SECULARISM IN INDIA: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

By
R. Domenic Savio Marbaniang

MPhil 01/04

A thesis submitted to

Asian Institute of Theology
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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

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May 2005

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has been read and approved by the Undersigned Appointed for this purpose

by the

Asian Institute of Theology

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Mentor

May 2005.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this study was conducted by me during the year 2004-2005. No part of this study is either published (or) submitted elsewhere for any examination or degree.

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                                          M.Phil. 01/04

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Glossary

ahimsa	-	non-violence
arya-vart	-	land of the Aryans
astik	-	believers (i.e., in the Vedas)
brahmin	-	high caste people (priest class)
darsana	-	literally, 'vision', used for 'philosophy'
dhamma	-	duty or obligation
dharmanirpekshata	-	indifference towards religion, secularism
epistemic	-	epistemological, related to theory of knowledge
Hindutva	-	essence of being Hindu, the ideology of the Sangh
Hindutvavadi	-	proponent or follower of Hindutva
Inqilab Zindabad	-	Long Live Revolution!
karma	-	work, result of one's work
kshatriya	-	warrior high caste
lokayata	-	this-worldy
nastik	-	unbelievers (i.e., in the vedas)
pramana	-	proof, source of true knowledge
punarjanma	-	rebirth, reincarnation
Ramrajya	-	Kingdom of Rama
sabda	-	word (written or vocal)
samsara	-	cycle of birth and rebirth
sarvadharmasambhava	-	principle of equal respect to all religions
sati	-	practice of burning widow on husbands funeral pyre

satyagraha	-	literally means 'holding on to truth.'
shruti	-	'the listened', Vedas
shudra or *sudra*	-	low caste, untouchables
swaraj	-	self-rule
vaishya	-	tradesmen high caste
varna	-	caste
yukti	-	reason

Abbreviations

cf. (confer)	-	compare or see
ch., chs.	-	chapter, chapters
ed., eds.	-	editor (or edited by), editors
edn.	-	edition
eg. (exempli gratia)	-	for example
et al. (et alii)	-	and others
etc. (et. Cetera)	-	and others (of the same class)
f., ff.	-	and the following
ibid. (ibidem)	-	same reference/source
i.e. (id est)	-	that is
loc.cit. (loco citato)	-	the place cited
MS, MSS	-	manuscript, manuscripts
n.d.	-	no date of publication
n.p.	-	no place of publication
op.cit. (opere citato)	-	in the work cited
p., pp.	-	page, pages
rev.	-	revised, revised by, revision

sec., secs.	-	section, sections
TBT	-	Theological Book Trust
trans., tr.	-	translator, translated by
v., vv.	-	verse, verses
viz. (videlicet)	-	namely
vs. (versus)	-	against
vol., vols.	-	volume, volumes

INTRODUCTION

1. India: An Overview

i. Location and Extent. India is located towards the South of the Asian Continent between 8º4' and 37º 6' northern latitudes and 68º 7' and 97º 27' longitudes east of Greenwich. India is surrounded by the Himalayas on the north, the Indian Ocean in its south, and the Arabian Sea on its west and the Bay of Bengal on its east. The land is stretched on an area of 3,165,596 sq. km (1,222,243 sq. mi).[1]

ii. Population. India is considered to have about 16 per cent of the world's population. Its population was 1,029,991,100 in 2001. The overall population density was about 325 people per sq. km (843 per sq. mi).[2]

iv. Languages. There are 18 officially recognized languages and hundreds of dialects. The eighteen languages are Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Nepali, Konkani, and Manipuri.[3]

v. Religions. The major religions in India are Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism, and Zoroastrianism. As per the 1991 Census the Hindus formed 82 per cent of the population, the Muslims 12.1 per cent, the Christians 2.3 per cent, and the Sikhs 1.94 per cent.[4]

vi. Constitution. The 42nd amendment of 1976 added the word 'secular' in

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[1] 'India', *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* (Microsoft Corporation: 2001).
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.*

the original Preamble, whereby India was declared a 'Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic.'[5] This will be explained in detail later in this thesis.

2. Explanation of the Thesis Title and Objectives

This Thesis entitled 'Secularism in India: A Historical Analysis' is an analytical account of the historical genesis, development, impact, understanding, and challenges of secularism in the Indian context. This thesis is a study of the various philosophical, economical, political, social, and cultural dimensions of the history of secularism in India.

'Secularism' refers to the ideology that facilitates practice without reference to religion of any kind.[6] The title 'Secularism in India' points to the geographical limitations of this Thesis to India. 'A Historical Analysis' indicates that secularism in India will be studied with reference to its past and present in India keeping within perspective its future in the light of its historical analysis.

The Thesis encompasses the following subject areas and its objectives:

i. The Source of Secularism. The Thesis traces the origin and development of secularism in the classical Age of Greece, its revival through the Medieval Ages in the Renaissance, the contribution of the Reformation to its development, and its impact on modern political thought.

ii. The Promotion of Secularism in India. The Thesis investigates the way in which secularism found entry and ground in the Indian sub-continent, how it developed through the various religious and secular movements and finally found a

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[5] S. Sen, P.S. & J.K. Chopra, *Indian History* (New Delhi: Unique Publishers, 2004), p.1014.
[6] *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, p.1641.

place in the Indian Constitution. It also gives an account of State Government initiatives in coping with their contextual religious problems.

3. Methodology Used in the Research

The historical method has been used in this research. The historical method is used to unravel the origins and development of secularism in the West, its promotion in India, and its progressive impact on the Indian context. Some of the philosophical bases of secularism such as humanism, rationalism, naturalism, etc. are analysed.

4. Importance of the Topic

Religious plurality is one thing that makes secularism very important in India. An epitome of multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-religious, and multi-racial juxtaposition, India, it is argued by some needs to resort to pluralism to keep itself integrated. Religious pluralism, however, can only appeal to a polytheistic and pantheistic world-view such as Hinduism and can hold no interest for either Islam or Christianity. Secularism, however, as an ideology serves better to keep the nation united on extra-religious infrastructures. It shifts the focus from religion to other 'temporal' and 'this-worldly' things, striving to change the present for a better and brighter future.

The rise of Hindutva as a powerful counter-ideology has even more intensified the importance of secularism in India. Known also as 'religious nationalism,' 'Hindu nationalism,' 'politicized Hinduism,' and 'cultural

nationalism,' Hindutva supportive political parties are advancing rapidly as a threat to the cause of secularism in India. Politically, corruption within the secular ruling parties had led to a resort to the BJP for a change of government. Culturally and religiously, false propaganda by the Sangh missionaries has contributed to the modern rural hatred for Muslims and Christians, thus threatening the very existence of secularism in both politics and society.

The failure of secularism as a consistent ideology in the West raises doubts regarding its future on this sub-continent. Secularism began as an epistemic method in ancient Greece and soon became the philosophical backbone of almost every major discipline taught in the Universities after its resurgence during the Renaissance through the Enlightenment. Its impact on Western Protestant theology and then on culture soon surfaced in a materialistic outlook of the universe. Later, this outlook fell back on itself and soon paved way for first the hippie culture among the young and then for the influx of eastern mysticism, yoga, and psychical science. With the decline of faith in secularism and its ideological strength debilitating in the West, the cultural gurus of modern India became proactive in harping on the Brahminic accomplishments of the past. Former Education Minister Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi's introduction of Astrology as a discipline at the University level, the rewriting of history textbooks at the school level, and the 'Ramrajya' utopian ideal of Hindutva politics efficiently portray Hindutva's resolve to get back to the original 'culture.' Even as postmodernism in the West arose out of a revulsion for the insufficiency of the rationalist modernity, Hindutva in India is developing on as a revolt against the modernist secular politics of the Congress and

its allies and an aggression against the absolutist claims of Christianity and Islam.

The issue of religious conversion also makes secularism an engaging topic. Forced conversions, extra-national interests, fundamentalism, and religious intolerance are some of the burning issues that challenge the future of secularism in India.

5. Limitations

The research has been chiefly limited, geographically, to India. The period focused is A.D. 1600 – A.D. 2004.

CHAPTER ONE

DEFINITIONS AND DEVELOPMENT
OF THE CONCEPT

1. Definitions and Description

The word *secularism* is derived from the Latin *saeculum*, meaning a generation or this age, and corresponds to the Greek *aeon*. Its meaning extends on to connote also this 'wordly;' thus, its Lower Latin form *saecularis* means 'worldly.'[7]

The various definitions of secularism can be classified into at least four groups, *namely*, ecclesiastical, philosophical, sociological, and political.

i. Ecclesiastical Definitions. The ecclesiastical definitions are those definitions that relate to the usage of the term *secularism* in the field of religion. The researcher calls them ecclesiastical since the word was first used in this sense in ecclesiastical circles.

The Thomistic synthesis of Greek and Hebrew thought by dividing knowledge into the upper and lower storey, the upper belonging to theology and the universals and the lower belonging to philosophy and the temporal or secular, led to the development of the concept of the 'secular' as contrasted to that of the 'religious.'[8]

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[7] *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, 2nd edn. (US: Dorset and Baber, 1983), p.1641.
[8] Francis Schaeffer, *Escape From Reason* (Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968), p.1ff.

In its earlier development, its adjective form, the word *secular* was used to describe a priest 'who was not bound by monastic vows or rules' or 'subject to the rules of a religious community,' or 'non-monastic.' Gradually, it began to be used to mean that which pertained to the laity or that which was non-clerical.[9]

The verb form of *secularization*, in the beginning, meant 'the process by which a "religious" priest was transferred to a parish responsibility,'[10] or 'the act of converting a regular or monastic person, place, or benefice into a secular one.'[11]

Later, it also came to mean 'the act of converting from religious or sacred to secular or lay possession, use, or purposes.'[12] With the widening of gap between the Pope and the emperor, *secularization* came to mean the 'passing of certain responsibilities from ecclesiastical to political authorities.'[13]

In its modern ecclesiastical usage, the adjective *secular* means simply 'non-religious' or 'non-sacred.' Thus, the phrases 'secular job' and 'secular College' mean 'non-ecclesiastical or non-religious job' and 'non-ecclesiastical College or non-religious College,' respectively. Likewise, 'secular music' means 'non-Church or non-religious music' and 'secular education' means 'non-theological or non-religious education.'[14]

The noun form *secularism* in religious circles is used in the sense of its philosophical and political usage alone. Consequentially, it has negative or positive connotations depending on the view and the sense (philosophical or political)

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[9] *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, 2nd edn., p. 1641.
[10] *Ibid*, p.17.
[11] *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, p.1641.
[12] *Ibid,* p.1641.
[13] Harvey Cox, *The Secular City,* p.17.
[14] *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, p.1641.

involved. For instance, Ravi Zacharias approaches it in the sense of its philosophical meaning and has a negative view of it,[15] while Sayyed Abul 'Ala Maududi uses it in the sense of its political meaning and has a negative view of it.[16] Harvey Cox uses the adjective form, *secular,* and the noun form, *secularization,* in their sociological sense, and has a positive view of them. He, however, uses the word, *secularism*, in its philosophical sense and has a negative view of it.[17]

ii. Philosophical Definitions. The word *secularism* is used in philosophy to mean an ideology or a system of doctrines and practices that rejects any form of religious faith and worship.[18]

Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, defines *secularism* as 'the belief that one's own life can be best lived, and the universe best understood, with little or no reference to a god or gods or other supernatural concepts.'[19]

According to the Harper Dictionary of Modern Thought, '…At its maximum, secularisation would mean the end of all interest in religious questions and attitudes, including Mysticism.'[20]

According to Cox, *secularism* is 'the name of an ideology, a new closed world view which functions very much like a new religion and differentiates it from

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[15] Ravi Zacharias, *Deliver Us From Evil*. (USA: Wpublishing Group, 1997).
[16] Yoginder Sikand, 'Islamic Mission and Inter-Religious Dialogue in A Minority Context: The Jama'at-i-Islami of India', www.truthindia.com
[17] Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (New York: Macmillan Pub. Co. Inc., 1975) p. 18.
[18] *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*, p.1641.
[19] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secularism
[20] Allan Bullock and Oliver Stallybrass, *The Harper Dictionary of Modern Thought* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977), p.564.

secularization which is an inevitable process.'[21]

John Desrochers says that *secularism* has also been defined by some as the view that a focusing on the autonomy of man and the rejection of the sacred, mythological, and transcendent worldview, that is, of religion is essential for the furtherance of humanism. Adherents of secularism after this definition favour the increasing secularization of society by the progressive decline of religious influence in the economic, political, and social life of human beings and even over their private habits and motivations.[22]

Dean C. Halverson outlines seven presumptions of philosophical *secularism*; they are as follows:[23]

1. The denial of God (Secular Atheism to contrast with atheistic religions such as Jainism)

2. The denial of miracles (Anti-Supernaturalism)

3. The fact of Evolution (Atheistic Evolutionism)

4. The potential of humanity (Secular Humanism)

5. The centrality of science (Scientism)

6. The stress on relativity (Relativism)

7. The finality of death (Materialism, Existentialism, and Nihilism)

All the above definitions of *secularism* make obvious the reason why this word has a negative connotation, when used in its philosophical sense, in religious circles. *Secularism* as a philosophical world-view undermines religion and counts it

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[21] Harvey Cox, *The Secular City,* p.18.
[22] John Desrochers, *The India We Want to Build*, vol. 2, (Bangalore: Centre for Social Action, 1995), p.368.
[23] Dean C. Halverson (ed.), *World Religions* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1996), pp. 185-186.

of no value to human progress. Hard-core secularists even oppose religion and consider it to be the opium that inhibits intellectual progress.[24]

    iii. Sociological Definitions. Sociologically, the term *secularism* refers to the theory that argues the irreversibility of the evolutionary progress of society from primitive fear through animist, polytheist, pantheist, and monotheist ages, to a fully scientific age when religion will have nothing of importance for man. Following are some sociological definitions of *secularization* and *secularism*:

    According to T. N. Madan, *secularization* ordinarily refers to socio-cultural processes that enlarge the areas of life – material, institutional, and intellectual – in which the role of the sacred is progressively limited.[25]

    According to Peter Berger, *secularization* is 'the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols.'[26]

    According to Os Guinness, s*ecularization* is 'the process by which religious ideas, institutions, and interpretations have lost their social significance.'[27]

    T. N. Madan calls *secularism*, the ideology that argues the historical inevitability and progressive nature of secularization everywhere.[28]

    According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, *secularism* means '…in society, any of a range of situations where a society less automatically assumes religious beliefs to be either widely shared or a basis for conflict in various forms,

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[24] Laxminidhi Sharma, *Dharma Darshan Ki Roop Rekha (*Allahabad: Abhivyakti Prakashan, 2000), p.431.
[25] T. N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.5.
[26] As cited by Ravi Zacharias, *Deliver Us From Evil* (US: WPublishing Group, 1997), p. 23.
[27] As cited by Ravi Zacharias, *Deliver Us From Evil,* p.24.
[28] T. N. Madan, *Modern Myths, Locked Minds*, p. 6.

than in recent generations of the same society.'[29]

Thus, it has been seen that sociologically, *secularism* is understood as the common world-view of a society in which religious beliefs do not have any significant role. *Secularization of society*, therefore, means the process by which religious influence over society is reduced. A *secular society* is that society in which the secularization process is considered to have been complete.

iv. Political Definitions. In Politics, *secularism* is the name of the state's policy of neither interfering with nor favouring any particular religion in making any decision. It refers to the policy of keeping the state separate from any religious influence. Following are some political definitions of *secularization, secularism,* and *secular*:

According to Desrochers, the political meaning of *secularism* is, '…the belief that the right place of religion is in the private sphere and not in politics and education, particularly…. the sacred and the secular exist side by side; yet, without any clash, the latter enjoying temporal authority, and the former spiritual authority.'[30]

According to the Harper Dictionary of Modern Thought,

> At its minimum, secularization means the decline of the prestige and power of religious teachers. It involves the ending of State support for religious bodies; of religious teaching in the national schools; of religious tests for public office or civil rights; of legislative protection for religious doctrines (e.g. the prohibition of contraception); and of the censorship or control of

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[29] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secularism

[30] John Desrochers, *The India We Want to Build*, vol. 2 (Bangalore: Centre for Social Action, 1995), p.368.

literature, science, and other intellectual activities in order to safeguard religion. Individuals are then free to deviate openly from religious dogmas and ethics. In all or most of these senses, secularization now seems desirable to many religious believers as well as to all agnostics....[31]

According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, *secularism* means '...in government, a policy of avoiding entanglement between government and religion (ranging from reducing ties to a state church to promoting secularism in society).'[32]

According to Donald Eugene Smith 'the State is a secular state which guarantees individual and corporate freedom of religion, deals with the individual as a citizen irrespective of his religion, is not constitutionally concerned to a particular religion - nor does it seek either to promote or interfere with religion.'[33]

Thus, *secularism*, in the political sense, is the policy of keeping state and religion separate and free from interference with each other.

Laxminidhi Sharma underscores at least four forms of *secularism* found in political thought and practice:[34]

i. Atheistic Secularism. Also known as fundamentalist secularism, this form of secularism is sceptical of the good of any religion and considers religion to be an impediment on humanity's road of success. Atheistic secularism is hostile towards religion and openly opposes in it. In political practice, it is found in the communist countries such as Russia and China. The state, in such instances, supervises and monitors all kinds of religious thought and activity.

ii. Humanist Secularism. This form of secularism is indifferent towards

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[31] Allan Bullock and Oliver Stallybrass, *The Harper Dictionary of Modern Thought* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1977), p.564.
[32] en.wikipedia.org\wiki\secularism
[33] As cited by Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India* (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 2002), p. 251.
[34] Laxminidhi Sharma, *Dharma Darshan Ki Roop Rekha,* pp.430-431.

religion. States adhering to the principles of materialism, naturalism, humanism, Marxism, scientism, and rationalism follow this form of secularism.

iii. Pseudo-Secularism. This form of secularism is formal, hideous, and hypocritical in character. While professing to be secular, a pseudo-secular state favours certain religions above others. According to the Wikepedia Encyclopedia,

> **Pseudo-secularism** is, in a societal setting, the state of implicit non-secular trends in the face of pledged secularism. This is usually an allegation by groups who perceive a double-standard exhibited within the established secular governing policy towards culturally different groups among the governed.[35]

iv. Liberal Secularism. This form of secularism is neither opposed to nor biased against any religion. Liberal secularism recognizes the worth and significance of religious tolerance and of respect for all religions. In a context of religious plurality, this form of a secular nation follows a liberal and sympathetic approach towards religion.

Sharma holds that the Constitution of India makes provision for a liberal kind of secularism.[36] However, some Hindus in India hold that India is a pseudo-secular state because Muslims and Christians 'are given special privileges, quotas and advantages over Hindus which is a consideration adopted by the government to accomodate for the religious differences.'[37]

Following is the kind of inter-relationship between the above stated definitions that this thesis presupposes:

1.The sociological and the political aspects of secularism follow its

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[35] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pseudo-secularism
[36] Laxminidhi Sharma, *Dharma Darshan Ki Roop Rekha,* pp.430-431.
[37] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pseudo-secularism

philosophical aspect.

2.A secular state is one that follows the philosophical principle of secularism, namely, that the good life and knowledge of truth is possible apart from religion. Consequentially, a state can be run without subscription to any particular religion, religious teaching, or God. The laws and policies of a secular state, therefore, are based on human reason and experience rather than on any religious tradition.

3.The influence of philosophical secularism in society through education, art, and media, accompanied by endorsement from a secular state leads to progressive secularization of society.

4.Therefore, a study of secularism must involve the study of all of its philosophical, sociological, and political dimensions.

This chapter, therefore, is a study of how secularism began in Western philosophy and then entered society and politics as suppression of free thought by organized religion necessitated separation of the state and the Church.

All of the above (ecclesiastical, philosophical, sociological, and philosophical) definitions are involved in the usage of the words *secularism, secularize, secularization, secular,* and *secularist* in this thesis.

In this thesis, *secularization* is used to refer to the process by which the different aspects of human life like culture, society, education, politics, and even religion come under the influence of an ever-growing secular outlook. By *secularism* is meant, in this thesis, the ideology that rejects the value of religious

beliefs over human reason and the various (sociological, political, educational, and economic) aspects of existence.

2. Origins and Development of Secularism in the West

Secularism first appeared in the West in the classical philosophy and politics of ancient Greece. It disappeared for a time after the fall of Greece but resurfaced after a millennium and half in the Renaissance and the Reformation.[38] The Renaissance revival of classical Greek art and culture and the Reformation insistence on the separation of the state from the Catholic Church, eventually led to the development of secularism and the rise of the modern secular state. This section seeks to prove that secularism emerged in the West when the classical philosophers chose to depend on reason rather on religion for the knowledge of truth. It also attempts to prove that an increasing confidence in human capabilities, reason, and progress, that emerged during the Italian Renaissance, together with an increasing distrust in organized and state supported religion during the Reformation, was responsible for the ushering of modernity during the Enlightenment, which brought all facets of human life including religion under the purview of reason and thus became responsible for the freeing of education, society, and state from the domination of religion; in other words, the development of modern secularism.

i. The Classical Age of Greek Philosophy: Unfettering of Reason from Religion. The sixth century B.C. witnessed important events of historical

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[38] Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1961), pp. 96-105.

significance. It saw the reforms of King Josiah; the birth of Zoroastrianism, of Buddhism, Jainism, and Taoism; the rise of the Babylonian empire; and the birth of philosophy as a discipline independent from religion.

Augustine tells of two schools as being the pioneers of philosophy in the West: the Ionic and the Italian School. The Ionic School, based in Miletus, was founded by Thales; the Italian, based in Samos, by Pythagoras.[39] While the Italian School was religious in character, the Ionic School was distinct by itself for being the first to have ever begun the serious and scientific inquiry into the nature of the world apart from any influence of religious myths. Therefore, Thales is rightly regarded to be the first to have 'shifted the basis of thought from a mythological base to one of scientific inquiry.'[40] In other words, he became the first of a chain of philosophers who began thinking of the world in non-religious terms or *secular* terms. Religious answers no longer satisfied them.

