-headed monster of communalism. A spark is enough to ignite a communal flare-up; people slit each other's throat. Thus in the light of our experience, particularly during last two years, a fresh reappraisal or the correctness of what Nehru stood for and tried to achieve, is the need of the hour.

Notes

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- ³ Sayeed Abu Ayyub, "Secularism and Jawaharlal Nehru", in Sinha. V. K ed. 1968, *Secularism in India*, New Delhi, Lalvani Pub. House (pp.126-128)
- ⁴ D. E. Smith, "India as a Secular State", in Bhargava Rajeev ed. 1998, *Secularism and its Critics*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press Publications (pp.180-82)
- ⁵ According to Nehru, "religion is whatever introduces genuine perspective into the piecemeal and shifting episode of existence, or again any activity pursued in behalf of an ideal end against obstacles and in spite of threats of personal loss, became of its conviction of its general and enduring value, is religion in quality, Nehru truly believe in the vedantic approach of Indian religion which shows respect to all religious community". A.B. Shah, "Secularism in India" in Sinha, V. K. ed. 1968, *Secularism in India*, New Delhi, Lalvani Pub. House (pp.1-3)
- ⁶ Saran A.K., 2007, *On the Theories of Secularism and Modernization*, Varanasi, Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies Pub. Sarnath (pp.199-201)
- ⁷ Grover, Virender, 1990, *Political Thinker of Modern India*, New Delhi, Deep and Deep Pub. (pp.226)
- ⁸ *ibid* (228-29)
- ⁹ Ahulwalia. B.K., 1978, *Nehru India's Man of Destiny*, New Delhi, New Man Group Publishers (pp.15)
- ¹⁰ Luther. V.P., 1964, *The Concept of Secular State and India*, London, Oxford University Press. (pp.154)

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- ¹¹ Nehru commented, “we the Indians believe in a national state which includes people of all religions and is essentially secular as a state, or do we believe in the religion, theocratic conception of a state which regards people of other faiths as somebody beyond the pale? He speak of one national outlook, which would inform the working of the Indian state, though he did not spell out the source for the development of that one national outlook”. Smith. D.E. “India as a Secular State”, in Bhargava Rajeev ed. 1998, *Secularism and its critics*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press Publications (pp.180-182)
- ¹² Madan. T. N., 1997, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds; Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press Pub. (pp.116-118)
- ¹³ Basu Timir, “Secularism and Communalism in India”, in Banerjee Binay ed. 1994, *Towards Communal Harmony*, Calcutta, Germinal Publications (pp.25-26)
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- ¹⁵ Saran A.K., 2007, *On the Theories of Secularism and Modernization*, Varanasi, Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies Pub. Sarnath (pp.204-205)
- ¹⁶ Ahulwalia. B.K.,1978, *Nehru India’s Man of Destiny*, New Delhi, New Man Group Publishers (pp.28)
- ¹⁷ Parekh Bhikhu, “Nehru and the National Philosophy of India”, *EPW*, Vol.26, No.1/2 (Jan.5-12, 1991), (pp. 35-39)
- ¹⁸ Gandhi Rajiv, 1987, *Secularism, Social Equity – Foundations of the Indian State*, New Delhi, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India Pub. (pp.11-13)
- ¹⁹ Pantham Thomas, “Indian Secularism and its Critics”, *Journal, The Review of Politics*, Vol.59, No.3 (Summer), 1997, (pp.523-524)
- ²⁰ *ibid*
- ²¹ Ashis Nandy, “The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Toleration”, in Bharghav Rajeev ed. 1998, *Secularism and its Critics*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press Publications (pp.324-25)
- ²² *ibid* (pp.327)
- ²³ *ibid* (pp.337)
- ²⁴ Pantham Thomas, “Indian Secularism and its Critics”, *Journal, The Review of Politics*, Vol.59, No.3 (Summer), 1997, (pp.523-524)
- ²⁵ Madan. T.N., “Secularism in its Place”, in Bharghav Rajeev ed. 1998, *Secularism and its Critics*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press Publications (pp.298-99)
- ²⁶ Pantham Thomas, “Indian Secularism and its Critics”, *Journal, The Review of Politics*, Vol.59, No.3 (Summer), 1997, (pp.523-524)

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- ²⁸ Pantham Thomas, “Indian Secularism and its Critics”, *Journal, The Review of Politics*, Vol.59, No.3 (Summer), 1997, (pp.523-524)
- ²⁹ Chatterjee Partha, “Secularism and Tolerance”, in Bharghav Rajeev ed. 1998, *Secularism and its Critics*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press Publications (pp.372)
- ³⁰ Pantham Thomas, “Indian Secularism and its Critics”, *Journal, The Review of Politics*, Vol.59, No.3 (Summer), 1997, (pp.523-524)
- ³¹ Vanaik Achin, 1997, *Communalism Contested: Religion, Modernity and Secularization*, New Delhi, Vistaar Publications (pp.306-308)
- ³² Bilgrami Akeel, “Secularism, Nationalism and Modernity”, in Bharghav Rajeev ed. 1998, *Secularism and its Critics*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press Publications (pp.408)
- ³³ Sayeed Abu Ayyub, “Secularism and Jawaharlal Nehru”, in Sinha. V.K. ed. 1968, *Secularism in India*, New Delhi, Lalvani Pub. House (pp.127, 129)
- ³⁴ Smith Eugene Donald, 1967, *India as a Secular State*, Princeton, USA, University of Pennsylvania Publications (pp.5)
- ³⁵ Chandhoke Neera, “Representing the Secular Agenda for India”, in Hasan Mushirul ed. 2004, *Will Secular India Survive*, New Delhi, Imprint One Publication (pp.57-61)
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