These first philosophers were called *sophos*, the Greek for sage. The *sophos* unshackled themselves from the gods and forces of popular Greek religion and undertook a systematic study of nature and society. Superstition was challenged by secular thinking and new models of the world were proposed. The brief history of Greek philosophy that subsequently followed was marked by much speculation, argumentation, contradiction, and incessant flow of new ideas that tried to throw of the earlier theories. Eventually, skepticism became vibrant. A new group of philosophers known as the Sophists gained popularity because they, instead of engaging in too much speculation, considered practical matters of greater worth. To

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[39] Augustine, *The City of God* (tr. Marcus Dodsi; New York: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 244.
[40] Samuel Enoch Stumpf, *Socrates to Sartre* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1988), p.6.

the Sophists, belongs the credit of developing rhetoric or the art of persuasion, which they used to earn money well. The Sophists had concluded from the previous findings of philosophy that truth cannot be attained; therefore, the only value of philosophy lay in the use of words to win an argument – the truth or falsity of the conclusion mattered less as long as the argument was valid. This *relativist, pragmatist, and utilitarian way* of looking at philosophy had a very adverse effect on both politics and society. Soon the Sophists gained importance in the Greek parliament where their art of persuasion was considered inevitable to draw votes. It is from the word *sophist* that the modern word *sophistry* is derived. Soon Greek culture and politics fell under the growing tide of sophist sophistry and hard relativism.

Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle did try to overcome this *Sophist* dominance of culture by their own theories of universals. However, as Russell Kirk observes, it was 'the clear relativism of the Sophists, not the mystical insights of Plato, nor Aristotle's aspiration after the Supreme Good, which dominated the thinking of the classical Greeks in their decadence. The failure of the Greeks to find an enduring popular religious sanction for the order of civilization had been a main cause of the collapse of the world of the polis.'[41]

As the rational and secular spirit of Milesian philosophy spread to other parts of Greece, the role of traditional religion was both challenged and undermined. Soon, the citizens of various Greek city-states de-emphasized the role of gods in politics and separated government from religion, magic, and superstition.

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[41] *The Roots of American Order*, pp. 93-94, as cited by Ravi Zacharias, *Deliver Us From Evil,* p. 38.

The advancement of reason in Greek philosophy meant the evacuation of gods from the various territories of human life. The gods were no longer considered to be controllers of nature neither rulers of human destiny. The universe was ruled by natural laws; the state, by laws made by human community and not by gods and divine kings.[42]

Athens, then, best symbolized the height of philosophy and democratic politics. In 594 B.C., Solon (c.640-559 B.C.), the lawgiver, had written down a law code for Athens. Solon's economic policies and reforms helped to restore Athenian society back to prosperity and turned it into a great commercial center. The significance of Solon lies in the fact that he was the first who initiated a rational way to solve the city problems 'by de-emphasizing the god's role in human affairs.'[43] Solon's reforms clearly indicate the pervading belief that religion could not provide adequate answers for all the questions of society. They also reveal the humanist tendency of Greek culture, which held that since man was responsible for disorder in community, he and not the gods was responsible for restoring back order in community by the proper exercise of reason. Thus, did secularism begin as a philosophical and political method in Classical Greece. Both art and research methodology was influenced as a result. Thucydides (c. 450-c.400 B.C.) took a secular approach towards history and, therefore, included no myths or legends in his history. To Thucydides it is not the gods but humans themselves who make their own history and so the historian's objective must be to discover social forces and

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[42] Marvin Perry, *Western Civilization*, 4th edn. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), pp.45-46 .
[43] *Ibid,* p.48.

human decisions behind events.[44]

In the early ages of the church, as Christianity spread from the Jews to the Greeks, the issue of the relation between religion and secular philosophy arose. To the church fathers, the Christian faith was not built on fables and myths but was a fact of history. To them even the secular method could not falsify the claims of Christianity.

In the first century, Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 153-217), in the *Stromata*, refrained from seeing any kind of partition between human arts and science and divine wisdom.[45] He defended philosophy as a God-given discipline by defining it anew as not a system (as Platonic, Stoic, Epicurean, or Aristotelian) but as the eclectic whole of whatever has been well said by each of those sects which teach righteousness along with a science pervaded by piety.[46] He denounced the sophistical art of sophistry as pervertive and ubiquitously injurious 'if not conjoined with philosophy.'[47]

Tertullian (c.155-c.220), on the contrary, held to the irreconcilability of theology and philosophy. His famous rhetorical question was: 'What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem?' However, Tertullian himself could not be consistently unphilosophical as is seen by his use of philosophical ideas in formulating Christian teaching.[48]

There were, thus, many interactions between theology and secular

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[44] *Ibid,* p.72.
[45] Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), pp.304–5.
[46] *Ibid,* p.308.
[47] *Ibid,* p.308.
[48] Colin Brown, *Christianity and Western Thought,* vol. 2 (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1990), p. 91.

philosophy throughout the early ages and early medieval ages. Augustine, although, earlier on drawing much from Platonism, grew quite aversive of philosophy towards the end of his life. In this later Augustine, we find a repudiation of the autonomy of reason – a distinguishing feature of classical humanism.[49] He upheld faith above reason and changed the earlier human-centered outlook of classical humanism into a God-centered Christian humanism. Still, as *The City of God* shows it, the influence of Platonic philosophy could still be found in his later thought.

Christianity triumphed over classical thought during this early period by its doctrines of asceticism, total depravity, purposive history, and primacy of revelation over reason. However, with the fall of Rome in A.D. 476, an age of intellectual darkness, known as the Dark Ages dawned on Western Church history. During this period both Christian and Muslim Scholars played important roles in the preservation of Greek philosophical writings.[50] The rift between Platonists and Aristotelians also widened during this period. This, later, ended in a struggle between the Augustinian and Thomist controversies during the Medieval Ages. The first Scholastic, Boethius, urged Christianity to join faith and reason. He also contributed towards this cause by translating the writings of Aristotle into the Latin language.

ii. Thomistic Scholasticism: Separation of Faith from Reason. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) attempted to resolve this conflict between secular philosophy (especially in its Aristotelian form) and theology through a new synthetic

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[49] Marvin Perry, *Western Civilization*, p. 138.
[50] Stumpf, *Socrates to Sartre*, p. 151 and Perry, *Western Civilization*, p. 183.

epistemology of religion. In his *Summa Theologiae*, he attempted to provide a consistent statement of Christian doctrine in light of Scripture, tradition, and philosophy.[51]

Though first boycotted by the Franciscans, Aquinas was soon upheld as the Common Doctor of the Catholic Church and made saint in 1323. His works were basically understood as being a wall against the rising tide of liberalism and secularism.[52] In 1879, Pope Leo XIII asserted the permanent value of Aquinian Scholasticism.

The thoroughly secular outlook of Aristotelism stood irreconcilably against much of Christian thought. Church officials tried to curtail the growing influence of Aristotelian secularism by banning Aristotle's teachings at the University of Paris. However, this ban could not be consistently applied to the rest of Europe where the study of Aristotle continued.

The Thomist synthesis tried to find in reason a common ground where both Christians and non-Christians could dialogue on the validity or invalidity of religious beliefs. Aquinas divided Christian epistemology into the lower and upper storeys of knowledge. The upper storey was the common ground of only Christians and was dominated by revelation. The lower storey was the common ground of Christians and non-Christians and was based on reason. Aquinas contended that the knowledge of God could be arrived at also by means of natural reason. However, the more distinctive doctrines of Christianity are given by God's grace to man. *Reason was the handmaid of faith and supported faith*. Thus, he attempted at the

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[51] Colin Brown, *Christianity and Western Thought,* vol. 2, pp.120-121.
[52] *Ibid,* p.122.

reconciliation of the secular outlook and the Christian faith by trying to provide a transcendental perspective within a secular worldview.

This attempt of synthesis through an epistemic schism, however, proved fatal to Scholasticism itself. For in process of time, the schism widened to an extent that later thinkers began casting doubt on the ever possibility of synthesizing Aristotelian naturalism with Christian theology. Fourteenth century thinkers began to see that reason often contradicted faith and Christianity itself was in conflict with philosophy. These later thinkers began to opt on reason for knowledge of nature alone and not of God. They insisted that reason had to do only with the understanding of the natural world and had nothing to do with faith. Thus, the Thomistic synthesis began to disintegrate. Faith became religious and beyond proof, while reason became secular and provable.

William of Ockham (c. 1285-1349) played an important role in ushering in this modern outlook of *sacred-secular* division. According to him, even the rational proofs of God, as Aquinas had expounded them, were only probable and negligible. Christianity had no rational foundation, and reason and faith stood against each other. Ockham's role is significant in its freeing of reason from the restraints of religion, and so to begin a purely 'empirical investigation of nature.'[53]

Even as religion's authority over reason was being challenged at this time, political theorists and religious dissenters began challenging the claims of the papacy to supreme leadership. This trend in philosophy and politics later culminated in the age of Renaissance and Reformation.

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[53] Perry, *Western Civilization*, p.202.

iii. Renaissance: Humanism, Individualism, and Secularism. The Renaissance (1350 –1600) was a 'rebirth' of classical humanism, especially in its cultural forms of art, literature, and architecture. Beginning in Italy, the Renaissance spread north and west to Germany, France, England, and Spain during the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[54]

a. Humanism. Humanism, during the Renaissance took two forms: secular and Christian. While Italian humanism was predominantly secular, it was not opposed to Christianity. The separation of faith and reason was definite in the minds of Italian humanists. To them moral problems could be treated in a 'purely secular manner.'[55] To these humanist thinkers man was not that totally depraved creature that Augustine had taught of. Man was capable of achieving excellence in every field. Secular interests, like praise and self-honor, fascinated them highly.

Northern humanism (in France, Germany, England, and Spain), on the other hand, was more concerned with the purifying of Christianity. These Christian humanists emphasised on Christian piety and used the revived classical arts of rhetoric, history, and language to attack medieval scholasticism and to build a purer, more scriptural Christianity. Perry notes that Protestant reformers, including Martin Luther, relied on humanist scholarship. Though Christian in its approach, northern humanism also was anti-clerical. They believed that the clergy has corrupted the apostolic purity of religion and that through use of humanist arts and skills, man could restore the purity taught in the Bible.

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[54] *Ibid*, p.213.
[55] *Ibid,* p.217.

Erasmus (c.1466-1536) argued for a rational religion based on a humanism that stressed toleration, kindness, and respect for human rationality.[56] Humanist drama saw its best in the works of William Shakespeare during the Elizabethan Age (1558-1603). Shakespeare's plays contain an abundance of classical Greek and Roman themes.

b. Individualism. A characteristic feature of Renaissance humanism was the stress on human individuality and dignity.[57] While the man of the Middle Ages was a contingent part of a corporation such as the Church, the State, and the feudal structure, etc., the man of Renaissance humanism was the free, rational, self-reliant, volitional, and thoughtful individual. An interest in the individual's feelings, nature, psychology, character and motives surfaced during the Renaissance.[58]

The development of individualism was the beginning of a movement that has culminated in what we today know as the human rights movement, which also stresses greatly the equality and dignity of each individual. The specific feature of Renaissance individualism was its confidence in and extollation of the capacities of the individual. This point of view greatly differed from the early Augustinian concept of human weakness, sinfulness, and dependency.[59] The 'pride of life' in the individual was explicit in the art and culture of Renaissance.

More importantly, the irreligious humanism propagated by Petrarch (1304-1374) of Italy opened the path of a cultural and philosophical development eventually leading to a relativist picture of the individual as the measure of all

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[56] Perry, *Western Civilization*, p 224.
[57] Bard Thompson, *Humanists and Reformers (*Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdman's, 1981), p.4.
[58] *Ibid*, p.20.
[59] Perry, *Western Civilization*, p 216.

things.[60] This individualistic perspective is responsible for the way psychology, morality, and economics developed over the years to play a major role in the shaping of modern outlook. Modern utilitarianism, pragmatism, existentialism, hippie culture, and a host of other movements can trace their origins to the development of secular individualism during the Renaissance.

c. Secularism. An interest in the study of the individual also proved, besides the capacities for good present in him, the capacities for evil as well. Shakespeare (1564-1616) well portrayed such contrarieties of character in his cast characters. The Italian thinker Niccoló Machiavelli (1469-1527) observed that the Italian city-states were ruled by men who used craft and force to gain authority. He concluded that Christian ideals of politics could not explain such phenomenon. The Aquinian concept of a higher law held no appeal for Machiavelli. Instead, he proposed a thoroughly secular approach to politics. According to Machiavelli, the first principle of statecraft was to begin with the assumption that 'all men are bad and always prone to display their vicious nature.'[61]

Machiavelli's classic work, *The Prince*, represented a shift in political theory from idealism to realism. It ventured to dissociate itself from political theory based on ideals of ethics, culture, *theology*, and metaphysics. It also argued for the uselessness of moral categories when it came to politics. Cruelty, malice, and deception are not ethical immoralities but political methods.[62] Religion, accordingly, has nothing to do with politics.

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[60] C. Gregg Singer, *From Rationalism to Irrationality* (New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1979), p.30.
[61] Bard Thompson, *Humanists and Reformers,* p.301.
[62] *Ibid*, p.302.

Machiavelli criticized Christian ethics for making men feeble and causing them to become an easy prey to evil-minded men.[63] Christian humanists like Erasmus and Thomas More did respond to Machiavelli's *The Prince.* More's *Utopia* was a vision of an ideal commonwealth where there is mutual religious tolerance and respect for each other's religions.[64] However, Machiavelli had already introduced the idea of the importance of a kind of power politics that was based on experimentation and not on any religious or traditional norms.[65] This secular approach to politics, known as Machiavellianism, is regarded to be a defense of despotism and tyranny in open defiance of religious ideals.[66]

iv. Reformation: Privacy of Religion and Freedom from Papacy. The Great Papal Schism began is 1378 when the French cardinals declared the election of Urban VI null and elected instead a French Pope, Clement VII who ruled from Avignon. The Conciliar movement began at the time to solve this papal schism. Conciliarism was the theory that a general council of the Church was superior to any pope and that a representative Church body should govern the Church. It challenged the supremacy of the pope. Although with the end of the schism in 1417, the papacy rebounded, yet the ideas that had once challenged the supremacy of papal authority had already been let loose, and they gradually gained strength.

The conditions of Germany at the time of Luther's birth were favourable not just for the Reformation but also for the development of nationalism on secular

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[63] Stumpf, *Socrates to Sartre,* p.211.
[64] Thompson, *Humanists and Reformers*, p.353.
[65] *Niccolò Machiavelli, Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* (Microsoft Corporation: 2001).
[66] *Ibid.*

lines. Germany, then, was a part of the Holy Roman Empire. Instead of being a strong national state, it was a composite of loose territories. This lack of national governance led to a spate of confusion and lawlessness in pre-Reformation Germany.[67] Restlessness was high among the peasants leading to the rise of peasant revolutionaries. When Luther emerged as a challenger of papal authority, most German peasants mistook him to be a national hero. The common misunderstanding was that the Roman Catholic Church suppressed, oppressed, and exploited the people.[68] Voices against the papacy grew louder and louder each day.

On the afternoon of October 31, 1517, Luther nailed his 95 thesis on the Wittenberg Church door. Immediately, Luther's very life was threatened by the politicized papacy. In 1523, Luther published his "On Temporal Authority." In it Luther argued for the division of the church and the state. Luther specified two distinct realms or powers: *weltliches Regiment* (German word for 'the kingdom of the world,' 'the State') and *geistliches Regiment* (German word for 'the kingdom of God,' 'the Church'). The state was connected with God's continual work of creation and the church with God's continual work of redemption. God, Luther stated, is the head of both the kingdoms.[69]

Luther's argument for the separation and unadulteration of state and church and for God as their head must be understood in the light of Medieval political theory and the prevalent revolutionary thinking. Both were situated on opposite extreme poles. Medieval political theory ascribed all temporal power to the

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[67] Thompson, *Humanists and Reformers,* p.378.
[68] Thompson, *Humanists and Reformers*, p. 379.
[69] *Ibid*, p. 406.

Catholic Church. The revolutionaries such as the revolutionary branch of Anabaptists, on the other hand, called for a complete separation from any involvement in government at all. However, Luther, by bringing both the church and the state under the leadership of God, yet by keeping them separate, attempted at bringing them into a balanced relationship that is free from all extremity. He said that since a Christian is righteous yet also a sinner, he is a citizen of both the kingdoms.[70]

Lutheranism spread rapidly by the help of the new printing press and drew support from almost every class of German society. The devout supported it as a movement against the growing worldliness of many clergy. The German townspeople saw in it the rationale for separating themselves from Rome which till now had been drawing their money in the form of church taxes and payment for church offices. The nobility also embraced it, considering it a means of resisting the Catholic Holy Roman emperor, Charles V, and as an opportunity to confiscate church lands, eliminate church taxes, and gain the support of their subjects by serving as leaders of a popular and dynamic religious movement.[71] Luther spearheaded the rational destruction of superstitious religion, propagated by the Catholic Church, and blindly adhered to by the lay that, later on, during the Enlightenment developed into a full-fledged form of religious and, further down, secular rationalism, scientism, and skepticism.

The marginalized peasants saw in Luther a great champion for their cause of freedom and economic development. The great Peasant's Revolution broke out in

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[70] *Ibid,* p. 406.
[71] Perry, *Western Civilization*, p.231.

1525. He believed that the state was divinely ordained though separate from the church, and that revolution against any duly constituted authority was inadmissible.[72] Therefore, he opposed it urging the nobility to put it down by any means. The nobility did succeed in doing so; yet, at the cost of relegating the peasantry to increasing backwardness and oppression until the 19th century.[73]

Being unable to subdue the Lutheran princes, the Holy Roman emperor, Charles V, admitted to the Peace of Augsburg (1555), by which it was decreed that each territorial prince should determine the religion of his subjects. Thus, the Holy Roman Empire was decentralized and divided into Catholic and Protestant regions and the power of papacy diminished.

The division of Europe into Catholic and Protestant was a crucial step towards the development of the modern secular and centralized state. Protestant rulers, having freed themselves from papal authority, began to subordinate the churches under them, thus gaining freedom to form strong nation-states. Thus while Aquinas had insisted on the subordination of state by the church the Reformation marked a point in the reversal of that model in European practical politics.

Both Luther and Calvin held that citizens should be subject to their rulers as unto divine authority. However, this subjection was only limited to as long as the ruler's edict conformed to God's divine will as shown in the Bible. Some Protestant theorists argued that in case the edicts of the rulers contravened God's law, resistance and even revolution is inadmissible. The resistance of English Calvinists, or Puritans to the English monarchy in the seventeenth century found religious

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[72] Thompson, *Humanists and Reformers,* p. 407.
[73] Perry, *Western Civilization*, p. 231.

justification in this Protestant theory of political revolution.

In such ways did the ideas of religious freedom develop during the Reformation. The religious basis that the Reformation provided for protest and revolution against any anti-private-religion system, whether it is a Catholic papacy or a Protestant monarch, was highly responsible for the development of secularism as a political movement in the West. Ideas of religious privacy, equality of all (lay and clergy), and self-determination made the Reformation not just a religious movement, but also a political movement. As David Watson points out, freedom of religious belief and practice was a primary concern during the Reformation.[74] The concept of a free and responsible individual, responsible for his own salvation, began to take shape. The German sociologist Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (1904)*, argued that this idea of a self-determined individual who is responsible for his own and his surrounding's transformation, was responsible for the development of the modern capitalist society.

v. Enlightenment: Rationalism, Scientism, and Naturalism. The Renaissance began in Italy, the Reformation in Germany, and the Enlightenment in France. The term 'enlightenment' was not employed during the Enlightenment to designate itself until the closing decades of the nineteenth century.[75] According to Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804), Enlightenment (German *Aufklärung*) is '…our release from our self-imposed tutelage – that is, a state of inability to make use of

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[74] 'Civil Rights and Civil Liberties', *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* (Microsoft Corporation: 2001).
[75] Alister E. McGrath, *The Making of Modern German Christology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), p.14.

our own understanding without direction from someone else….'[76]

The Enlightenment was also called as the 'Age of Reason' because of its stress on the self-sufficiency of reason and its supremacy above either faith or revelation. Kant called it mankind's emergence from immaturity. Though the spirit of Enlightenment did not cover the whole earth, its influence gradually gained strength with the development of the scientific method and its propagation through education.

Paul Halsall underscores five ideals of the Enlightenment, the first four of which are essential to secularism:[77]

1.Reason

2.Toleration

3.Natural Law

4.Change and Progress as good things

5.Deism.

The Reformation unshackling from papal oppression and inquisition, gradually, led to more reliance on human reason with Renaissance resurgence of Classical Greek philosophy. Toleration of religious differences became important since no one could claim absolute authority in matters of faith. Every thing had to subject itself to the supremacy of reason. The Copernican revolution gained approval in Galileo's discoveries through the newly invented telescope, which though it had spurred the Church, had broken in a new age of scientific revolution.

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[76] As cited by McGrath, *Ibid.*, p.14.
[77] http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook.html

Descartes' mechanistic interpretation of the universe found support in Newton's physical laws of mechanics and eventually paved the path for the development of scientism. A breakthrough in biological science took place when Darwin published his *Origin of Species* and introduced Evolutionism and Naturalism in the European world.

The Deists attempted to interpret the universe based on reason alone and spurned any necessity of revelation, mysticism, or prayer. The authority of the Scriptures was questioned even as new strides were taken in the development of Biblical criticism. The undermining of Scriptural authority as well as the central doctrines of Christianity (such as Christology) led to the fall of faith and, eventually, the development of a secular academic mind-set.

a. Rationalism. A confidence in human reason is central to secularism, since it is by reason alone that it brings aspects of human existence under its scrutiny and purview. In secularism, reason (not religion or tradition) is the judge between truth and falsity.[78] Therefore, the development of rationalism during the Enlightenment is significant to the study of secularism.

Continental Philosophy greatly stressed the supremacy of reason. However, reason's role was seen not apart from experience. According to Locke (1632 – 1704), the role of reason in the acquisition of knowledge lay in the interpretation of sense-impressions that continuously fell on the blank slate of the human mind. Hume (1711 –76) doubted the very validity of reason itself. Kant gave a new direction to Hume's skepticism by removing the possibility of *real* knowledge (i.e.,

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[78] Paul Cornish, 'Secularism', *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* (Microsoft Corporation: 2001).

of the *noumenal* world) in his epistemological model. Throughout it all, however, the finality of rational judgement over any other source of knowledge, whether experience or revelation, was emphasized.

In his *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, Locke referred to *reason* as the *law of nature* that governed the *State of nature*.[79] Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), however, reasoned that *reason* improves by the activity of passions and so the understanding is greatly indebted to the passions.[80] In his *The Social Contract,* he points out the fact that the principles he puts forth are not 'based on the authority of poets, but derived from the nature of reality and based on reason.'[81] Locke's theory of fundamental rights based on reason greatly influenced later human rights movements. Montesque proposed the theory of separation of powers, which played a major role in the formation of constitutional governments. The Enlightenment thinkers developed the idea of the separation of the Church and the State to ensure freedom of thought and religion. Paul Cornish writes:

> Enlightenment thinkers attacked classical traditions and religious authority. In particular, they argued that the separation of Church and State would enable the free exercise of human intellectual capacities and imagination, and would bring about government by reason rather than by tradition and dogma.[82]

Thus, it can be seen that during the Enlightenment, reason instead of the Church or tradition was became the reference point for the knowledge of truth, whether in physics or in politics.

b. Scientism. Galileo and Isaac Newton made revolutions in the field of

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[79] http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/locke/locke2
[80] 'A Discourse Upon The Origin and The Foundation of The Inequality among Mankind', http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook.html
[81] http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook.html
[82] 'Secularism'*, Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* (Microsoft Corporation: 2001).

science. With the discovery of Newton's laws of moving bodies, the development of a mechanical view of the universe began that ended up in first deism, then materialism and naturalism. The Church's opposition to the preliminary scientific discoveries of the eighteenth century could not survive for long. Soon, the Enlightenment saw the rise of the scientific method of observation, hypothesis, deduction, and experimentation. Science and mathematical reason went together and faith was cast aside. Astronomy and physics had already made the scientific hypothesis of God unnecessary; the evolution theory of Darwin in the 19th century left no place for God even in biology.[83]

c. Naturalism. Earlier on Descartes and, following him, Galileo and Newton presented to the West the picture of the universe as a closed machine run by laws of nature without need of any God to continue to run it, though He was presupposed by the Deists as the One who gave it its initial push.[84] No doubt, Deism has also been called as natural religion.[85] This mechanistic naturalism also had a great impact on Christian Theology as naturalists began to question the authenticity of the miracles recorded in the Bible.[86]

As has been seen, Darwin followed the scientific method and conceived the idea of the evolution of species. This innovation in the field of science was a powerful stroke on the already collapsing structure of theological authority. As evidences for the evolution theory began accumulating, responses from theological fields arose in the form of syncretistic theories that tried to interpret the Genesis

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[83] Os Guinness, *The Dust of Death (*London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), p. 8.
[84] Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy*, p.151ff.
[85] Vishal Mangalwadi, *Missionary Conspiracy,*(Mussoorie: Good Books, 1996), p. 261.
[86] 'Laws of Nature', *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* (Microsoft Corporation: 2001).

account of creation in the light of recent discoveries. The gap theory, the Day Age theory, and the progressive creation theory were put forth as a result. On the other hand, as seen above, a stream of liberal thinkers arose who totally stroke off as unauthentic any scriptural account that did not accord with science or the principle of natural law. As a result, skepticism regarding the Biblical accounts of supernatural intervention, miracles, the Virgin Birth, and such other accounts began pervading the Protestant world.

Enlightenment naturalism disdained any reference of divine intervention in human history. Even the incarnation of Christ was ridiculed. It was considered *the scandal of particularity*. A new hermeneutics arose as a result that tried to demythologize the Gospels. Gradually, naturalism invaded the church in the West and the power of religion declined.

Naturalism also backed the development of theories like Nihilism, Marxism, and in the twentieth century, Communism and Fascism that represent the extreme form of secular political government.

vi. The First Amendment to the American Constitution. As the grip of religion loosened and the autonomy of reason grew in human areas, ideas of freedom, equality, nationalism, and democracy developed. As a result, revolutions broke in at several places.

Thirteen colonies were established between 1607 and 1733 in America. Governors deputed by the King of England ruled them. The English puritans despised the rule of a Roman Catholic king over them who oppressed. And so, they

moved in to the newly found land of America and settled themselves there. Therefore, they are known as the 'Pilgrim Fathers.' These colonists adopted English as their national language and lived together despite of their differing nationalities and creed. They advocated freedom of speech and allowed the propagation of their individual religion. However, as the British restrictions on these American colonies grew severe, the colonists got agitated. They believed that all men are born with equal rights and privileges and that government is for the people and not *vice-versa.* In 1775, the colonists declared United States of America as a separate nation. Britain reacted and war broke in. Under the military leadership of George Washington, America was able to win the war. In 1783, the treaty of Paris was signed by which Britain recognized American Independence and sovereignty.

The American constitution that was eventually written has been the influencing factor behind many other constitutions, even as its revolution inspired many other revolutions. The American constitution made America the first democratic federal republic of the world. The written constitution followed the theory of separation of powers. It also guaranteed Fundamental rights for the citizens.

The first amendment of the American constitution clearly outlined the relation of the state to religion. It read as follows:

> Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

This declaration of the non-involvement of the state in private religious matters displays how far secularism had developed in the West to at last find place in politics.

vii. The French Charter of the Rights of Man. The monarchial administration of France prior to the French Revolution had no regard for the people's rights. Locke's theory of natural rights, Montesque's notion of the separation of powers and the de-centralisation of power, and Rousseau's Social Contract theory played a major role in the intellectual development that led to the revolution. Voltaire had preached that the ideal government for France would be either a limited monarchy or a republic. Added to all these, the American Independence brought great hope and inspiration to the French middle class and the peasants who were being antagonised by the privileged class of France. Soon, oppressed workers began forming secret revolutionary groups that aimed the destruction of feudalism and the establishment of the French Republic.

The French Revolution brought to global attention concepts such as 'nation,' 'sovereignty,' 'equality,' and 'freedom.' Nationalism developed over from here and spread over the entire world. Sovereignty of a nation meant that no law was above the nation. Laws made by the citizens themselves ruled the republic nation. The church was subordinated to the state and special privileges were abolished on the grounds that all were created equal. The French Declaration of the Rights of Man was adopted on August 26, 1789. It went as follows:

> Article III – The principle of any sovereignty resides essentially in the Nation. No body, no individual can exert authority

which does not emanate expressly from it.

> …All the citizens, being equal in [the eyes of the law], are equally admissible to all public dignities, places, and employments, according to their capacity and without distinction other than that of their virtues and of their talents. [87]

Later developments saw the nation take over the property of the Church (while taking on the Church's expenses), through the law of December 2, 1789. On February 13, 1790 monastic vows were abolished. On July 12, 1790, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy turned the remaining clergy into employees of the State and required that they take an oath of loyalty to the constitution.[88]

Thus, the French Constitution came into existence, which became a great inspiration behind the formation of many other constitutions. Perry notes that the French Revolution attempted to reconstruct society on the basis of Enlightenment thought. The constitution upheld the dignity of the individual, demanded respect for the individual, attributed to each person natural rights, and barred the state from denying these rights.[89]

Thus did secularism develop in the West. Its seeds were found in classical Greek thought, were revived in the Renaissance, backed by the Reformation, matured in the Enlightenment, and finally found place in the constitutions of the United States of America and of France.

Four reasons behind the survival of secularism as a political ideology in the

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[87] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Declaration_ of_ the_ Rights_ of_ Man
[88] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Revolution
[89] Perry, *Western Civilization*, p.346.

modern world can be gleaned from the above account. They are as follows:

Firstly, religious plurality and the need for religious freedom necessitate a secular state. The issue of religious freedom during the Reformation made necessary the division of the state and the Church. It will be seen later in the thesis that this principle of the division of state and the Church was applied in the religiously plural context of India by the British Government in the form of division between state and religion.

Secondly, scientific progress has made the theory of divine king or religious politics outdated and barbaric in the modern age. Any state that subscribes to a particular religious tradition as the only authoritative guide in politics is considered to be uncivilised and unscientific. Rationalism, evolutionism, and naturalism, through permeation of the education-system, have rendered ideas of religious supremacy as ridiculous.

Thirdly, it can be seen that humanism has taken the place of religion in politics and Individualism has taken the place of traditional authority in society. While in the past, religion provided the ethics of government, humanism has provided the concept of human rights on which present day secular states operate.

Finally, Democracy and Constitutional system from the Enlightenment, based on the concept of human rights, have provided valuable checks that ensure that the state does not fall back to despotism and religious warfare.

The following chapters will concentrate on the promotion of secularism in India. It will be seen why, keeping in sight the above four reasons, secularism could not survive during the pre-colonial period and how Western secularism found home

in India through colonial rule.

At the end of this Chapter, it must be said that, the most powerful challenge to secularism in India, posed by the Hindutva forces, is nothing but an attempt to *replace the position of humanism in politics and the Constitution with a kind of cultural nationalism that they inherited from Nazism.*[90] The Hindutvavadis know that religious apologetics means little in the modern secular age. It has already been seen earlier, under sociological definitions, that the secularization of society is an irreversible process. Therefore, they can never win the intellectual votes. However, they know that romantic appeals to the imagination can be highly successful among the masses (T.V. ads. are based on such appeals). Therefore, it is considered better to propagate cultural nationalism among the masses and, then later on, bring amendments in the Constitution in line with racism and cultural nationalism. In present India, secularism is tied together with humanism. However, Hindutvavadis desire to wed it with cultural nationalism, to the effect that only **cultural rights, not human rights,** will be provided by the state.

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[90] M.G. Matthew, *Dharma Parivartana: Ek Samvad* (Perumpavoor: Truth & Life Publication, 1999), p.5.

CHAPTER TWO

SECULARISM IN PRE-COLONIAL PERIOD

The religiously plural context of India was a perpetual issue to be addressed by any government that reigned. The earliest conflict known was between the invading Aryans and the Dravidians. The Aryans, gradually, absorbed the deities of the Dravidians to form a syncretistic, pluralistic Hindu religion. In the north, the Dravidians and other aboriginal tribes were made the outcastes, while in the south those of them that accepted the Brahmanical mandate were initiated into the upper three castes while the rest were consigned to the margins of society. Many of the originals that chose not to fall prey to the Aryan rule fled into the mountains and the jungles and were distanced from mainland civilisation till the modern Christian missionary era.[91] Thus did the early Aryans deal with the newly invaded people of the land now known as India. Obviously, the policy was to make Aryan rulership acquiesced to both in matters of religion and politics. The caste-system invented by the Aryans served their own selfish purposes. It gave the Brahmin Aryans dominance in religion, the Kshatriya Aryans dominance in politics, the Vaishya Aryans dominance in commerce, and left servitude and labour to the greater percent of unorganised untouchable and outcaste non-Aryans, especially in the north. By fabricating society on such a pattern, the Aryans, though appearing to be pluralistic, used religion in philosophy, politics, society, and culture to propagate racialism.

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[91] Ebe Sunder Raj, *The Confusion Called Conversion,* rev. edn. (New Delhi: TRACI Publications, 1998), pp.55-75.

The Hindu religion was intrinsically woven into the socio-cultural, commercial, and political life of the Indians; secularism, in such conditions, was unimaginable. However, traces of the secular outlook were present in the Indian philosophy.

1. Charvaka: A Secular Approach to Existence

Indian philosophy has the peculiarity of weaving within itself thoughts of different and, often, contradictory nature. There were six *astik* (believing) and six *nastik* (non-believing) schools of Indian philosophy in the past. The six *astik* schools were Nyaya, Vaisesika, Samkhya, Yoga, Purva Mimamsa, and Uttara Mimamasa. The six *nastik* schools were Charvaka, Jainism, and the four schools of Buddhism, namely, Vaibhasika, Sautrantika, Yogachara, and Madhyamika.

The Indian school of materialism, Charvaka, perhaps developed as a reaction against the excesses of Brahmin priests and an exploitative society.[92] It dismissed 'necessarily all belief in everything that constitutes the specific subject-matter of religion and philosophy.'[93] It had place for neither God who controls the universe nor conscience that guides man. The absence of the transcendent in Charvaka might be reason for its also being called as *Lokayata-darsana*, meaning philosophical school 'restricted to the experienced world,'[94] or 'secular.' The Charvaka had no regard for the *Shabda Pramana* (Verbal Testimony, i.e., the *Vedas*). It had a purely empirical and rational concept of reality. However, the Charvaka could not gain political approval and so gradually declined – although its

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[92] Vijaya Ghosh (ed.), *Tirtha* (New Delhi: CMC LTD., 1992), p. 218.
[93] M. Hiriyanna, *Indian Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2000), p. 193.
[94] *Ibid*, p. 104.

hedonism vented out through popular polytheism. Charvaka philosophy could not continue also because of the powerful dominance of Brahmanism over religion, culture, society, and politics. To Brahmanism, the Veda was supreme authority. The notion of a separation of faith and reason, therefore, was inadmissible. Reason (*yukti*) was subservient to the faith (in the revealed word, *Shabda, Shruti*) and not above it. In fact, true knowledge could not be rationally attained. Truth was mystical and available for only the privileged few, i.e., the Brahmins. The Charvaka, along with the Buddhists and the Jains were labelled *nastiks* or unbelievers and isolated from the mainstream. Brahmanism also sustained itself by preventing the other caste members from being educated. This it did by its restrictive use of the Sanskrit language and by its maintaining that higher knowledge was unattainable by the other castes. It also divided religion into two storeys: the upper was non-dualistic and attainable by the higher caste members alone; the lower was polytheistic and the popular form of Hindu religion. The higher was considered the Real and the lower the lesser real dominated by myths and phenomena. Brahmanism held both the storeys together by claiming Vedic authority. The Charvaka secular ideology was, in comparison, to Brahmanism, a lower world-view caught up with the present world and far-removed from the true Reality that the Upanishads declared. Thus, Charvaka gradually diminished before the mounting influence of Brahmanism. Nevertheless, it suffices to state that the secular outlook that cast off all religious restraints and considered the human reason capable enough to know truth was not new for the Indian context.

Politically speaking, religious tolerance is not novel just to the modern age

of India when secularism is vibrant.[95] Traces of it could as well be found in the pre-colonial period, though it stands to be assessed how far such religious policies implemented fall in line with the concept of modern secularism.

In the fifth century B.C., when philosophy was sprouting in the west, two great revolutionaries were born in India: Vardhamana Mahavira (599-527 B.C.) and Siddhartha Gautama (The Buddha, 560-480 B.C.). Both of them hailed from the Kshatriya (Royal Warrior) caste and both opposed the racial and caste-inequality that Brahmanism endorsed. Mahavira founded Jainism and Gautama Buddha founded Buddhism. The Hindu pundits responded by first declaring both of these sects as *nastik* (non-believing, i.e., in the Vedic authority) and then by attempting to picture Jainism as a variant of Hinduism itself. When Buddhism did not budge to the Brahmanical attempt, it was strategically ousted from India.

The impact of the Jaina and Buddhist revolutions was tremendous on the Indian context; to the effect, that in some places the Sudras (lowest castes) regained power and rule. Dr. Mukherjee notes: 'In any case sixth and fifth centuries B.C. hold out strange phenomena before us, - Kshatriya chiefs founding popular religious sects which menaced the Vedic religion, and Sudra leaders establishing a big empire in Arya-vart on the ruins of Kshatriya Kingdoms.'[96]

2. Ashoka: A Humanitarian Approach to Religion

As far as secularism is concerned, Buddhism is best remembered in India

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[95] Laxminarayan Gupta, *History of Modern Indian Culture* (Agra: Prem Book Depo, 1973), p. 7.
[96] As cited by Ratibhanu Singh Nahar, *Prachin Bharat Ka Rajnitik Aur Sanskritik Itihaas* (Allahabad: Kitab Mahal, 1956), p. 189.

for its dearest adherent, the Emperor Ashoka, whose religious policies are some of the closest to the modern principles of humanism. Chandragupta Maurya died in 300 B.C. Bindusara succeeded him and, after his death in between 273-272 B.C, Ashoka ascended the throne in 269-268 B.C.[97] After his painful experience in the Kalinga war, he converted to Buddhism and, having united the whole of the sub-continent under his rule, gave India one of its rarest times of peaceful governance. Ashoka gave great importance to the ideal of tolerance towards different ideologies and religions. According to Romila Thapar, Ashoka's definition of social ethics is based on a *respect for all religious teachers*, and on a harmonious relationship between parents and children, teachers and pupils, and employers and employees.[98]

The religious policies of Ashoka grew out of his concept of religion and its role in human society. Ashoka's practice of the principle of non-violence, after becoming a Buddhist, led him to ban animal sacrifices to the great chagrin of the Brahmins. The principle of universality and inclusivism kept Ashoka from all forms of communalism that the caste-Hindus were so fond of. Ashoka's religion contained gleanings from all religions.[99] Ashoka followed the policy of religious tolerance and made a law that prohibited anyone from any act or word against any religion.

According to Jawaid Quddus, during the reign of Ashoka, diverse religious sects, such as the Brahamas, Sramanas, Nirganthas, Ajivakas, etc., bore great hostility and sectarian rancor against one another. Quddus quotes from the ' Studies

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[97] *Ibid*, p. 238.
[98] Romila Thapar, 'Ashoka'*, Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* (Microsoft Corporation: 2001).
[99] Ratibhanu Singh Nahar, *Prachin Bharat Ka Rajnitik Aur Sanskritik Itihaas* (Allahabad: Kitab Mahal, 1956), p.245.

in Ancient India' by Provatansu Maiti, (1969 edition) following of the directives of Ashoka that aimed at religious tolerance and mutual respect among the various sects:

1. All sects must dwell at all places so that they could know one another and develop tolerance for each other.
2. All sects must observe restraint of speech and purification of heart when they deal with each other.
3. The exaltation of one's own religion and condemnation of others' creed is not permitted.
4. Different sects should study of the scripture of other sects and develop concord among themselves.
5. All people must practice Ahimsa (non- violence) towards each other and towards animals.
6. Ashoka renounced the policy of conquest by sword and urged people to adopt the policy of conquest by law.[100]

Although Ashoka's policy of religious tolerance seems quite conforming to the principles of secularism, his declaration of Buddhism as the state-religion doesn't apparently do so. Ashoka considered religion as the foundation of a stable state. By religion, Ashoka meant *Dhamma*, the principle of right duty and obligation. Though this *Dhamma* was much influence by Buddhism, it was not separated from reason but based on reason.[101]

Ashoka sent Buddhist missionaries to foreign kingdoms and he also undertook religious journeys to inspire his people towards religiosity. He established a department of religion that was responsible for measuring the religious level of the people and also teaching them the principles of *Dhamma*. He

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[100] http://www.truthindia.com
[101] *Ibid*, pp. 244-246.

used to organize religious discourses and shows for the education of the masses.[102]

The various pillars and inscriptions dating from the time of Ashoka point to the seriousness with which he understood the inter-relationship between religion and the state. The goal was to instil in the people the knowledge of what is right and what is wrong and awake and motivate them towards right thinking and right action. No doubt, Ashoka succeeded in doing so.

Thus, though Ashoka's religious policies cannot be called as purely secular-oriented, they do resemble secularism in practice in their laws of religious freedom, religious tolerance, and respect for all religions. To be sure, Ashoka's religious policies were oriented to the well being of all people in the present, despite race, colour, language, creed, or gender.

3. Akbar: A Syncretistic and Rational Approach to Religion

Akbar was born in on October 15, 1542 A.D[103] in Amarkot, Sindh (now in Pakistan). He is often considered the true founder of the Mughal Empire. He reigned over his Mughal Empire in India from 1556 A.D. to 1605 A.D. By now, in addition to Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Sikhism were also religions that the Muslim rulers had to tackle. Akbar stands distinctively from all other Muslim rulers in his policy towards the religions of his kingdom. His policy of inclusivism, religious tolerance, and inter-religious respect and endeavour towards an empire based on unity and equality led to Jawaharlal

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[102] *Ibid*, p. 247.
[103] Ashirbadi Lal Srivastava, *History of India (1000-1707A.D.) (*Agra: Shiva Lal Agarwal & Co., n.d.), p. 434.

Nehru calling him the 'the Father of Indian Nationalism.'[104] As Thapar points out, Akbar 'won the allegiance of the Rajputs, the most belligerent Hindus, by a shrewd blend of tolerance, generosity, and force; he himself married two Rajput princesses. Rajput princes were given high government ranks, and by 1583 all Rajput states had accepted Akbar as ruler.'[105] His religious policy towards the Hindus was in such a time when religious intolerance was on high and Muslim rule over Hindus was more often of an oppressive kind.[106]

It is conjectured that Akbar's Hindu policy was greatly influenced by the many Hindu wives that he had.[107] Akbar himself was a regular audience of Hindu saints and philosophers. Some consider that a probable influence behind Akbar's Hindu policy could be Sufism that is said to have inspired him towards a more liberal approach towards Hinduism. Others think that Akbar's Hindu policy was politically motivated.[108]

In 1562, Akbar banned the forceful conversion of war prisoners. In 1563, he abolished the pilgrimage tax which, immediately, prompted Hindus all over India to construct numerous temples. He also set up a department of translation for the translation of Hindu texts into the Persian language, towards building a common ground for unity between the two cultures. In 1564, Akbar abolished the *zazia* tax imposed over the Hindus. Earlier on, only the Muslims were treated as citizens. But Akbar gave equal citizenship status to both Hindus and Muslims. His policy didn't

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[104] Laxminarayan Gupta, *History of Modern Indian Culture*, p.24.
[105] Romila Thapar, *Akbar, Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* (Microsoft Corporation: 2001).
[106]Vidyadhar Mahajan, *Muslim-Kalin Bharat (Muslim Rule in India) (*Delhi: S. Chand & Co. Ltd., 1979), part II, p.103.
[107] *Ibid,* p. 104.
[108] *Ibid,* p. 107.

admit political differentiation on the basis of religion. In 1603, he declared a royal decree by which Christians were allowed to convert others.[109]

Akbar opposed child-marriages and encouraged widow re-marriages, which the Hindu law disallowed. In his reign, the Hindus prospered greatly since most Rajputs were given high posts and Hindu warriors formed a large part of the Mughal army. Akbar himself also endorsed much of Hinduism by participating in their festivals.

It is also said that Akbar learned Hindu doctrines from Hindu Brahmins, Jain thought from Heera Vijay Suri, Vijaysen Suri, Bhanuchandra Upadhyaya, and Jinchandra; Zoroatrian beliefs from Dastur Meherji Rana, and Christian doctrines from the Pastors called in from Goa.[110]

By the Infallibility Decree of 1579, Akbar became the supreme arbiter over all religious matters of his subjects. By this decree, Akbar became the *Imam-E-Aadil* and the sole arbitrator of Islamic Law.[111] The decree shows that though the laws were based on reason, the state itself was not separated from religion totally in the modern sense of secularism. However, it must be kept in mind that the above decree, especially in relation to Islam, was in order to prevent Islamic religious authority from tampering with the religious policies of Akbar. This decree prevented fundamental and communal forces from influencing in any way the Emperor's decisions. By positioning himself above the Islamic religious leaders, getting declared himself as a Judge most beloved on the Day of Judgement, and

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[109] *Ibid,* p. 108.
[110] *Ibid,* p. 110.
[111] *Ibid,* p. 110.

conditioning his laws to be in line with the Quran, Akbar was able to gain a religious backing for furthering his syncretistic and rational religious policies.

It has been conjectured that these policies of Akbar grew out of more his syncretistic and pluralistic mind than his adherence to any particular religion. One Portuguese Jesuit of the group that Akbar had invited to teach him of Christianity when he was in search of truth reported that the Emperor was not a Muslim; in fact, he was skeptical of all religions and was of the opinion that there was not one religion on earth that was specially instituted by God and that there could be found things in any religion that was inconsistent in its own rationality. The Jesuit also reported that Akbar had found Christianity more interesting than all other religions and that he was close to conversion. He said that there were some in the court who argued that Akbar was a Hindu who worshipped the sun; some believed that he was a Christian, and others that he was starting a whole new religion (*Din Ilahi*) himself. The Jesuit reporter said that there were differences of opinion even among the subjects: some said he was a Muslim; some, Christian; others, Hindu. The wiser men of understanding, the Jesuit continued, believe that he was neither a Muslim, a Hindu, nor a Christian; and that they only considered him a Muslim who was outwardly interested in gaining the approval of all religions.[112]

Akbar's pluralism is also reflected in the impact Zoroastrianism had on him. In 1578, the Zoroastrian scholar Dastur Meherji declared to Akbar the specialties of this Parsee religion. Consequentially, from 1580 onwards Akbar began to worship the Sun and Fire before his subjects and his courtiers began standing up in respect

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[112] *Ibid*, p.139.

on the lighting of the evening lights. According to Vincent Smith, it was Jainism that influenced Akbar to stop eating meat and to impose a ban on all kinds of animal sacrifice.[113]

Srivastava considers Akbar to be a true rationalist who carried on his investigation into truth in a scientific spirit by which he concluded that sensible men and abstemious thinkers could be found in all religions and that if some true knowledge was thus everywhere to be found, why should truth be confined to one religion or creed like Islam which was comparatively new and scarcely thousand years old.[114] Akbar rejected the Islamic doctrines of Resurrection and Judgement. He also rejected the doctrine of revelation.[115] On the basis of such rational attempts to understand truth, Akbar took to study of different religions and absorbed several ideas from them.

Thus, it can be concluded that Akbar's religious policies of religious freedom and religious tolerance flowed out of his syncretistic, liberal, rational, and pluralistic way of looking at things. His integrative perspective prevented him from siding with any particular community and thus helped him to inculcate in his subjects a spirit of mutual respect and good will. This pluralistic attitude also grew out of his comparative study of the various religions and people as well as his own belief in the power and value of reason in understanding and judgement. On such grounds, therefore, it can be stated that though Akbar's policies did not totally conform to all the elements of modern secularism, they contained the secular seeds

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[113] *Ibid,* p. 142.
[114] Ashirbadi Lal Srivastava, *History of India (1000-1707A.D.),* p. 471.
[115] *Ibid*, p. 471.

of state-sanctioned religious freedom and dignity. His claim for Supremacy over religious matters in a monarchial government that was far removed from the modern concept of democracy and constitutionalism, however, limited his policies only to his period. Later successors, especially Aurangazeb, reverted more intensively to the methods of fundamentalism, intolerance, and forced conversions. Thus, though Akbar promoted religious freedom in his own time, he could not provide a mechanism by which his policies could be followed on even after him. This truly shows the importance of a written constitution, a democratic form of government, the separation of powers, and a total separation of state and religion for the future of secularism in any pluralistic context.

CHAPTER THREE

THE COLONIALIST CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS

INDIAN SECULARISM

This Chapter aims to prove that Western secularism found its way into India through the Colonialist Rule. At the beginning of the 17th century the Portuguese, followed by the Dutch, the French, and the British came to India. Originally having come for purposes of trade, these East India Companies began to colonialize the land. Soon, rivalry rose up among them until all of them except the English East India Company lost hold over their territories and had to leave. The entrance of the Colonialist marks a major turning point in the history of India.

The English East India Company was the dominant power on India by the start of the 19th century. It also succeeded in taking over Sri Lanka and the North Eastern areas. The Company conquered Maharatha in 1813, Sind in 1843, and the Sikh kingdom of Punjab in 1849, and thus established itself as a strong power on the sub-continent.[116] Its conquest of the land was motivated by a desire to provide for the purposes of smooth commerce a stable government and economical conditions.[117] Under the founding leadership of Clive, Hastings, and Cornwallis the Company was able to bring the whole of India under the British rule. During this same time, secularism was gaining popularity and approval in England. As a matter

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[116] *India, Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* (Microsoft Corporation: 2001).
[117] Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India* (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 2002), p. 16.

fact, the use of the term "secularism" in recent times is associated with George Jacob Holyoake (1817-1906) and Charles Bradlaugh (1833-1891). According to Holyoake, secularism was an immediate quest for the physical, moral, and intellectual development of human nature to its highest possible degree. Theology was inadequate, unreliable, and unbelievable in such a quest, argued Holyoake. Bradlaugh, then President of National Secular Society (of England) saw the Roman Catholic Church as an abuser of democracy and a threat to freedoms of thought, speech, and action[118] This modern secular and scientific outlook had already begun to have an impact on the governmental decisions of England, and began to impress itself on the Indian mind through the colonial administration in India.

The British colonial contribution towards Indian secularism came in at least two ways: Government and Missions.

1. British Government

Robert Clive's victories over the French at Arcot in 1751 and at Plassey in 1757 made the company the dominant power in India. With the defeat of the French at Pondicherry in 1761, all European rivalry to the Company fell apart. British Government soon took important steps in bringing under its surveillance and control the affairs of the Company in India. In 1773, a Governor-Generalship was established with the Bengal governor, Warren Hastings, as the first governor-general of India. The 1784 India Act created a department of the British Government that exercised control over the political, military, and financial affairs

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[118] Kazi Anwarul Masud, 'How fares Secularism in India?'
www.thedailystar.net/2003/09/07/d30907020318.htm

of the Company in India. In 1813, the Company's monopoly over Indian trade was abolished and in 1858, after the Sepoy mutiny of 1857, the British Crown assumed all governmental responsibilities in India by the Act for the Better Government of India.[119]

The British Government, from the very beginning, contributed in various ways towards the promotion of secularism in India. Among its many contributions were its uniting of the country, its laws, its reforms, and impact on the constitution and impression on the minds of the natives.

i. Integration of the Land: Free Spread of Secular Ideas. The British succeeded in colonizing this great country because, among other reasons, of its disunity of religion, culture, kingdom, caste, race, and language. A significant result of this colonization was, however, the unification of India under one British rule. This uniting of India under one rule also facilitated, later, the democratization of the nation and of its being born anew as a republic nation. Vishal notes that Wellesley and Hastings's military conquests gave political unity and peace to India, without which it would have been far greater struggle to modernize India.[120] Macaulay's speech to the House of Commons on July 26, 1833 brings out the fact of how the Company had found the politically, economically, and socially fragmented picture of India and knit it together to build an empire stronger and more integrated 'than

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[119] 'East India Company', *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* (Microsoft Corporation: 2001).

[120] Vishal Mangalwadi, *Missionary Conspiracy* (Mussoorie: Nivedit Good Books Distributors Pvt. Ltd., 1996), p. 196.

that which Aurangzebe ruled.'[121] Thus, contrasting the achievements of the Company with the failures of the earlier Muslim rule, he continues:

> I see that we have established order where we found confusion. I see that the petty dynasties which were generated by the corruption of the great Mahometan empire, and which, a century ago, kept all India in constant agitation, have been quelled by one overwhelming power.[122]

Once the whole land was united under one government, it became very easy for the ideas of nationalism, pluralism, equality, and dignity to spread to all corners of the land. According to Mahajan, the highly centralized character of British rule in India promoted the growth of Indian nationalism.[123] The railways, post office, and the English language that the Government introduced served greatly to the integration of India. Secularism in India would have been a far-fetched idea if, in the first place, India itself had not formed into a political unit.

ii. Introduction of English Law: Secularization of Indian Law. In 1657, the Crown authorized the Company to make laws and ordinances for the sake administration, and punish or fine those who didn't conform to the laws. It was made mandatory that the laws be made in accordance to reason and the laws, statutes or customs of England.[124] The granting of legislative powers to the Company has great historical significance, for it laid the foundation for the development of the Indian constitution. The Charter of 1726 marked the beginning

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[121] As cited by Vishal Mangalwadi, *India: The Grand Experiment (*Surrey: Pippa Rann Books, 1997), p. 93.
[122] *Ibid*, p. 94.
[123] V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History,* p. 643.
[124] Daya Shankar Dubey & Rajesh Tandon, *Constitutional History of India* (Allahabad: Allahabad Law Agency, n.d.), p.2.

of a systematic legal system and the courts. Corporations were established by it. Mayor's Court and Courts of Oyer and Terminer were established at Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta. In all the above three Presidencies, the Common Law and the Statute Law were enforced. Since the English Law could not appeal to the Indian context, it was not imposed fully and immediately. For instance, whereas the English Law prohibited polygamy and sex with a partner under age 10, such practice was common among Indians and could not be prohibited without hurting their sensitivities. Therefore, it was deemed necessary to make changes in the English Law to suit the Indian context.[125]

The Regulating Act was passed in 1773 by which a Governor-Generalship was established in India that was declared the Supreme Government in India and given power of legislation. By this Act, the Supreme Court was established in Bengal and its Judges appointed by the Crown. In accordance to the Charter Act of 1833, the First Indian Law Commission was appointed in 1834. Lord Macaulay was the most prominent member of this Commission. Through its efforts, the Draft Indian Penal Code was prepared. This Commission was also involved in the direct or indirect preparation of the Indian Penal Code that replaced the earlier criminal law, Code of Civil Procedure, Code of Criminal Procedure, and other laws. The Charter Act of 1833 clearly expresses the secular policies of the British Government. Section 87 of the Act declared 'that no Indian subject of the Company in India was to be debarred from holding any office under the Company "by reason

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[125] *Ibid*, p. 18.

of **his religion,** place of birth, descent and colour.'"[126]

In those days, according to both the Muslim and the Hindu laws, the property of anyone converting to another religion was sequestered. In its report, the Commission suggested that the theory of not depriving any person of his or her property rights on conversion to another religion be enforced all over India. This theory was given Legislative sanction in an Act passed in 1850.[127] Therefore, this Act is also called as the "Freedom of Religion Act" and the "Caste Disabilities Removal Act" for the freedom and liberty it gave an individual to choose a religion for him/her without allurement or force that would hinder him from doing so. The influence of Renaissance individualism and humanism, of Reformation privatism and freedom, and of the Enlightenment belief in reason and human rights can clearly be seen in the laws that the English introduced in India; all of these contributing towards the promotion of secularism in the social and political context of India.

Following the revolt of the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857, the Crown made a declaration to take the government of India into Her hands in 1858. Accordingly, Lord Canning was appointed the first Viceroy and Governor-General by the Crown in India. Lord Canning held a Durbar at Allahabad on November 1, 1858 to declare the assumption of the Government of India by the Crown. The declaration contained among many statements, the following statement of significance in the history of secular politics.

> Firmly relying ourselves on the truth of Christianity and

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[126] V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History,* p. 264 [Researcher's emphasis].
[127] Daya Shankar Dubey & Rajesh Tandon, *Constitutional History of India,* p. 102.

acknowledging with gratitude the solace of religion, *we disclaim alike the right and the desire to impose our convictions on any of our subjects.* We declare it to be our royal will and pleasure that *none be any wise favoured, none molested or disqualified by reason of their religious faith and observances;* but that *all shall alike enjoy the equal and impartial protection of the law,* and we do strictly charge and *enjoin all those who may be in authority under us that they abstain from all interference with the religious belief or worship of any of our subjects on pain of our highest displeasure....*[128]

By this declaration, Government authorities were forbidden to interfere in the religious affairs of India. Protection of the cultures, traditions, and customs of India was ensured. Equality was established between the British and the Indian subjects.[129] The British rule left us a legacy of the rule of law. All were declared before the law irrespective of caste, creed, race, language, or gender. In such ways did the relation between politics and religion develop over secular lines by the introduction of English Law in India.

iii. Reforms: Promotion of Secular Humanist Values in Society. The Serampore missionaries who studied Hindu community knew that the social and religious reforms were important for the betterment of the Indians.[130] Through their influence and the effort of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the Government introduced several reforms in India.

Lord William Bentick initiated the policy of reform. By this time, the English back home were thinking of their colonization of India as a God-given

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[128] As cited by V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, 17th edn. (New Delhi: S. Chand & Co. Ltd., 2004), p. 270.
[129] *Ibid,* p. 121.
[130] J.N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1924), p. 15.

responsibility to produce a better India than to exploit it.[131] Backed by such support from home and the locals as well, Bentick introduced certain reforms in India during his time in office, after *the principles of secular humanism* and a liberal attitude.[132] Farquhar divides them into three groups:[133]

(1) The Government decided to prohibit those religiously backed customs that were 'grossly immoral and revolting to humanity,' though it considered interference in religious matters to be beyond the province of rulers. And so the custom of *sati* (widow's burning along with husband's body), strangling and robbery of travellers, female infanticide, and human sacrifice were prohibited.

(2) The second group of reforms was that which was based on the notion of human equality. Accordingly, it 'was decided that no native of India should suffer in any way because of his religious opinions, but that all should be absolutely equal before the law. This principle was applied in the area of employment in government services also. The principle of secularism in obvious here: the law will be based on neither religious dictates nor judge with respect to a person's religion.

(3) The third group of reforms related to the English language. After considering the great success of Alexander Duff's policy of education in Calcutta and the powerful advocacy of Macaulay,

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[131] Vishal Mangalwadi, *India: The Grand Experiment,* p. 83 & *Missionary Conspiracy*, pp. 168-69.
[132] Shrinetra Pandey, *Bharat ka Brihat Itihaas,* vol. 3, part I, *Adhunik Bharat*, 2nd edn. (Allahabad: Student's Friend, 1955), p.353.
[133] J.N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India,* pp. 17-18

Bentick decided in favour of modern education. English was made the official language of the empire and the medium of all higher education. The policy of modern education, soon, gave rise to a number of Government schools and colleges. Medical education was also introduced at this time. Missions in India, as will be seen later, played a very important role in the spread of modern education that created a class of thinkers with secularist leanings to shape the future India.

The British Government in India continued its reforms in several other areas of Indian life; all through, the concept of human rights playing a significant role. In 1843, it rendered slavery in India illegal. Lord Dalhousie (1848-1856) passed a law prohibiting gross obscenities in the streets of Indian cities. However, the *secularist tendencies* of the Government made it to insert a clause excluding the temples, images, and cars of Hindu gods from the operation of the law.[134] The accusation of Hindutvavadis that the British were trying to force Christianity down the throat of Indians lacks evidence. If the Government had made laws on the basis of Christianity alone and not in accordance with the developing ideas of secularism, it would surely have also interfered in the religious practices of Indian religions that did not accord with the concept of Christianity. But the Government didn't do so because its policies were more oriented towards secular humanism. Vishal notes that traces of this secular humanism are evident even in Macaulay's speech in

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[134] Nudity is part of the idolatry and ascetic practices of Asian religions such as Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism.

Parliament in 1833.[135] The speech presented the manifesto for India's freedom.

iv. Educational Programs: Promotion of Secular, Modern, and Scientific Outlook. Before the arrival of the colonialists, there were no educational institutions in India; only Brahmins were considered qualified for higher education – that too in ancient texts.[136] When the House of Commons debated the renewal of the Charter of East India Company in 1792-93, Wilberforce suggested the adoption of such steps as would lead to the advancement in useful knowledge of the people of India. He suggested that schoolmasters and missionaries be sent to educate the people of India in modern knowledge. However, Wilberforce's move was opposed on the argument that the Hindus had 'as good a system of faith and morals as most people.'[137] A few years later, Charles Grant, one of the Directors of the Company, submitted a memorandum in which he suggested that the only way by which the moral condition of Indians could be improved was by imparting to them a knowledge of the English language which would become a means by which a world of new ideas would be opened to them.[138] Lord Minto, in 1811, suggested the improvement of existing colleges in addition to the establishment of new ones for the development of literary and scientific awareness in India. In 1813, a clause was inserted in the Charter Act that stipulated the setting apart of a sum of not less than one lakh rupees every year for the purpose of revival and improvement of literature and for the introduction and promotion of knowledge of the sciences among the

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[135] Vishal Mangalwadi, *India: The Grand Experiment*, p. 109.
[136] Laxminarayan Gupta, History of Modern Indian Culture, p. 224.
[137] V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, p. 500.
[138] *Ibid,* p. 500.

inhabitants of the British territories in India.[139]

The Christian Missions in Danish territories were already doing significant work in the field of Education by now. Now, the British Government itself was beginning to see the value of education for the betterment of India. In 1823, Mr. Adams appointed a Committee of Public Instruction to make suggestions with regard to the same. The preoccupation with the First Burmese War, however, hampered their work.[140] In his Minute of 1823, Elphinstone urged the establishment of schools for teaching of English and European sciences.[141] The Orientalists, however, were in favour of education in the oriental languages (Sanskrit and Arabic). Such a controversy made the Government to set up a Committee to settle it. Lord Macaulay was appointed the Chairman of the Committee in 1835. On February 2, 1835, Macaulay presented a Minute that argued the importance of modern education through the English language. Part of his argument was that Sanskrit was itself a dead language and the books written in it conveyed information of the least value for the modern context. In comparison, the English language had books rich in literature, science, arts, philosophy, politics, trade, and so on. He said, 'Whoever knows that language has already access to all the vast intellectual wealth which all the wisest nations of the earth have created and hoarded in the course of ninety generations.'[142] Earlier on he had argued in the House of Commons: 'The question before us is simply whether, when it is in our power to teach this language-English-we shall teach languages in which, by

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[139] *Ibid,* p. 501.
[140] *Ibid,* p. 135.
[141] *Ibid,* p. 501.
[142] As cited by Vishal Mangalwadi, *Missionary Conspiracy*, p. 412.

universal confession, there are no books on any subjects which deserve to be compared to our own....'[143] Consequentially, on March 7, 1835, Lord William Bentick passed a resolution in approval of Macaulay's Minute. The resolution emphasized the employment of all educational funds on English education alone and the discontinuation of Government funds towards oriental education. The cause set before was modern education. The importance of this resolution lay in its opting for secular, progressive, and modern education through a modern, living, and widespread language rather than of traditional education through a dead language. The Indian Reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy supported such a cause and opposed education in Sanskrit.[144] However, opposition arose against this resolution from both Hindus and Muslims who thought that the resolution to adopt English as the medium of education was motivated by a desire to gain converts. To remove such misgivings, Lord Bentick declared the policy of strict neutrality that said, 'In all schools and colleges, interference and injudicious tempering with the religious belief of the students, mingling direct or indirect teaching of Christianity with the system of instruction, ought to be positively forbidden.'[145] Thus, he introduced a secular policy of education in India. Regarding the impact of English education, Mahajan notes:

> ...English education broke the intellectual isolation of the Indian mind and brought it into close contact with literature, philosophy, economics, politics, history and science of the West. It broadened the outlook of the Indians who got new progressive, social and political ideas of the West in place of mythical geography, superstitions and rituals, legendary history, tyrannical monarchy and

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[143] V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, p. 502.
[144] Vishal Mangalwadi, *Missionary Conspiracy*, pp. 399-403.
[145] V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, p. 503.

pseudo science.[146]

According to the Government Resolution of 1844, preference for public employment was to be given first of all to those who were educated in Western science and in the English language. The Wood's Despatch of 1854 recommended among many things governmental encouragement of female education. Thus, the ground was laid for the development of secular education that played a crucial role in the development of Indian intellectuals that were of secular and rational perspectives and, later on, became the leaders of the nation. Through such modern education in the English medium Indians came into contact with Western ideas of rationalism, liberty, equality, socialism, democracy, nationalism, secular humanism, and naturalism. Thus, Western education played an important role in the promotion of secularism in India.

v. Impression on the Indian mind: An Attraction towards Secular Outlook. The Indians were greatly impressed by the manners, style, thought, and religion of the British. Regarding this impact, Macaulay said in his speech:

> …I see the morality, the philosophy, the taste of Europe, beginning to produce a salutary effect on the hearts and understandings of our subjects. I see the public mind of India, that public mind which we found debased and contracted by the worst forms of political and religious tyranny, expanding itself to just and noble views of ends of government and of the social duties of man.[147]

Aleyamma Zachariah points out nine areas in which the British impressed the Indians and elicited admiration towards them: activeness of manner, discipline

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[146] *Ibid,* p. 643.
[147] Vishal Mangalwadi, *India: The Grand Experiment,* p. 95.

and order in organization, scientific outlook in life, simplicity of Christian faith in religion, spirit of nationalism and faith in democracy in politics, equality of women in society, secularity of syllabi and opportunity for all in education, use of the printing press for communication, and the military might and modern equipments of war in warfare.[148] The power of such impression lingers even till today when many Indians consider aping the West equivalent to progress in modern civilization. The secular scientific outlook of the West communicated through its policies and education stirred many Indian thinkers towards reforms in Indian religion and society. Superstitious beliefs and mythologies began to be critiqued by Indian scholars hailing from the high caste themselves.

2. Missions

The earlier attitude of the British Government towards Missions was one of skepticism and vehement opposition. The British believed that if Protestant Missions were allowed in India that would only lead to tension and aggression among its Indian supporters and produce instability of governance. Therefore, in the beginning, the British followed the policy of supporting and patronizing the native religions as the earlier rulers had done. They undertook the management and patronage of a large number of temples, paid the salaries of temple officials, and sponsored the Hindu festivals and sacrifices. A pilgrim-tax was imposed to pay for all this. The British also refused permission to any missionary to settle in their territory. They also refused to employ native Christians and prevented by force any

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[148] *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India*, pp. 20, 21.

native soldier employed from becoming a Christian.[149] Vishal points out that while the Christian Missions received no money from the Company or the Government, until 1858, at least 26,589 Hindu temples were receiving financial support from the Company in the Bombay Presidency alone.[150] It was only through the long and toilsome struggle of reformers in England and India that this political patronage of superstitious idolatry was finally put down.[151]

Two Englishmen who played a pivotal role towards granting permission for Missions to work in India were Charles Grant and William Wilberforce. Charles Grant began his campaign for Missions in 1786-87. Grant observed that India was worse under the then British rule than it had been under the Mughal rule and tried to influence Christians in England to understand their moral responsibility for India's welfare; this, so that they would endeavor to produce in India class of persons who would be able to govern India after the pattern of Britain after Independence.[152] He believed that the problem of India was more a religious and a cultural one than anything else. He proposed religious conversion as the only solution for the Indian predicament.[153]

Grant's strive for getting official permission for missionary work in India had also in perspective the necessity of a political assurance of religious freedom to Indians so that they could evaluate their own beliefs and the beliefs of other faiths and, so, come to a rational conclusion as to which religion they should choose. Unless the Government back home, in England, guaranteed religious freedom and

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[149] J.N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India,* pp. 9, 10.
[150] Vishal Mangalwadi, *Missionary Conspiracy*, p. 137.
[151] Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, p. 9.
[152] Vishal Mangalwadi, *Missionary Conspiracy*, pp. 138, 145.
[153] *Ibid*, p. 149.

required the East India Company to enforce the same, there always lurked the danger of the Company's turning against the Missions in face of political and economical threat from the Hindus.[154] In fact, when the Vellore Mutiny broke out in 1806 and was erroneously attributed to missionary propaganda, Sir George Barlow prohibited the Serampore missionaries from leaving Serampore, from preaching openly in the bazaar, and the native converts from preaching unless they were sent forth as emissaries from Serampore.[155]

By an Act of Parliament in 1813, missionaries were permitted to land and work in India. Thus began an era of missionary enterprise in India when missionaries from Europe and America entered India in large numbers and began preaching the Gospel in unreached areas.[156]

Missions not only showed and proclaimed to the Indians the religion of the ruling Englishmen, who impressed them greatly,[157] but also prepared Indians to develop ideas of *individualism, democracy, human dignity, human rights, equality, justice*, etc, through their ecclesiastical, social, and educational programs. Following are some of the ways in which Missions made a secular impact on the Indian scenario:

i. Evangelism that Respected Freedom of Choice: Promotion of the Ideas of Religious Freedom. The evangelistic methods of Christian missionaries in India were based on the Biblical principles of individual human choice and

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[154] *Ibid*, p. 150.
[155] D.C. Ahir (ed.), *Ambedkar on Christianity in India* (New Delhi: Blumoon Books,1995), pp. 51-52.
[156] J.N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, p. 10.
[157] Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India*, p.20.

responsibility. Their objective was not religious conversions but human transformation. Based on the ethic of love and respect for all, they worked passionately to communicate the power and truth of Gospel. Laxminarayan Gupta writes that an attitude of tolerance was the reason why the missionaries did not attempt forced conversions as the earlier Muslims had done despite the fact that the British had been powerful in India for three centuries.[158] The missionaries had deep respect for the human right to freedom of thought and religion. To the missionaries, conversion to religion had to be based on individual choice and decision.

ii. Morality Based on Humanism: Promotion of the Ideas of Human Dignity, Worth, and Freedom. Men like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Mahatma Gandhi were greatly impressed by the moral teachings of Jesus. Roy's *The Precepts of Jesus- the Guide to Peace and Happiness* was an expression of his indebtedness to Christ for the humanist moral ideas he had learnt from Him. Though traces of humanism can be found in both Buddhism and Jainism, the value of being human in both religions is obscured by the doctrines of *karma, samsara, dukkha, maya,* and *punarjanma*. In both the religions, man is caught up in a vicious cycle of births and rebirths of which he is unable to come out. Man and animals differed only externally. In fact, a man could become a dog in his next birth. The world, according to Hinduism, was illusory and the human predicament (caste, gender, and then colonial rule) was a fate determined by karma. Such concepts in the Indian religions could not stir Indians towards either independence or rational and

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[158] Laxminarayan Gupta, *History of Modern Indian Culture,* p.218.

humanist moral acts. *What it means to be man was meaningless in a world-view where even animals and trees were worshipped as deities.* However, the Christian concept of morality - of truth, patience, love, kindness, compassion, equal treatment, and justice - being built on a surer foundation of the doctrine of God, creation, man, salvation history, and the Church began to gradually spread over India through means of evangelism, education, social work, and the free press. Soon, a class of Indians emerged who, though they might not admit their indebtedness to Christian humanist morality, reflected Christian ideals of the good.

There were others, however, who based on secular revolutionary ideas from France, Germany, and Russia, began to fight for Indian independence through guerrilla warfare and terrorism.[159] Western education was also introducing the youth of India to the radical nationalist thoughts of the West and stirring up a militant form of nationalism.[160] The Congress, instead, under the leadership of Gandhi waged a non-violent battle for the freedom of India.

Thus, the moral ideals of Christian humanism contributed towards the *secular battle* for national independence and the formation of a secular nation.

iii. Modernization of Education: Promotion of Secular Knowledge. Education was one of the best contributions of Missions to India. In fact, Christian Missions initiated educational programs in India long before the Government even thought of doing so. European missionaries opened 17 schools in 1725.[161] The

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[159] Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India*, p. 204.
[160] Krishna Reddy, *Indian History*, p. C149.
[161] Laxminarayan Gupta, *History of Modern Indian Culture*, p. 221.

London Missionary Society opened schools, first, in south India, and then in Bengal. These schools provided *free education* and the native Hindus sent their children to study for service in the Company. William Carey came to India in 1792 and spearheaded in Bengal the establishment of several schools that imparted modern education. The subjects that these schools taught were English, Mathematics, Geography, and Science. Carey translated the Bible into Bengali, and then along with his associates translated it into several of the Indian languages. The printing press that the Serampore missionaries brought to India contributed greatly towards the cause of education. The American Missionary Society was the first in the history of India to open a native girls' school in Bombay in 1824. In 1826, the Church Missionary Society established the first female school. With the conviction that only the English language could be the best medium for communication of modern education in India, the Scottish missionary, Alexander Duff opened a school for instruction in English at Calcutta.[162] His success in such venture later helped Lord Bentick to decide in favour of English language.

Christian missionaries also contributed greatly towards the development of the vernacular languages. For instance, Bengali in the past was considered a language 'fit only for women and demons.'[163] Therefore, Carey had to be invited from Serampore to Calcutta to teach Bengali. Modern Bengali literature was introduced and developed by the Serampore missionaries and by the Fort William College.[164]

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[162] Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India*, pp. 18, 19.
[163] Vishal Mangalwadi, *India: The Grand Experiment*, p. 171.
[164] K. Krishna Reddy, *Indian History* (New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., Ltd., 2003), p. C86.

The influence of the missionaries' works in education was widespread. By the strenuous efforts of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, a supporter of English education who opposed the opening of a Sanskrit College, the Hindu College was opened in 1820 in Calcutta for education in the modern arts and sciences.[165] The Hunter Report of 1882 brings out well the facts of missionary contributions towards the modernization and propagation of education in India.[166]

Thus, Christian Missions, by first initiating modern education and influencing the British Government towards the same, played an important role in the modernization of education in India. An age of Indian Renaissance dawned on the sub-continent as a result, and several reforms and rethinking were sparked in the field of science, society, religion, education, economics, and culture.

iv. Social Work: Application of the Ideas of Human Dignity, Equality, and Worth. The social works that the Christian missionaries did in India presented a living and visible example of their view of human dignity and equality. In addition to educational Missions that gave an occasion for all to study (irrespective of caste, race, or gender, the very first time in India), medical Missions brought 'help to the millions of the common people of India, for whom no skilled assistance in the time of trouble and death was available.'[167] Medical Mission also introduced women missionaries into the Indian sub-continent to minister unto the suffering women of India.

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[165] Laxminarayan Gupta, *History of Modern Indian Culture*, p. 227.
[166] Pages 8-16 as excerpted in Vishal Mangalwadi's, *Missionary Conspiracy*, pp. 360-373.
[167] J.N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, p. 20.

Orphanages, widows' homes, and hospitals were started at different places of India. Leprosy mission in India owes its origin to the Christian missionaries. Hostels for non-Christians were built in considerable numbers and managed by Christian Missions. The results were so impressive that demand for the extension of the hostel system throughout the country increased. Missions also reached the youth of Indian society, irrespective of caste or creed, by the Young Men's Christian Association, which also played an important role in the development of democratic orientations among them.[168] The concept of social work, irrespective of caste, creed, or gender, evolved out of the example that the missionaries set in India. William Carey's campaign against *Sati* in 1806, though motivated by his Christian attitude, could not have been successful on the basis of only biblical arguments. His campaign, together with that of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, with support from Lord Wellesley and Lord William Bentick, was right in a context that favoured humanist ethics in independence from religion. Some reformers, who had come to believe in the rationality of humanist ethics through English education and contact with the missionaries, traced these principles to their own religion than accepting it as particular only to Christianity. Thus, Missions in India influenced Indians to develop a humanist approach to culture, society, and religion and, in this way, contributed towards the development of a humanist kind of secularism in India.

v. Freedom of Press: Promotion of Free, Proven, and Unbiased Criticism of Politics. The beginning of the modern Indian secular press can be

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[168] *Ibid*, p. 25.

traced to the launching of *Friend of India* in English, *Samachar Darpan* in Bengali, and *Dig Darshan* in Hindi at the Serampore Mission in 1818.[169] The Indian type was first founded and used in the Serampore Mission's printing press.[170] Earlier on, Hicky had started *The Bengal Gazette* as a weekly in 1780. However, its vociferous criticism of Warren Hastings' policies led to the arrest of Hicky and the termination of the journal in 1782.[171]

Under the Governor-Generalship of Lord Wellesley, censorship was established over all the newspapers that were published in the country in 1799. Consequentially, the editor of the *Bengal Kirkaru*, Charles Maclean was deported to England for censuring by the means of print a public officer 'for acts done in his official capacity.'[172] However, Maclean didn't stay silent in England but continued his agitation against power abuse in India, which ultimately led to the resignation of Lord Wellesley.

Lord Hastings (1813-1823) believed in the importance of an independent press in the formation of public opinion and good governance. Therefore, he slightly modified the regulations regarding censorship in 1813. In 1818, he abolished the post of Censor and, thus, began an era of free press. Immediately, new journals sprouted out. However, there continued conflicts between the press and the Government. The Government of India deputed Sir Thomas Munro to investigate and report on this problem. In accordance with the recommendations

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[169] Vishal Mangalwadi, *India: The Grand Experiment*, p. 186 & Krishna Reddy, *Indian History*, p. C86.
[170] Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India,* p. 14.
[171] V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, p. 487.
[172] *Ibid,* pp. 487-88.

that Munro made, the Government placed new regulations before the Supreme Court in March 1823 that provided that no press was to be established nor any paper or book printed without prior licence from the Government. Indians like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Dwarka Nath Tagore protested against those regulations. Finally, with the assistance of Lord Macaulay, Law Member of the Government of India, Sir Charles Metcalfe cancelled these regulations in 1835. As a result, the Indian press became as free as its counterpart in England was.[173]

Earlier on in 1830, William Carey had written in the Serampore journal *Friend of India* that the most gratifying of the many indications of the extension of freedom in the 19th century was the establishment in India of a periodical press by whose potency the tyrannical dynasties of ages were crumbling rapidly away. He noted that it was the power of the press that had brought such a fast change in the Indian mind from superstition to rational thinking.[174]

During the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857, temporary restrictions were placed on the press but were soon withdrawn after the Mutiny. The Act of 1867 that is still in force aimed at the regulation of the printing presses and newspapers. In 1878, the Vernacular Press Act was passed that made regulations to make sure that the press does not misuse their freedom to incite feelings of disaffection towards the Government or to incite communal feelings. Also nicknamed as 'The Gagging Act,' this Act was condemned by the Indians all over the country.[175] Subsequent conflicts between the press and the Government went on.

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[173] *Ibid*, pp. 488-89.
[174] Vishal Mangalwadi, *India: The Grand Experiment,* pp. 190-1.
[175] V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History* , p. 489.

The concept of free press that the Indians were conceiving and for which they were contending was not originally Indian. It came from the West and *was popularised by the Serampore missionaries*, despite the fact that the Government was quite opposed to it. They used the press to confront the Government. Prof. Tripti Chaudhari writes:

> The British officials and trading groups were completely indifferent to their misery and the rising Bengali Intelligentsia, with a few exceptions, were struggling for their own recognition in the field of education and administrative sphere in the colonial set up. In this background **only the Protestant missionaries** in Bengal in the late nineteenth century came forward to voice the grievances of this [i.e., the peasants] class. It is hardly an exaggeration to state that they became almost the sole spokesmen of the ryots tied to the iniquitous land system.[176]

Thus, Missions in India played an important role in the initiation of printing press in India and the development of the concept of free press. Later laws and regulations that saw the modern freedom of press were built upon the earlier work of the missionaries. The foundation of free press in India that the Missions and the British Government laid was constituted after the principles of secularism that discouraged any abuse of the press for breeding communal ill feelings. The laws and regulations made were, consequentially, in line with those principles of factuality, rationality, fraternity, and humanism, unclouded by any religious fundamentalist zeal.

It has thus been seen that the Colonial rule in India played a very important role in the promotion of secularism in India. Renaissance humanism, building on to

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[176] As cited by Vishal Mangalwadi, *India: The Grand Experiment*, p. 196 [Author's Parenthesis and Emphasis].

cultural and social secularism, and Reformation religious privacy, developing on to political secularism, entered India with the Colonial conquest. Earlier on, the Government employed a non-interference policy towards Indian religions, but was soon awakened by the Evangelicals to its task of introducing reforms for the good of Indians.[177] All through, however, the steps taken were to be in line with humanist reason and non-interfering as far as privacy of religion was concerned. However, where religious practices conflicted with humanist principles, laws were prescribed. The unification of India under one British rule helped the spread of cultural, social, and political secularism even faster. Industrialists started industries to the cities leading on to mass migrations to them from the villages. This led to the beginning of the breaking of the traditional families as secularism began to invade social life through its economic impact.

The English law was adapted to the pluralist context of India, though in accordance with the principles of secularism. People of all religious backgrounds fared well during this time. The Crown's declaration in 1858 further assured secular policy and relieved Indians of any fears. Meanwhile, inter-communal suspicions and doubts intensified. The pluralist Hindus could not understand the fundamentalist Muslims. The Muslims, on the other hand, doubted if their future was safe in case the secular British departed and the Hindus got the country's reins. Various levels of responses came out as a result. Some Indian reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Mahatma Gandhi resorted to pluralistic religious perspectives. Others like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan contended for a rational view of

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[177] Vishal Mangalwadi, *India: The Grand Experiment,* p. 83 & *Missionary Conspiracy*, pp. 168-69.

life. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, on the other hand, fought for the emancipation of the oppressed dalits; the ideological influence behind the fight was the Western concept of human equality and rational existence. All these people were greatly impressed by Western culture and philosophy. In addition, the Governmental reforms also brought out in the India a consciousness and realization of the possibility of change, reformation, and upliftment.

Missions played an important role in both the ideological and political development of secularism in India. Their ideological impact in the field of religion came in through their emphasis on rationality of religion and condemnation of superstition. Education played an important role in bringing out this ideological change. Idolatry, caste system, and inhumane practices that were endorsed by religion came under severe rational criticism. The printing press that the Serampore missionaries popularised became a great tool in the hands of the reformers who used it to circulate journals and pamphlets to awaken their countrymen to a modern and rational way of thinking that was free from religious domination. Missionaries played an important role in the Indian Renaissance and the secularization of culture and society. Mahajan says about the Christian missionaries:

> … They spread not only Christianity but also education in the country. They opened schools and colleges and set up printing presses in the country. They opened hospitals and started other works of public charity. As a result of their activities, there spread a lot of skepticism among the Indians….[178]

Thus, both the British Government and Christians Missions played an

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[178] V. D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History,* p. 645.

important role in the early promotion of secularism in India.

CHAPTER FOUR

INDIANS AND THE CONTEXTUALIZATION OF SECULARISM IN INDIA

While the Colonialist contributed towards Indian secularism through the conveyance of Renaissance humanism and Reformation secular politics, Indian reformers of the Indian Renaissance provided the turns along which Indian secularism developed. The condition of India before its Renaissance was very pitiable. The country was politically, socially, culturally, economically, and religiously confused. Tradition and superstitions sabotaged individual and national development. Mahajan calls it a 'dark age' in which reason was suppressed by overwhelming and meaningless ceremonies and rites.[179] Superstitions, myths, and traditions reigned powerfully. Pessimism, fatalism, and hopelessness grew and spread widely under the patronage of Hindu *karmic* theory and Islamic doctrine of *kismet*. Social evils were not addressed by religiously inclined rulers. The condition of existence was taken for granted and reform was far-fetched. Thus, added to the misery of life was the ideological discouragement of reform or solution of any kind. However, the autonomous rationalism, individualism, and humanism of European Renaissance began to find way into India through the educational work of the Missions and British Government. Eventually, a group of Indians grew up whose

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[179] V. D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, p. 643.

way of thinking was influenced by European thought, philosophy, politics, and religion. It is not, therefore, coincidence that the early reformers and thinkers of Indian Renaissance were exclusively those who had received English education.[180]

This Chapter is a study of the role of Indian thinkers and reformers in the contextualization of secularism in India. It is their contribution towards secularism, rather than their other religious activities, that this section concentrates on. It will be seen how secularism influenced Indian minds through the doctrines of humanism and individualism that appeared during the Italian Renaissance and, later, developed during the Enlightenment. It must also be said that the individuals that this section studies are only few of the many that greatly contributed towards the promotion of secularism in India. This section analyses the nature of the contribution of Indians towards the promotion of secularism in the various facets of India. The contribution of each of these individuals, it will be seen, lies in their departure from traditional religion towards a modern and secular way of thinking under the influence Renaissance humanism, Reformation religious freedom, and Enlightenment rationalism and scientism.

1. Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833): The Promotion of Secularism in Religion and Society

Described as 'the founder of modern India' and 'the inaugurator of modern Indian Renaissance,'[181] Raja Ram Mohan Roy was powerfully influenced by

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[180] J.N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, p.21.
[181] S. Radhakrishnan, *Living With a Purpose*, p. 38.

Western liberalism, empiricism, pragmatism, and rationalism. His experiences with the *Sufis* and the Christians prepared him towards a rational and syncretistic approach to religion and society. The influence of John Locke, David Hume and Jeremy Bentham is obvious in his writings.[182]

Roy played a very important role in the area of reforms in Hindu society. He was also behind the starting of several English medium schools in Bengal, having himself realized the importance and urgency of modern education in India. He was one of those who prepared the scheme of the Hindu College for education in the modern arts and sciences. He was also the one who arranged for a house where Alexander Duff opened his English school in 1830, and also brought students to him.[183]

He spearheaded the contextualization of Western rationalism in the field of religion and society.[184] His opposition of idolatry, *sati,* polygamy, and the caste system were influenced by his study in comparative religion, Christian ethics, and Western humanism. Roy was friendly to all religions; yet, his evaluation of religions was based on the idea of universal humanism. One writer called him the 'harbinger of the idea of universal humanism, the humanist….'[185] He began the Brahma Samaj in 1828 with the purpose of reforming Hinduism. This Samaj, later on, played an important role in the stemming of the tide of religious conversions to Christianity since it symbolized the possibility of dignified and rational existence within one's own religion without converting another. Its liberal perspectives also

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[182] *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* (Microsoft Corporation: 2001).
[183] J.N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, p.33.
[184] V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History,* p. 648.
[185] *Ibid*, p. 512.

made a considerable impact on the young Indians, who advanced them in the sphere of Indian society and politics.[186]

2. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898): Promotion of Secularism in Education

The significance of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was enormous in the field of modern education among the Muslims. At a time when religious intolerance was swelling high and any talk between the Hindus and Muslims was unthinkable, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan voiced the tolerant views of Western humanism based on science and reason in his own community. He pleaded for a rational approach to religion, the eradication of irrational traditions and customs that hindered human progress, and the Hindu-Muslim unity. He called for a reinterpretation of Quran in the light of reason and proposed that the Bible and the Quran did not contradict each other. Probably, he understood well that the Muslim view of Christians as corrupters of the Quran could be a great hindrance in their opening themselves to the modernity of thought and sciences that the Westerners were empowered with.

In 1863, he formed the Association for the Study of Western Science and became the first Indian to start a society for the promotion of the scientific and rational method.[187] He started the journal *Tahzib-ul-Akhlaq* that advocated a rational approach to religion.[188] This journal also provided systematic treatments of social, religious, educational, and cultural issues.

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[186] *Ibid,* p. 649.
[187] Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India*, p. 45.
[188] K. Krishna Reddy, *Indian History*, p. C77.

One of the greatest contributions of Syed was in the field of education. He opened a school in Aligarh in 1875, which later developed into the Mohammedan Anglo-oriental College in 1877. The College was designed to be an exact copy of the Oxford and Cambridge Universities in England and provided instruction through the English medium. Aleyamma notes that this College became a centre of enlightenment and progressive thought. It was open to all communities, and both Hindus and Muslims were able to obtain advanced education at this College. He also founded the Mohammedan Educational Conference for the spread of liberal views among the Muslims.

Syed was also a great advocate of the secular state. During his life-time, he never spoke in favour of separatism, of politics as a religious issue, and of communal politics.[189]

Thus, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan contributed enormously towards the propagation of Western rationalism, scientism, humanism, and secularism in India; especially among his own community, the Muslims.

3. Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941): Promotion of Secularism in Literature

While Raja Ram Mohan Roy carried the influence of Western Renaissance on him in the area of social and religious reforms and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan carried it in the field of education, Rabindranath Tagore gets the credit for bringing

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[189] Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India*, p. 48.

Western humanism and secular thought into the field of Indian literature. To his credit go over 2000 songs in the Bengali language, nearly 60 volumes of poems, and several other writings, essays, travelogues, and treatises. He wrote 13 novels, around 50 plays, and nearly 100 short stories (a literary genre he introduced in Bengali) dealing with socio-political problems of India. His paintings and sketches number over 1500. He became the first non-European to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. The national anthem of India *Jana-Gana-Mana-Adhinayaka, Jaya he* ("Thou Art the Ruler of the Minds of All People, Dispenser of India's Destiny was composed by Rabindranath Tagore in 1911 and adopted by India in 1950. His *Amar Sonar Bangla* ("My Golden Bengal") was chosen as the national anthem Bangladesh and adopted in 1972. His writings were a blend of humanism, realism, romanticism, and mysticism in a vision for the universal man (*Vishwa Manava)*. His ideas and vision were influenced greatly by the West and differed much from Upanishadic philosophy. Kakoli Basak who did an extensive research on Tagore writes:

> …Tagore's idea of liberation differs from Upanisad…. Man's ideal is not to be Brahman but to live in the world amongst fellowmen.[190]

Tagore popularised the phrase 'human religion' (*manava dharma*) or 'the religion of man.'[191] For Tagore, any true religion had to be humanistic. In other words, the centre of true religion is man. Therefore, humans had the responsibility of intellectually evaluating a religious injunction before following it, rather than

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[190] Kakoli Basak, *Rabindranath Tagore A Humanist* (New Delhi: Classical Publishing Company, 1991), pp. 5,6.
[191] *Ibid*, p.155.

blindly following it.[192]

Tagore's humanist approach to religion freed him of any essential belongedness to any particular religious tradition. His pluralism was based on the principles of Renaissance humanism that accepted only those points of religions that accorded with its own principles. Consequentially, his Viswabharati was a place where people belonging to all sects could meet, where people were not distinguished on the basis of religion, and where institutional religion was not given importance.[193] Such was the rationality of approach that Tagore undertook, having been influenced by Western secular outlook and Romantic literature. Regarding this influence, Tagore wrote:

> We had come to know England through her glorious literature which had brought new inspiration into young lives. The English authors whose books and poems we studied were full of love for humanity, justice and freedom. This great literary tradition had come down to us from the revolutionary period. We felt its power in Wordsworth's sonnets about human liberty. We glorified init even in the immature production of Shelley written in the enthusiasm of his youth when he declared against the tyranny of priestcraft and preached the overthrow of all despotisms through the power of suffering bravely endured. All this fired our youthful imaginations. We believed with all our simple faith that even if we rebelled against foreign rule, we should have the sympathy of the West. We felt that England was on our side in wishing to gain our freedom.[194]

> It was chivalrous West which trained the enthusiasm of knight-errants ready to take upon themselves the cause of the oppressed, of those who suffered from the miserliness of their fate and we felt certain that the special mission of Western civilization was to bring emancipation of all kinds to all races of the world. Though the West came to our shores as cunning tradesmen, it brought with it also the voice and a literature which claimed justice

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[192] *Ibid,* p.168.
[193] *Ibid*, p.171.
[194] V. D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, p. 644.

for all humanity.[195]

To Tagore, man was the dominant and ultimate Reality: not the abstract, impersonal, and unmanifest Brahman. He believed that if there was a God, he had to be interpreted in human terms.[196] The literary significance of Tagore's humanist thought is paramount. It was not just humanism: it was romantic humanism. His poems, novels, and plays powerfully convey the dignity, beauty, glory, and spirituality of man along with the predicament he finds himself in, but sprinkled with hope and vision for a new age of human freedom, love, joy, peace, truth, and unity. His influence was nationally and internationally felt. He truly influenced writers in all Indian languages, as Ananda Lal of Jadavpur University, Calcutta, points out.[197]

Tagore's vision of one humanity living together in peace, also developed in him a pluralistic philosophy that was based on humanistic and scientific principles rather than on any orthodox religious exclusivism. He wrote:

> We should remember that the doctrine of special creation is out of date, and the idea of a specially favoured race belongs to a barbaric age. We have come to understand that any special truth or special culture which is wholly dissociated form the universal is not true at all.[198]

And so, any religious teaching that stood against the universality, equality, freedom, and intellectual progress of man was not true. That was Tagore's standard

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[195] *Ibid*, p. 644.
[196] Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India*, p.107.
[197] *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* (Microsoft Corporation: 2001).
[198] Quote from *The Centre of Indian Culture*, as cited by S. Radhakrishnan, *Living with a Purpose*, p. 77.

of measurement. Tagore had a powerful influence on the Indian youth.[199] When the British Government decided the Partition of Bengal, Tagore gave a call to the people – both Hindus and Muslims to observe the day timed for the Partition, October 16, 1905, as Rakhi Bandhan day[200] to demonstrate the unity of the people of Bengal. His symbolic and romantic appeal was powerful. Hindus and **Muslims** tied Rakhis on each other's wrists, as a symbol of fraternity of all Bengalis after taking a holy dip in the Ganges.[201] The power of Tagore's appeal consisted in his taking out the Rakhi-symbol from its religious setting and giving it a secular, national, and humanist significance.

Thus, Tagore contextualized secular humanism in India through a Romantic style of writing that blended with both the Indian classical and the folk style, and, thereby, appealed widely to the greater populace of the country. Gradually, the shift from myth to reality, from orthodoxy to libertinism, and from traditionalism to modernism began to appear in Indian art and literature. Individualism and autonomy of man with a secular outlook began to surface even as religious narrow-mindedness and suffocation of the individual began to be loudly decried.

4. Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948): Promotion of Secularism in Politics

Mahatma Gandhi championed the promotion of secularism in Indian

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[199] K.K. Bhardwaj, *Indian National Movement*, *Competition Success Review,* March 2003, p. 59.
[200] A Hindu festival in which the sister ties a thread, often having an amulet, around the wrist of the brother, who in return gives her a gift, often in rupees; the symbol signifies the brotherly relationship ensuring protection and care for the sister from the brother.
[201] K.K. Bhardwaj, *Indian National Movement*, *Competition Success Review,* March 2003, p. 59.

politics. Although Communism as a hard-core secularist movement was making advance as a political ideology in Russia and also beginning to influence a few in India,[202] it could not gain powerful ground in India owing to both the British policies and the nature of the Independence Struggle under the able leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The Gandhian perspective of Indian secularism was *Sarva Dharma Sambhava*, 'equal respect for all religions.' Mahatma Gandhi was a deeply religious person who was ardently devoted to the search for truth. To him Truth was God, and experimentation the way to it. His autobiography, *My Experiments with Truth*,[203] shows the manner in which experimentation and religion combined in his thought and life. In his book, he continually attributes the great escapes from sin in his life to the grace of God. It was this combination of religiosity and modern humanistic outlook in him that made him an able leader of the masses in the struggle for Independence. He tirelessly called for a Hindu-Muslim-Sikh-Christian unity based on a pluralistic theism that was tied to the concept of Truth as ultimate and one.

Earlier on, Gandhi believed that the ideals of the British Government provided for all of its subjects freedom of vocation, freedom of conscience, of thought and expression, and dignity of man. Therefore, he wanted the Indians to support it for their own betterment. However, after the passing of the Rowlatt Bill and the events following the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, his mind turned more

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[202] Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India*, p. 203.
[203] M.K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1927)

towards the independence struggle.[204] Subsequently, Congress convened a special session at Calcutta in September 1920, and it marked the beginning of the period that historians refer to as the Gandhian Era.[205] Gandhi assumed the leadership of the Congress Movement and dominated the political scene of the country till the end of the Gandhian Era in 1935,[206] when in 1934 he formally left the Congress though he continued to be its moving spirit until his death.[207] He opposed the British, not because their ideals were wrong but because their practices did not fall in line with their beliefs, at least as far as politics in India was concerned.

Rationality of thought was paramount for Gandhi. He envisioned a non-violent society in which all decisions 'were based on consensus, arrived at by rational discussion in which each strove to look at the subject in question from the standpoint of others.'[208] One of the arguments he put forth in opposition to religious conversion of the Untouchables by Christian Missions was that the Untouchables were not qualified enough to use reason to differentiate between what was true and what was false.[209] But this rationality of decision of Gandhi was overshadowed by his own belief in religious pluralism. It was the religious pluralism which Gandhi advocated, than any thing else, that greatly affected the development of secularism in India. Gandhi's religious pluralism is well expressed in his own words:

> My position is that all religions are fundamentally equal. We

[204] V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, p.452

[205] *Ibid*, p. 452.

[206] S. Sen, P.S. Chopra, & J.K. Chopra, *Indian History* (New Delhi: Unique Publishers, 2004), p.655.

[207] Krishna Reddy, *Indian History*, p. C163.

[208] Bhikhu Parekh, *Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* (Microsoft Corporation: 2001).

[209] D.C. Ahir (ed.), *Ambedkar on Christianity in India* (New Delhi: Blumoon Books, 1995), p. 27.

must have the same innate respect for all religions as we have for our own. Mind you, not mutual toleration but equal respect.[210]

It must be pointed out here that though pluralism may well be acceptable within a polytheistic and pantheistic framework that Gandhi avowed, demanding the same kind of acceptability from Christianity and Islam is unjust. In fact, Gandhi's pluralism falls far short of any true and lasting practical value. His pluralism could not make a Hindu to eat beef and a Muslim to eat pork. But, even in the presence of such conflicts, it demanded that Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians be willing to respect all religions as equally right. Obviously, Gandhian pluralism was not at all in keeping with fact and reason; especially, seeing that no two religions are fundamentally similar. Yet, it is this kind of a pluralism, which regards all religions as the same and all gods as variations of the One, which is being posited as the only true form of secularism, today.[211] The researcher believes that this development owes part of the credit to Gandhi's preaching of pluralism and opposition of religious conversions. Kazi Anwarul Masud says rightly that Gandhi spoke of secularism from the perspective of religion,[212] to which the researcher would add, from the perspective of religious pluralism[213] in keeping with polytheistic Hinduism.

Thus, it can be concluded that Mahatma Gandhi played a very important role in transmitting a pluralist picture of secularism among the Hindus. Gandhi's

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[210] *Ibid*, p. 26.
[211] http://forumhub.com/expr/1378.00.14.37.html & Sudheer Birodkar, 'Religious Tolerance and Secularism in India', http://www.hindubooks.org/sudheer_birodkar/hindu_history/secularroots.html
[212] 'How Fares Secularism in India', *The Daily Star,* www.thedailystar.net/2003/09/07/d30907020318.htm
[213] Laxminarayan Gupta, *History of Modern Indian Culture (*Agra: Prem Book Depo, 1973), pp. 276-279.

religious policy, therefore, cannot be considered truly secularist. Instead of basing inter-faith relationships on a secular outlook that separated religion from state, he argued that the truest form of religious harmony could only be based on an acknowledgement of the equality of all religions. The author believes that Gandhi would have done better if he emphasized more on equal respect to all humans rather than emphasizing on equal respect to all religions. The equality of humans is readily known; the equality of religions, not.

5. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (1891-1956): Promotion of Secularism among the Depressed Classes.

The significance of Dr. Ambedkar, in this study of secularism, is found in his ability to influence a secular Government on behalf of a community that was downtrodden by traditional religious standards. His importance is greater in the spreading secular ideas among the Depressed Classes.

There were at least four ways in which B.R. Ambedkar helped the promotion of secularism among the Untouchables. They were as follows:

i. Organizations, Societies, and Political Parties. After returning home from England in 1924, he established the Depressed Classes Institute (*Bahishkrit Hitkarnini Sabha*) in Bombay for the moral and material progress of the Untouchables.[214] In 1927, he started the Samaj Samata Sangh with the object of creating in the Untouchables the awareness of human equality and right to

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[214] Krishna Reddy, *Indian History*, p. C115.

freedom.[215] The three political parties that he formed were the Independent Labor Party in 1936, the All India Scheduled Castes Federation in 1942, and the Republican Party in 1956. These organizations and political parties played an important role in helping the Untouchables realize their role and rights in society and the state. The impact of Ambedkar's work was so great that his Independent Labour Party won 10 of the 15 reserved seats and 3 general seats in the Bombay Legislative Assembly in the 1937 elections.[216] In July 1945, he established the Peoples Education Society to promote the interests of his community.[217] As Law Minister of the Government of India in 1947, he played a leading role in the drafting of the Indian Constitution that ensured equality of rights and opportunity for the Untouchables.[218] Thus, Ambedkar helped to create a political awareness among the Depressed Classes that they could never have attained were they, through religion, relegated to only the margins of society.

ii. Journals and Literature. He started the Marathi fortnightly, *Bahishkrit Bharat* in 1927.[219] In November 1930, he started a weekly called the *Janata*. Among his prominent writings are *Castes in India: their mechanism, genesis and development* (1916), *Mook Nayak* (Dumb Leader, 1920)[220] and *Pakistan or Partition of India* (1946).[221] Thus, Ambedkar made use of the press that the Europeans had popularized to spread liberal and secular ideas among his people.

iii. Protest and Satyagrahas. Ambedkar led his community in many

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[215] *Ibid*, pp. C115-6.
[216] Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India*, p. 281.
[217] Krishna Reddy, *Indian History*, p. C116.
[218] Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India*, p. 148.
[219] Krishna Reddy, *Indian History*, pp. C115-6.
[220] Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India*, p. 146.
[221] Krishna Reddy, *Indian History,* p. C116.

satyagrahas[222] and other forms of protest to secure the rights of man that his community had long been denied by the Hindus. In 1927, he launched a Satyagraha to assert the Untouchables' right to draw water from a public tank at Malad, Kolaba district.[223] He also led a Satyagraha to claim his community's right to enter the famous temple of Kalaram at Nasik in 1930.[224] His other temple entry satyagrahas were at Amravati (1927) and at Pune (1929).[225] The aim of these satyagrahas was not to gain the favour of the deity at the temple but to assert the community's equality and rights as co-humans. In other words, the goal was **secular and humanist**. Thus, Ambedkar led his community to know and assert their rights as humans.

iv. **Secularization of Religion.** One of the most important contributions of Ambedkar towards his community was the movement of religious conversions that he led. At the Yeola Conference at Nasik, the leaders of the Scheduled Castes passed a resolution to the effect that the Depressed Classes should leave the Hindu-fold and join some other religion *that gives social and religious equality to them.*[226] Consequentially, on October 14, 1956 Ambedkar took *Diksa* and became a Buddhist in a public ceremony. The same day three lakh and eight thousand people followed him to embrace Buddhism.[227] The movement of religious conversions that Ambedkar started this day is of great historical significance. Within ten years, i.e. from 1951-1961, there was a 1,670.71 percent rise in the population of Buddhism,

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[222] *Satyagraha* literally means 'holding on to truth.' *Cf. Ibid,* p. C164. It was a non-violent way of protest for truth through fasting, strikes, and voluntary migration. *Ibid,* p. C164.
[223] *Ibid,* p. C116.
[224] *Ibid,* p. C116 & Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements,* p. 279.
[225] Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements,* p. 279.
[226] *Ibid,* p.146.
[227] *Ibid,* p.147.

much of it concentrated in Maharashtra itself.[228] The Ambedkarite Buddhism that his followers embraced is considered to be a 'humanistic, secularistic, democratic and scientific' religion.[229] By Ambedkar's inspiration a movement of mass conversions among the Untouchables spread all over the country.[230]

Criticism has been levelled against both the conversion movement[231] and Ambedkar's book *The Buddha and His Dhamma.*[232]Obviously, the conversions were not at all motivated by religious or spiritual reasons: they were motivated by social, economical, psychological, and political reasons. Ambedkar saw Lord Buddha as a social revolutionary, saw Buddhism as a purely rational religion, and saw the basic doctrines of Buddhism to be 'Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.'[233]

Though the Ambedkarite Buddhists do not fully subscribe to Ambedkar's secular views,[234] yet they all are said to hold that conversion to Buddhism meant becoming a new human, to be delivered from feeling untouchable, degraded, polluted, and hopeless.[235] Thus, Ambedkar helped to spread ideas of humanism, secularism, and rationalism among the Depressed Class. He also led his people into action through protests and satyagrahas to fight for their rights and ensured Constitutional guarantee of those rights as Chairman of the Drafting Committee that was set up to prepare a Draft Constitution for India.[236]

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[228] Adele M. Fiske, 'Buddhism in India Today', *Buddhism in the Modern World (*eds. Dumoulin & Maraldo; New York: Collier Books, n.d.), p. 141.
[229] Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements*, p. 151.
[230] Adele M. Fiske, 'Buddhism in India Today', p.141.
[231] *Ibid,* p. 141-2.
[232] Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India*, p. 153.
[233] Adele M. Fiske, 'Buddhism in India Today', p.142.
[234] *Ibid,* p. 142 & Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India*, p.151.
[235] Adele M. Fiske, 'Buddhism in India Today', p.142.
[236] Krishna Reddy, *Indian History*, pp. C208 & Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India*, p.148.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ROLE OF RELIGION AND SECULARISM IN THE INDEPENDENCE AND THE FRAMING OF THE CONSTITUTION

India has been a land of invasions and struggles for independence since the beginning of its history. Though each invasion of the past (by Aryans, Greeks, and Muslims) had contributed to the development of Indian culture and civilisation, it was the advent of the British that played an important role in the formation of modern, secular India. As has already seen, the British impact was already being seen in the area of Indian politics, education, and economics. The Government reforms and contributions of Indians such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Rabindranath Tagore, and Mahatma Gandhi had resulted to produce a humanist consciousness among many Indians. The humanist consciousness that exulted in the glory and dignity of man also spurred an intense craving for independence from foreign dominion. India, by now, was already united under one Government. The English language also served as the medium by which Indians inherited Western ideas of humanism and nationalism. It also made possible for Indians, once separated linguistically, to sit at table together and discuss the common problems of their country.[237] The final part of the Independence Struggle became greatly associated with symbols; songs and odes on India's glory were composed and sung, foreign goods were boycotted, and Western clothes cast aside

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[237] V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, p.380.

for local dress. Antagonism against the British was so high that 'many things associated with British values came to be shunned or viewed with suspicion, including Christianity.'[238] The object of this section is to prove that it was the support of Evangelicalism in England to the Gandhian struggle, despite the corrupt and communalist practice of the British Government in India, which eventually gave India its political independence. It also attempts to show that religious fundamentalism and secularism were burning issues during the Independence Struggle and that the Constitution of India was greatly influenced by Western secular humanism.

1. The Role of British Evangelicalism in India's Freedom

Evangelicalism is an Anglo-American Protestant movement that emphasises personal commitment to Christ and the authority of the Bible.[239] Evangelicalism reached its height in the eighteenth century during the time of John Wesley, the leader of Methodism, and the lay Parliament member William Wilberforce.[240] Wilberforce and his associates worked greatly to provide education to the poor. They founded the Church Missionary Society in 1798 and the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1807. They also contributed greatly to the institution of the British ban on slave trading in 1807 and the abolition of slavery in British territories in 1833.[241]

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[238] Subhash Agarwal, 'Law, Order, & Religious Conversions', *The Financial Express*, September 25, 2003, http://www.hvk.org/articles/1003/77.html
[239] 'Evangelicalism'*, Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* (Microsoft Corporation: 2001).
[240] *Ibid.*
[241] *Ibid.*

Prof. Donald Drew notes that, by the first half of the 18th century, England had already moved a great distance from Enlightenment Deism to rationalism to skepticism to cynicism. Christian morality was seeing a great decline and the hedonism became the philosophy of the majority. During this time, few evangelicals stood up to strengthen the Church and save their country. Among them were clergymen such as Venn, Romaine, Grimshaw, Berridge, Fletcher, the Milner brothers, Jones, Newton, Simeon, and laymen such as Zachary Macaulay, Lord Teignmouth, the Thornton brothers, Charles Grant, and William Wilberforce.[242]

The English evangelicals also expressed their concern for India. Noting the ruin that the East India Company was taking the country into, Charles Grant wrote that this state of disorder was heightened by the utilitarian interests of the Company and the natives together. He wrote that Indians too participated in corruption and monopolies in the names of Europeans.[243] In his *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain, particularly with respect to Morals and on the Means of Improving it. Written Chiefly in the Year 1792*, he argued that India was providentially put into the hands of England, not that it may draw an annual profit from it but that it might diffuse among its inhabitants, 'long sunk in darkness…the light and benign influence of the truth, the blessings of well-regulated society, the improvements and comforts of active industry.'[244]

Evidently, evangelicals in England had begun to see India as not a land to be exploited and plundered but as a ground to be sown with seeds of light and

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[242] Vishal Mangalwadi, *Missionary Conspiracy*, pp. 261-2.
[243] Vishal Mangalwadi, *India: The Grand Experiment*, pp. 83-4.
[244] *Ibid*, p. 85.

truth.[245] The growing opinion was that India was not to be considered to be forever in English hands; it, one day, had to be emancipated and delivered into hands that only Western education could render qualified. Missions played an important role during this time to prepare Indians for the civil services.

Lord Wellesley (1798-1805)[246] slackened the policy of recruiting only Europeans in the department of Justice by providing Indians opportunity to join the services.[247] He also invited two clergymen, Rev. Dr. Claudius Buchanan and Rev. David Brown, together with Rev. William Carey, to start the Fort William College in order to train civil servants.[248] Gradually, evangelical influence was already being seen in the new generation of Indian scholars who studied at this and other colleges run by missionaries. Indians were introduced to modern, humanist, and liberal thought. The goal of such training was to produce a class of Indians who would be modern in outlook, culture, thought, and work methods. The Government Resolution of 1844 provided that preference for public employment was to be given first of all to those who were educated in Western science and in the English language.[249] This resolution was in line with the evangelically influenced Macaulay's speech to the House of Commons on July 26, 1833, which contained the manifesto for India's freedom. In it, Macaulay had recommended that superiorly educated Indians be appointed for civil services.[250] Macaulay also said that though India was not in a position to receive immediately political freedom, yet

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[245] *cf.* Charles Grant's letter to Thomas Raikes, dated October 23, 1784, *MissionaryConspiracy*, p.148.
[246] Time period of his Governor-Generalship.
[247] Shrinetra Pandey, *Aadhunik Bharat,* 2nd edn. (Allahabad: Students Friends, 1955), p.305.
[248] Vishal Mangalwadi, *Missionary Conspiracy*, p. 197.
[249] V. D. *Modern Indian History,* p. 503.
[250] As cited by Vishal Mangalwadi, *India: The Grand Experiment*, p. 98.

the English could be in future proud of educating its 'subjects into a capacity for better government.'[251] Macaulay added at the end of his speech:

> …The scepter may pass away from us….But there are triumphs which are followed by no reverses. There is an empire from all natural causes of decay. Those triumphs are the pacific triumphs of reason over barbarism; that empire is the imperishable empire of our arts and our morals, our literature and our laws.[252]

This manifesto for educating Indians for freedom was supported by the growing evangelical view that India was committed into British hands not for exploitation but for freedom and transformation. Macaulay argued:

> …We shall never consent to administer the pousta to a whole community – to stupify and paralyse a great people whom God has committed to our charge for the wretched purpose of rendering them more amenable to our control….We are free, we are civilized, to little purpose, if we grudge to any portion of the human race an equal measure of freedom and civilisation.[253]

Vishal Mangalwadi sees Macaulay's speech as containing a mixture of both evangelical and secular humanist concerns. While his emphasis on God given duties points to a biblical worldview, his exulting on the glory and triumph of the British Empire, Vishal concludes, shows the extent to which he had fallen in line with the humanist spirit of his age.[254]

The concern for India's independence was already gathering among the evangelicals of Great Britain. One of the purposes of introducing English education in India was to educate Indians for freedom. Two decades before the Sepoy Mutiny, Charles Trevelyn, an evangelical civil servant and friend of the missionary

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[251] *Ibid*, pp. 87, 108.
[252] *Ibid*, p. 108.
[253] *Ibid*, p. 107.
[254] *Ibid*, pp. 108-9.

educator, Alexander Duff, had stated clearly the political purpose of Christian education in these words:

> The natives will have independence after first learning how to make use of it; and…trained by us to happiness and independence, and endowed with our learning and political institutions.[255]

Regarding this introduction of English education, Michael Edwards wrote that its 'moral overtones were, of course, Christian in character….' He continued:

> …Macaulay and others looked forward to a future in which Indians, having acquired a taste for "European civilization," might demand European institutions and even independence from Britain.[256]

Thus, the evangelicals played an important role, long before the 1857 revolt, to conceive of India's freedom and also prepare Indians for the administration of India. This they did not out of a utilitarian desire but out of a sense of trusteeship and responsibility as given by God to them for India's good.

2. The Rise and Fall of Secular and Anti-Secular Ideas in the Nationalist Movement

Local agitation against the British rule often erupted at different places of India. Some of the reasons behind these agitations were the selfishly motivated economic policies of the British, their racial superiority and discrimination. However, these protests were limited only to specific regions and could not marshal enough force since they lacked national support.[257] Even the first revolt of 1857 is

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[255] *Ibid*, p. 144.
[256] *Ibid*, p. 144.
[257] Krishna Reddy, *Indian History*, p.C145.

said to have failed due to such lack of national consciousness and support. Surendranath Banerji and Anandamohan Bose founded the Indian Association of Calcutta in 1876, which became famous among the educated class for its organized agitation against the lowering of maximum age-limit for the Civil Service examination from twenty-one to nineteen in 1877.[258] It also became popular among the tenants and plantation workers of Bengal by organising agitations for the protection of their rights against zamindars and the foreign tea planters, respectively.[259] It also tried to become an all-India body by convening two all-India conferences in 1883 and 1885.[260] Surendranath Banerji created the Indian National Conference in 1883.[261] However, all these attempts were also considered to have been essentially local in scope and membership. They could not have a national impact. Gokhale, in 1813, rightly observed that no Indian could have started a national movement embracing all India owing to the high distrust of political agitations that the officials had in those days.[262] It was the British who contributed towards the development of national consciousness in India and it was an Englishman who founded the Indian National Congress that became a mighty National Movement in India.

British imperialism, improvements in the means of transport and communication, the work of the Orientalists and Indian authors, the work of the reformers, the free press and modern education that the missionaries introduced, and the English language were some among the many factors that contributed to the

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[258] Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India*, p. 191.
[259] Krishna Reddy, *Indian History*, p. C147.
[260] *Ibid*, p.C147.
[261] Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India*, p. 191.
[262] V. D. *Modern Indian History,* p. 382.

development of national consciousness in India.[263]

By the encouragement of Lord Dufferin, Allan Octavian Hume, a retired English servant, along with the help of some prominent Indians, founded the Indian National Congress in 1885.[264]There is a great difference of opinion regarding the origin of the Indian National Congress. Mahajan lists six[265] of which the view of Surendranath Banerji, whose Indian National Conference merged with the Indian National Congress in 1887.[266] According to Banerji, the Congress was the 'outcome of those civilizing influences which Macaulay and his co-adjutors were instrumental in implanting in the Government of the country.'[267] What Banerji wanted to say was that the evangelical influence of Macaulay and believers such as Wilberforce and Grant was the reason behind the official initiative towards forming a national organization such as the Congress. It has been seen that the earlier Company men were not at all concerned about the state of Indians. It was only through the work of the evangelicals that the Government was being brought to an awareness of its God-given responsibility towards its Indian subjects. As one view goes, Lord Dufferin asked Hume to form a national body of Indian politicians who 'should meet every year and point out to the Government in what respects the administration was defective and how the same could be improved.'[268] Evidently, this was proof that the evangelicals had to a great extent succeeded in having 'civilizing influences' on the Government. Obviously, however, Dufferin and

[263] *Ibid,* pp. 377-381.
[264] Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India*, pp. 191-2.
[265] V. D. *Modern Indian History,* pp. 382-4.
[266] Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India*, p. 192.
[267] V. D. *Modern Indian History,* pp. 383-4.
[268] *Ibid*, p. 382.

Hume were both thinking in terms of welfare related suggestions and not in terms of political involvement by the Congress.

The first session of the Indian National Congress in 1885 at Bombay and the second session in 1886 at Calcutta went very well with praises and cheers for the blessings of the British rule in India. However, after the Madras session in 1887, its agitations against the Government's lack of concern for the people's welfare became more pronounced. Hume published a pamphlet entitled 'An Old Man's Hope,' which carried in it an appeal to the people of England in these words:

> Ah Men! well-fed and happy! Do you at all realize the dull misery of these countless myriads? From their births to their deaths, how many rays of sunshine think you chequer their gloom-shrouded paths? Toil, Toil, Toil; hunger, hunger, hunger; sickness, suffering, sorrow; these alas, alas are the key-notes of their short and sad existence.[269]

The voices that men like Hume rose for the good of India, their encouragement to Indians, were all foundational to India's quest for freedom. Charles Bradlaugh, the British social reformer and Member of Parliament attended the Congress Session of 1889 at Bombay, which was held under the Chairmanship of Sir William Wedderburn. Bradlaugh addressed the Congress at this session with these words:

> For whom should I work if not for the people? Born of the people, trusted by the people, I will die for the people.[270]

At the Lahore Session of 1893, which attracted great national attention, the President of the Session Dadaji Naoroji brought the following message from the Irish members of the British Parliament:

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[269] *Ibid*, p. 384.
[270] *Ibid*, p. 384.

Don't forget to tell your colleagues at the Congress that every one of the Ireland's Home Rule members in Parliament is at our back in the cause of the Indian people.[271]

Such support and encouragement from the English was a significant factor in the development of the Independence Struggle at a national level. For this study's purposes, two things become very important to consider. Firstly, it was the Christian British who strongly backed the national movement. Secondly, the overall concern was for the people of India as a nation; there was never a thought in terms of which religion one belonged to. In other words, the concern was secular; therefore, the movement was also secular. Here could be seen the beginnings of a secular form of nationalism in India. On his trip to the Lahore Session, Naoroji was given a robe of honour at the Golden Temple of Amritsar. Evidently, in this cause of nationalism there was no trace of religious fundamentalist feelings. Naoroji's speech at the Session makes this even clearer. He said:

Let us always remember that we are children of our mother country. Indeed, I have never worked in any other spirit than that I am an Indian and owe duty to my work and all my countrymen. Whether I am a Hindu or a Mohammedan, a Parsi, a Christian, or of any other creed, I am above all an Indian. Our country is India, our nationality is Indian.[272]

Thus, it has been seen that evangelical and British support was an important factor in the promotion of a national movement in India that followed secular principles.

However, this secular form of nationalism soon began to foster racial overtones. While evangelical support had a positive impact on the national

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[271] *Ibid*, p. 385.
[272] *Ibid*, p. 385.

movement, the actions of the British in India had a very negative impact on the development of the national movement. Whether the British were guided by avarice, fear, suspicion, or wisdom is debatable. Whatever, soon, racial feelings of hatred towards the English, *Angrez* or *Firangi*, began to surface. The seeds of such hatred were sown by the racist[273] and 'divide and rule' policies of British administrators in India.

It is said that Lord Dufferin began to grow suspicious of the Moderates[274] after the foundation of the Indian National Congress. They were being doubted for sedition, disloyalty, and double-sidedness.[275] As a result, the British officers began to try various methods to destroy this movement. Among these was the policy of 'divide and rule' that the British implemented to create schism between the Hindus and the Muslims within the Congress to weaken the nationalist movement.[276] The Government passed a law in 1898 that made it an offence to preach nationalism.[277] It also passed the Indian Official Secrets Act in 1904 to restrict the freedom of Press.[278] Such repressive measures stirred Indians to fight for independence and self-rule (*Swaraj*).

Of all these policies to stem the nationalist tide, it is the communal politics that the British played during this time that becomes more significant to this study of secularism in India. Regarding this British policy, Bipan Chandra writes:

> The policy of dividing Indians on communal lines and giving support to the communalists became, from the end of the 19th

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[273] Vishal Mangalwadi, *India: The Grand Experiment*, p. 242.
[274] The early Congressmen who supported British institutions.
[275] V. D. *Modern Indian History,* p. 388.
[276] *Ibid*, p. 389.
[277] Krishna Reddy, *Indian History*, p.C149.
[278] *Ibid*, p. C149.

century onwards, an important instrument of colonial policy in the effort to thwart the rising national movement.[279]

Speaking of the response of Indians to such a communal policy, he says:

> What has perhaps led to a certain misunderstanding of the nationalist leaders' viewpoint was their belief that divide and rule or a policy of counterpoise was a basic aspect of colonial policy and that there could be no long-term solution of the communal problem till the 'third' party, i.e., the colonial administration, left the scene.[280]

This observation of Bipan Chandra is noteworthy. He considers the leaders' viewpoint as a misunderstanding. And truly it has already been shown in this thesis earlier that it was the colonial rule itself that had really contributed towards the development of a national consciousness along secular lines in this country. Prior to the advent of the colonialists, India was divided into several religious, caste, political, social, economical, cultural, and linguistic divisions. The colonialists did not need to divide India any more: it was already divided. They only made use of these divisions in society. However, after unification under one rule, spread of education, and infusion of secular humanist thoughts Indians began to think in terms of the nation as separate from religious leanings and realised that the British in India were employing the policy of divide and rule. The misunderstanding was not that the British were employing such policy but that it was a permanent and basic aspect of colonial policy. It has already been seen earlier, that there were many Englishmen in England and also in India who looked at Indians as fellow humans, as a nation, and their relationship to them as trustees of God to save, educate, reform, and prepare India for freedom.

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[279] Bipan Chandra, *Communalism in Modern India* (New Delhi: Vani Educational Books, 1984), p. 243.
[280] *Ibid*, p. 241.

The second phase of the nationalist movement headed by the Congress is called by historians as the Extremist or Militant Nationalist Movement and is dated from 1905 to 1919.[281] Influenced by Western education and radical and revolutionary ideas of nationalism, many young and educated Indians took to extremism and militancy as the only way to India's freedom.[282] Indian press played an instrumental role during this time. It not only put the Indian case before the people asking for action, but also brought news of a number of political assassinations in Europe. It also kept the Indian youth informed of all the revolutionary incidents and ideas of hard-core Fascism, Nihilism, and Marxism that were taking the place of in Western secularism. Influenced by such news, some Indians also turned to pistol and bomb for freeing their motherland of foreign rule.[283] However, some Western influenced revolutionaries gradually came to understand the cultural and philosophical bankruptcy of Western totalitarianism. An important revolutionary figure at this time was Manabendra Nath Roy (1887-1954), an Indian humanist philosopher, political thinker, and participant in revolutionary movements in India, Mexico, the Soviet Union, and China. M.[284] He left India for China and Japan in 1915 in search for arms, went to America, and came into contact with the ideas of Marx. At the behest of the British, he was arrested but managed a bail and fled to Mexico in 1917. In 1919, he founded the Mexican Communist Party. In 1920, he participated in the 2nd Congress of the Communist International at the invitation of Vladimir Ilich Lenin. Lenin hailed him as the

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[281] Sen & Chopra, *Indian History*, p. 502.
[282] Krishna Reddy, *Indian History*, p. C149.
[283] V. D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, p. 400.
[284] 'Roy, Manabendra Nath', *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* (Microsoft Corporation: 2001).

'symbol of the revolution in the East.' When he returned to India in 1930, he was arrested by the British and imprisoned for six years. His experiences in the revolutions of the West and at home provided the background for the deep reflections and writings during his imprisonment.

After his release from prison in 1936, he declared his break with Marxism and rejection of its doctrine of historical determinism and class struggle. His reflections made him conclude that a cultural and philosophical revolution was foundational to any attempt for social, political, and economic revolution. Roy founded the Radical Democratic Party in 1940 'to promote a humanist approach to politics, and support the British war effort against Fascism.' However, he disbanded the Party in 1948 after becoming convinced that political parties were not legitimate instruments to spread democracy. He started the Radical Humanist Movement, which linked with other groups in Europe and America to form the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) in 1952, of which Roy was elected a founder Vice-President. The radical humanism of Roy's philosophy was a materialist philosophy seeking to restore to 19th-century radicalism its humanist essence and democratic spirit.[285]

The period of 1905 and 1919 also saw the rise of Hindu revivalism, culturalism, and religious politics that opposed the secular nationalism of the Indian National Congress. Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883), Ramakrishna Paramahamsa (1836-1886), Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), Aurobindo Ghosh (1872-1950), and Annie Besant (1847-1933) contributed greatly towards creating

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[285] *Ibid.*

among Indians an awareness of the greatness and riches of Indian spiritual heritage. Lokamanya Tilak (1856-1920) applied this cultural pride that the revivalists preached of to nationalist politics. Although he began as a moderate, he, later, ended up being an extremist. In 1893, he organised the Ganapati festival and thus became the pioneer in implementing religious orthodoxy as a method of mass contact.[286] As Reddy says, he also became the first to develop a patriotic-cum-historical cult through his organisation of the Shivaji festival in 1895.[287] The fiery speeches given during such occasions were geared towards provoking the people's emotions against the Europeans.[288] Tilak popularised the *swadeshi* movement that decried everything Western and preached intense love for India and its things.[289] He advocated violence and militancy on the religious authority of Hindu Scriptures such as the Bhagwat Gita.[290]He called upon the people to 'rise above the Penal Code into rarified atmosphere of the sacred Bhagwat Gita.'[291] He labelled Muslims and Christians alike as *mlecchas*.[292] To Tilak, personal religion (*Swadharma*) could not be separated from self-rule (*Swaraj*). In other words, the goal of freedom was to arrange the functioning of society after the principles of one's own religion. This was the kind of freedom that Tilak looked to; a freedom that ensures a kingdom of righteousness (*dharmarajya*) based on the principle of *dharma* that one's own religion taught about.[293]   It was this kind of a *Swaraj* that Dr. Ambedkar greatly

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[286] Krishna Reddy, *Indian History*, p.C150.
[287] *Ibid*, p. C150.
[288] V. D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, p. 401.
[289] Sen & Chopra, *Indian History*, p. 503.
[290] Vishal Mangalwadi, *Missionary Conspiracy*, pp. 96, 97.
[291] V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, p. 401.
[292] C.V. Matthew, *The Saffron Mission* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 1999), p.152.
[293] *Ibid*, pp. 151-153.

opposed. In his book *Annihilation of Caste* he wrote that '*Swarajya* (Independence) has got no significance, without establishing a caste-less society.'[294] This must be understood in the light of the fact that the caste-system is integral to Brahmanism and the concept of *dharmarajya* involved the arrangement of society on the basis of *varnadharma* (Caste-Obligation) as well. Tilak's emphasis on Hindu *dharma* obscured any conception of humanism and modernism. It was this kind of a mentality that made him rise a *fatwa,* a religious protest, on grounds of 'religious tradition in danger,' against Sir Andrew Scoble's 'Age of Consent' bill in 1891, that sought to raise the minimum age of a child-bride from 10 to 12 years, before one could have intercourse with her.[295] This narrow-minded, fundamentalist, and communal form of nationalism that Tilak preached of led to the development of a cultural nationalism that raised the same cry that Swami Dayananda Saraswati once raised: 'India for Hindus.'[296] Lala Lajpat Rai(1865-1928), leader of the 'college' faction of the Arya Samaj also played an important role in the development of such extremism during his time.[297] He ridiculed Westernized Indians who, he thought, were forgetting their own hoary culture.[298] Thus, Tilak became the pioneer of communal, religious, and militant nationalism in India. The British, therefore, called him the 'Father of Indian Unrest.'[299] Later Hindu movements such as the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh borrowed greatly from

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[294] As cited by Vishal Mangalwadi, *India: The Grand Experiment*, p. 132.
[295] Vishal Mangalwadi, *Missionary Conspiracy,*pp.150,151.
[296] Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India*, p. 67.
[297] Krishna Reddy, *Indian History*, p.C151.
[298] Sen & Chopra, *Indian History*, p. 503.
[299] Krishna Reddy, *Indian History*, p.C150.

Tilak.[300]

The British played an important role in promoting Hindu-Muslim schism during this period. As a result, even Christians, equated with the English, came to be hated. The establishment of the Muslim League in 1906 under British support drew a more definite line between the Congress and the Muslims.[301] In 1909, British Government introduced the Minto-Morley Constitutional Reforms, in which it provided separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims in response to the demand of a Deputation of Muslims to Lord Minto in1906, headed by Agha Khan.[302] As a result, there was great unrest among the Hindus who saw this as proof of the alliance of Muslims with the British against them.[303] The work of Dayananda Saraswati, Vivekananda, and Tilak became the background for the rise of communalism among the Hindus. Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya organised the Hindu Mahasabha in 1923 and led fanatic Hindus in communal riot against the Muslims.[304]

Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966), popularly known as Vir, gave the newly emerging Hindu nationalism the shape of fascist nationalism which he got from Mussolini during his tenure as president of the Hindu Mahasabha from 1937 to 1942.[305] He had, earlier on, founded a secret society called *Abhinav Bharat* (Modern India) as an Indian copy of the Italian revolutionary Mazzini's 'Young

[300] C.V. Matthew, *The Saffron Mission*, p. 162.
[301] Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India*, p. 158.
[302] Sen & Chopra, *Indian History*, p. 511.
[303] C.V. Matthew, *The Saffron Mission*, p. 165.
[304] Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India*, p. 170.
[305] Vishal Mangalwadi, *India: The Grand Experiment*, p. 140.

Italy.'[306] In 1923, he wrote the book *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu,* in which he promoted ideas of Hindu racism and cultural nationalism. He defined *Hindutva* as an ethnic community that possesses a territory and shares racial and cultural features.[307] A copy of this book reached the hands of Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, founder of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (1925). Influenced by the Hindu nationalism of Vir Savarkar, he wrote:

> The Hindu culture is the life-breath of Hindusthan. It is, therefore, clear that if Hindusthan is to protected, we should first nourish the Hindu culture….It is to fulfil this duty of protecting the Hindu society that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh has come into existence.[308]

Both Savarkar and Hedgewar were highly influenced by Italian Fascism and German Nazism.[309] In 1926, Mussolini became the dictator of Italy. The same year Hedgewar introduced among his cadres a uniform of black forage caps, khaki shorts and khaki shirts, all of which in addition to other things made Jawaharlal Nehru call it 'an Indian version of fascism.'[310] Vir Savarkar's younger brother, Ganesh Damodar Savarkar printed, in April 1907, 2,000 copies of the Marathi version of the autobiography of Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872) the Italian revolutionary and prophet of European nationalism.[311] He also published a pamphlet in 1909 that contained several inflammatory verses. On 21 December 1909, members of the Abhinav Bharat Society (Indian version of Mazzini's Young Italy) murdered Jackson the District Magistrate of Nasik who had convicted Ganesh

[306] *Ibid*, p. 282.
[307] *Ibid,* p. 283.
[308] As cited by C.V. Matthew, *The Saffron Mission*, p. 180.
[309] Vishal Mangalwadi, *India: The Grand Experiment*, pp. 283-4.
[310] *Ibid,* p. 283.
[311] V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, p. 401.

Savarkar. The pistols for this murder were supplied by V.D. Sarvarkar.[312] This was one of the many acts of violence that the revolutionaries, under the inspiration of Mazzini and Garibaldi of Italy and the Sinn Feinners of Ireland, took to all over India during the period of 1905-1919.[313]

After 1919, it was the October Revolution of Russia and Lenin's socialistic principles that began to influence Indian nationalism.[314] As has already been seen in Chapter 1, Communism follows the atheistic form of secularism, is hostile towards religion and openly opposes it.[315] The difference between secular humanism and Communism is that while the former is individualist, the latter is socialist. Though Communism in India was not openly opposed to religion, it did contribute towards the decline of religious nationalism in the country. Mahajan writes:

> …The slogans and code words like 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai', 'Bande Mataram', 'Om', 'Ram Hari', 'Allaho Akbar' and 'Sat Sri Akal' were substituted by 'Inqilab Zindabad', 'Down with Imperialism', 'Long Live the Proletariat' and 'Long Live India.' A leaflet issued by Naujawan Bharat Sabha discarded Buddha and Christ and described Karl Marx and Engels as the greatest men of the world. While the old revolutionaries got their inspiration from the Bhagwat Gita and the writing of Aurobindo, Vivekananda and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the new revolutionaries got their inspiration from the writings of Marx and Engels. While the revolutionaries like Lala Hardayal and his followers thought in terms of the past glory of ancient India, Sardar Bhagat Singh and his comrades relied upon the master-pieces of Lenin and such books as 'Roos Ki Rajya Kranti.'[316]

Thus, the Russian Revolution of 1917 contributed greatly to the fall of the tide of religious nationalism and communalism in India, which would otherwise

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[312] *Ibid*, p. 401.
[313] *Ibid,* p. 405.
[314] *Ibid,* p. 405.
[315] Josif Ton, *A Christian Manifesto to a Socialist Society* (Bombay: Jyoti Booklets, 1982), p.8.
[316] Meaning 'The National Revolution of Russia.' V. D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, p. 405.

have proved fatal to the existence of secularism in India.

Mahatma Gandhi entered Indian politics with the weapon of *Satyagraha* in 1919. Following the Rowlatt Act of 1919, which gave power to the British officers to lock up without trial anybody they liked for as long as they liked,[317] and the Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy at Amritsar, Gandhi took control over the Congress having lost all faith in British fairness. On August 1, 1920 he launched the All India non-violent Non-Co-operation Movement against the Government, which became a mass movement all over India. The Non-Co-operators were to boycott government and semi-government schools, colleges, courts, and elections; surrender titles and honorary offices and resign from nominated seats in local bodies; refuse to attend government or semi-government functions. The military, clerical, and labouring classes were to refuse to offer themselves as recruits in Mesopotamia. Above all, however, the significance of Gandhian Non-Co-operation Movement lay in its positive synthesis of secularism, humanism, and *swadeshi* in one National Movement. The Non-Co-operators were asked to establish national schools and colleges, use *Khadi* or hand-spun/woven cloth, develop Hindu-Muslim unity and harmony, shun untouchability, and work towards the upliftment of women.[318] Thus, Gandhi's entrance in Indian politics helped to salvage the Nationalist Movement from floundering along either fascist or communist lines. Secularism, as a result, was being revived. However, when Gandhi had to call back the Movement in 1922, following the *Chauri Chaura* village incident, there was great agitation and disappointment throughout the country. As activities of the Congress slackened,

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[317] Sen & Chopra, *Indian History*, p. 511.
[318] Krishna Reddy, *Indian History*, p.C166.

Hindu-Muslim riots broke out at several places in India. And this lasted for about six years.[319] Throughout this time, Gandhi kept away from active politics and concentrated on social and economic reforms.[320]

After the Simon Commission visited India in 1928, the Congress resurfaced in a powerful protest against British imperialism. In April 1930, Gandhi violated the Salt Laws and, thus, began the Civil Disobedience Movement. The principles of non-co-operation were revived to the extent that the British Government could see that the Indians could no longer be coerced to calm down. Gandhi began the Quit India Movement in August 1942. The Government used every available violent means to suppress the Movement. Gandhi and other important leaders were arrested. Under the absence of leadership the Movement came to a failure.[321]

3. Religion and Secularism in the Final Phase of the Independence Struggle

This section will show that religion was also a major issue that affected the nature of India's independence. While the Muslim League doubted any possibility of pure secularism under the Congress, the Congress was adamant that it represented true secularism. The time around the Independence was also marked by communal riots and violence at different places in India. The nature of India's independence was greatly influenced by Lord Mountbatten's attempt to resolve such a state that India had plunged itself into due to the inability of its leaders to

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[319] Sen & Chopra, *Indian History*, p. 655.
[320] *Ibid,* p. 655.
[321] V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, p. 421.

come to any peaceful agreement.

A resolution had been passed by the Congress on 27 July, 1940, offering co-operation to the British in World War II provided India's demand for independence was accepted and a provisional National Government responsible to the then Central Assembly was formed at the Centre.[322] The Viceroy issued a statement on 8 August, 1940 making it clear that Great Britain 'could not contemplate transfer of their present responsibilities for the peace and welfare of India to any system of Government whose authority is directly denied by large and powerful elements in India's national life, nor could they be parties to the coercion of such elements into submission of such a Government.' The powerful elements that the Viceroy was referring to were the Hindu Nationalist groups like the RSS and the Hindu Mahasabha, the Muslim League, and the Depressed Classes led by Dr. Ambedkar.[323] Evidently, in the midst of such internal disagreements, freedom would be meaningless. The Viceroy, however, declared that after the war a 'representative Indian constitution-making body would be set up and the Indian proposals as to its form and operation would at any time be welcome.'[324] The Congress was greatly disappointed by this declaration.

On August 14, 1941, during the World War II, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Winston Churchill joined with the president of the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt in signing the Atlantic Charter. The Atlantic Charter was a joint declaration by the United States and Great Britain expressing certain common

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[322] *Ibid*, p. 417.
[323] Mangalwadi, *India: The Grand Experiment*, pp. 129ff, 270; Reddy, *Indian History*, p. C168-9.
[324] V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, p. 417.

principles in their national policies to be followed in the post-war period.[325] The two leaders made and signed this declaration that the United States and Great Britain sought no territorial, or any other, enhancement from the war. They proclaimed **the universal right of self-determination that recognised the right of all peoples 'to choose their own form of government and not to have boundary changes imposed on them.'** Also was the right of all nations to have access to the Earth's natural resources and the principle of freedom of seas recognised. The declaration also expressed the conviction 'that humanity must renounce the use of force in international relations, and affirmed the need for disarmament after the expected Allied victory.'[326]

On January 1, 1942, the United States, Great Britain, the USSR, and 23 other countries signed the United Nations Declaration on January 1, 1942 in a conference at Washington, D.C. that contained a declaration that they 'subscribed to a common programme of purposes and principles embodied in the joint declaration...known as the Atlantic Charter.'[327] The United Nations (UN) became the official name for this anti-Axis coalition though they were more often referred to as the Allies.[328] The United Nations Declaration became the basis of the United Nations Organisation established at San Francisco in April-June 1945.

In June 1945, India became a charter member of the UN. Nehru was released from jail.[329] World War II ended with unconditional surrender of Japan to the Allied powers on September 2, 1945. The Civil Disobedience Movement and

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[325] 'Atlantic Charter', *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* (Microsoft Corporation: 2001).
[326] *Ibid.*
[327] *Ibid.*
[328] 'World War II', *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* (Microsoft Corporation: 2001).
[329] 'India', *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* (Microsoft Corporation: 2001).

the Quit India Movement had already established the Congress as a powerful anti-British Movement, by now. There was also great dissension in the armed forces of India, particularly in the Navy. In addition, Great Britain had incurred so much expenses and debts from the War and had so many problems to tackle at home that it felt unwise to keep herself involved in India when all her energy was required at home.[330] It was becoming clearer that the British could not continue their rule in India anymore. In 1945, the Labour Party came to power in England. The Labour Government was considered to be sympathetically inclined towards the Indian demand for freedom and, as soon as the pre-occupation with the war was over, the Labour Government tried to solve the Indian problem.[331]

Clement Richard Atlee (1883-1967), the Prime Minister of England and leader of the first Labour government presided over the granting of independence to India.[332] Brought up in a Christian and Philanthropic household, Atlee was highly committed to humanitarian and social works, which he often did out of his own pocket.[333] He had always had a keen interest in the Indian affairs. And so, when he became the Prime Minister of England in 1945, he made it very clear that even if Great Britain was able to subdue India by force, that was not at all profitable, and that the good-will of Indians towards Britain could only be ensured by granting India complete independence.[334] He began his mission to liberate India by first sending the Cabinet Mission and, thereafter, Lord Mountbatten to complete the

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[330] V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, p. 423.
[331] *Ibid,* p. 421.
[332] 'Attlee, Clement Richard', *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* (Microsoft Corporation: 2001).
[333] *Ibid.*
[334] V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, pp. 423-4.

process of transfer of power in India.[335]

Three Cabinet members, Pethick-Lawrence, Secretary of State for India under the Labour Government, Sir Stafford Cripps and Mr. A.V. Alexander arrived in India on March 23, 1946. This Cabinet Mission had a series of meetings with the different parties, prominently the Congress and the Muslim League. Following the discussions, a Tri-party Conference was held between the Government, the Congress, and the Muslim League at Simla. Seeing that the Congress and the Muslim League could not arrive at an agreement, the Cabinet Mission, with the full approval of the British Government, suggested their own Plan for solving the constitutional deadlock.[336] Significant for this study of secularism was the Mission's proposal of separate electorates for minority communities to ensure balanced representation. Only three classes of electorates were recognised; they were the General (that included all those who were neither Muslims nor Sikhs), the Muslims, and the Sikhs (only in the Punjab).[337] The Europeans, the Anglo-Indians, the Christians and various other groups that were earlier given separate representation were no longer to be recognised as separate entities.[338] It must be noted here that the earlier *Communal Award* announced by Ramsay MacDonald in 1932 provided separate electorates also for Indian-Christians, Anglo-Indians, and Europeans, along with Muslims and Sikhs.[339] The Cabinet Mission also ruled out the conception of Pakistan for the following some reasons:[340]

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[335] *Ibid,* p. 424.
[336] Sen & Chopra, *Indian History*, p. 535.
[337] *Ibid*, p. 536.
[338] *Ibid*, p. 537.
[339] V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, pp. 324-5.
[340] Sen & Chopra, *Indian History,* p. 536.

1. There would still remain in Pakistan and India a significant number of both Hindus and Muslims.

2. It was not considered just to include in Pakistan those Districts of the Punjab, Bengal, and Assam in which the predominant populace was non-Muslim.

3. The partition of the Punjab and Bengal would not be acceptable to a very large proportion of the inhabitants of these Provinces.

4. The division of the Punjab would also mean the division of the Sikhs.

5. The conception of Pakistan would disrupt the Post and Telegraph System and the Defence Force.

Evidently, religious harmony and maintenance of secularism was a chief concern of the British Government. After some expressions of frustration, the Muslim League accepted the Plan on June 6, 1946 followed by the Congress on June 25, 1946. Subsequently, the elections to the Constituent Assembly proposed under the Plan were held. The Congress captured 199 seats out of the total of 210 General seats, and 211 seats out of the 296 seats allotted to the British India. The Muslim League could only win 73. This greatly disappointed Jinnah who had already become distrustful of Congress' capability or motive to ensure communal harmony in the country after the failure of the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1920; and after the Congress had rejected his fourteen demands in 1928, he had come down to publicly denounce the Congress. He is known to have said that the

'Muslims can expect neither justice nor fair play under Congress Government.'[341] Obviously, it was impossible for the Hindu dominated Congress to acquiesce to the League's demands for special treatment of Muslims.[342] In January 1940, Jinnah had also declared that Hindus and Muslims formed two separate nations, and in March, the same year, he declared at the Lahore Session that the Muslim nation must have a separate independent state.[343] So, when the Muslim League accepted the Cabinet Mission's Plan, it did make clear in doing so that its demand for Pakistan was unshaken. However, the failure in election had a very negative impact on the Muslim League.

On 29 June 1946, the Muslim League rejected the Cabinet Mission Plan and proposed to go into direct action against the non-Muslims, i.e. the Hindus. The Leaguers started riots at several places in Punjab, Calcutta and East Bengal, leading to much loss of life and property. Lord Mountbatten was appointed the Viceroy of India in March 1947, having been entrusted with the task of transferring the government into Indian hands. On arriving in India, he observed that no compromise could be possible between the Congress and the Muslim League. Consequentially, he decided in favour of India-Pakistan division after consulting with both the British Government and the Indian leaders. The Indian Independence Act was passed by the British Parliament in July, 1947, which constituted two independent States of India and Pakistan with effect from August 15, 1947. Dr. Lal Bahadur Shastri saw the partition of India as inevitable for the maintenance of

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[341] Aleyamma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India*, p. 160.
[342] V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, pp. 320-1, 360.
[343] *Ibid*, p.161.

secular government. He said:

> The partition of India was an event of great importance. It ushered in an era of independence, though the enthusiasm for it was somewhat diminished due to division. But even the Partition is not without advantage. Had India remained a united whole, the Mussalmans would surely have dominated and would have shared in the amenities of life more than their due. Right traditions could never have developed as at every step special claims of the Mussalmans would have been advanced. They could have taken roots only if homage were not paid to Muslim appeasement. But seeing the history of the Indian National Congress this would have been impossible….But as I never understood Muslim mind and character, it also never adhered to principles in its dealing with Mussalmans. Expediency always came in operation in its treatment with Mussalmans. **The territorial integrity of India could be a benefit to the country only in the event of equal treatment to all and in the absence of Muslim appeasement policy.** Since the Congress was incapable of doing it, the division of the country cannot be seriously lamented. It was choosing between the two evils – Muslim domination over the whole of the country and vivisection of Mother India – and in accepting the latter position, perhaps a better evil was chosen.[344]

Members of the Muslim League, however, saw it as the only way to deliverance from any future Hindu domination.[345]

Thus, India became an Independent nation on August 15, 1947. Referring to this Independence, Atlee said that the independence of India was the fulfilment of Britain's mission in India. He said that the British had taught the Indians to govern themselves and they were now leaving the reins of Government in their hands.[346] As far as this last statement is concerned, Atlee cannot be regarded as being wrong. The British did teach the Indians a model of governance that was based neither on creed nor caste, but on the philosophy of secular humanism, which came to be

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[344] Cited by V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, p. 360 [Emphasis in bold by researcher].
[345] 'India', *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* (Microsoft Corporation: 2001).
[346] V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, p. 424.

embodied in the Constitution of India, as will be seen in the next section.

4. The Role of Secularism in the Framing of the Constitution

For the first time, the Constituent Assembly met at the Constitution Hall (now, the Central Hall of the Parliament House) at New Delhi on December 9, 1946 under the temporary Chairmanship of Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha. The total number of representatives present was two hundred and seven, including nine women. Members of the Muslim League boycotted it since they were demanding the partition and the creation of Pakistan with its own separate Constituent Assembly.[347] On August 14, 1947 the Assembly met in the Constitution Hall and at the stroke of the midnight hour, it took over as the Legislative Assembly of Independent India.[348]

The Constituent Assembly set up a Drafting Committee on August 29, 1947, under the Chairmanship of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to prepare a Draft Constitution for India. The Assembly tabled a total of 7,635 amendments, of which it discussed and disposed off as many as 2,473 during the preparation of the Draft.[349] The draft of the new Constitution was completed in February 1948 and given its final shape on November 26, 1949.[350] The members, in total 284, appended their signatures to it on January 24, 1950.[351] The Constitution comprised

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[347] Government of India, *India: A Reference Annual, 1958* (Delhi: Publications Division, 1958), p.33.
[348] Krishna Reddy, *Indian History*, p.C208.
[349] *Ibid*, p.C208.
[350] V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, p. 360.
[351] Krishna Reddy, *Indian History*, p.C208.

395 Articles and eight Schedules.[352]

The two Western theories that were combined in the Constitution were the 'British theory of parliamentary sovereignty and the American theory of judicial supremacy.' The Parliament was limited in its sovereignty by the Judiciary based on the concept of fundamental rights or nature endowed rights of man, propounded by John Locke and incorporated in the American Declaration of Independence in 1776.[353]

During the drafting of the Constitution, several important leaders, who were opposed to the RSS on other points, agreed that there be restrictions imposed on the right to freedom of conversion. Subhash Agarwal observes:

> At independence, conversion was already a burning issue. During the drafting of the constitution, many leaders, including a respectable array of liberals who were otherwise opposed to RSS ideology, supported restrictions on conversions or at least spoke in moral terms against it. These included not just the Mahatma himself, but also Vinobha Bhave, KN Katju and Rajaji.[354]

The Preamble of the Constitution declares India as a Sovereign Democratic Republic. It enshrines the resolve of the people of India to secure for all citizens: '*Justice*, social, economic, and political; *Liberty* of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; *Equality* of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all *Fraternity* assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the Nation.'[355] The secularity of the state is thus founded on the Constitutional resolve to secure *Justice, Liberty, Equality,* and the promotion of *Fraternity* among all citizens. Part

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[352] Government of India, *India: A Reference Annual, 1958*, p. 33.
[353] 'Natural Law', *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia* (Microsoft Corporation: 2001).
[354] Subhash Agarwal, 'Law, Order, &Religious Conversions', *The Financial Express*, September 25, 2003.
[355] Government of India, *India: A Reference Annual, 1958*, p. 33.

III of the Constitution (Articles 12 to 35) enumerates seven broad categories of 'Fundamental Rights,' namely, the right to equality, the right to freedom, the right against exploitation, the right to freedom of religion, cultural and educational rights, the right to property, and the right to constitutional remedies, which provides that the fundamental rights are justiciable and any citizen can move the Supreme Court for their enforcement.[356] The fundamental rights have been classified as follows:

a. The Right to Equality. The right to equality includes the following rights:

1. Article 14. Equality before the law: The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.[357]

2. Article 15. Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. 1. The States shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.[358]

3. Article 16 guarantees equality of opportunity in matters of public employment.[359]

4. Article 17. Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of Untouchability shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.[360]

5. Article 18 abolishes all titles. The State is prohibited from

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[356] *Ibid,* p.34.
[357] Ebe Sunder Raj, *The Confusion Called Conversion*, p. 145.
[358] *Ibid*, p. 145.
[359] Dubey and Tandon, *Constitutional History of India*, p.220.
[360] Sen & Chopra, *Indian History,* p. 1013.

conferring titles on any person. The Indian citizens are also forbidden to accept any title from a foreign state without the consent of the President of India. However, the State does not prevent institutions like Universities to confer titles or honours on men of merit. The State is also allowed to confer any distinction or award for social service.[361]

b. The Right to Freedom. Article 19 guarantees to the citizen his right to freedom of speech and expression, assembly, association or union, movement, residence, acquisition, holding and disposal of property and the right to practise any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade, or business. The Constitution does not, however, bar the State from making law prescribing *reasonable* restrictions on the exercise of these rights in the interests of the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence or in the interests of the general public or for the protection of the interests of any Scheduled Tribe.[362]

c. The Right against Exploitation. This right prohibits all forms of forced labour, child labour and traffic in human beings.

d. The Right to Freedom of Conscience and Religion. Article 25 reads:

> Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion.
> 1. Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion.
> 2. Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any

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[361] *Ibid*, p. 1013.
[362] Government of India, *India: A Reference Annual, 1958*, p. 34.

existing law or prevent the State from making any law.

  a) regulating or restricting any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice….[363]

The Constitution guarantees the freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion for all and the right of minorities to conserve their own culture, language and script and to receive education and establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.[364]

e. The Right to Property. Article provides that 'no person shall be deprived of his property save by authority of law.' This does not, however, deprive the State of its right to compulsory acquisition of private property for a public purpose, after payment of compensation.[365]

f. The Right to Constitutional Remedies. Article 32 provides that any citizen can move the Supreme Court for the enforcement all the above rights.[366]

Thus, India achieved its independence. The Constitution ensured the freedom of every citizen. The two concepts mean different things. 'Independence' means that India is not dependent on any foreign rule but is dependent on itself and responsible for itself. 'Freedom,' on the other hand, means that every citizen is assured of the right and freedom to be fully human. Moreover, this can never be possible unless the Constitution and the law guarantee protection of the individual from dehumanising elements. Vishal calls the *rule of law* as the essence of freedom. The *rule of law* stands in opposition to the *rule majority* or the *rule of majority*

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[363] Ebe Sunder Raj, *The Confusion Called Conversion*, pp. 139,140.
[364] Government of India, *India: A Reference Annual, 1958*, p. 35.
[365] *Ibid*, p. 35.
[366] Dubey and Tandon, *Constitutional History of India*, p. 221.

culture.[367] Thus, India got its independence and its Constitution.

The words 'Sovereign, Socialist 'Secular' Democratic Republic' were substituted for the words 'Sovereign Democratic Republic' of the Preamble by the 42nd amendment of the Constitution in 1976.[368] The word 'Secular' as used in the Constitution carried the following meanings:

> 1. There is no official religion for India and Parliament has no right of imposing a particular religion as an official religion.
>
> 2. All citizens, irrespective of their religious beliefs, are to be considered and treated as equal.
>
> 3. No discrimination will be shown by the State against any person on account of his religion either for participation in political affairs or entry into government service or admission into educational institutions.[369]
>
> 4. The State cannot interfere with things that are essential ingredients of any religion. The Court, however, has the right to determine whether a particular practice is essentially religious, and to interfere if it threatens public health or morality.[370]

Thus, secularism became part of the Constitution of India and essential to ensuring justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity. Religion and the State were separated. It did not mean that the State was declared irreligious or godless. It

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[367] Vishal Mangalwadi, *India: The Grand Experiment*, p. 259.
[368] Sen & Chopra, *Indian History*, p. 1014.
[369] *Ibid,* pp. 1011-2.
[370] *Ibid,* pp. 1014-5.

meant that the State was neutral towards religion. Secularism, however, had to accord with the peaceful maintenance of Human rights. Therefore, the Court could interfere if the right to freedom of religion was abused against the other rights of the citizens. The abolishment of Untouchability and the abolishment of inequality based on caste and gender are examples of how the Constitution ruled when certain religiously backed practices conflicted with the humanist principles.

CHAPTER SIX

POST-INDEPENDENCE ENACTMENT OF STATE LAWS WITH REFERENCE TO SECULARISM

There were bills and acts in relation to religious conversion even before the independence. Instances are the Raigarh State Conversion Act of 1936 and the Udaipur State Conversion Act of 1946. These laws aimed at eliminating the rural and tribal rights of freedom to conscience and religion.[371] After independence, there have been at least five states (Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Arunachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat) that have enacted laws to either curtail or cease conversions. The following section is an account of the Freedom of Religion Acts enacted by States of Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat to check the tide of religious conversions and problems arising from it. The Gujarat Law and parliamentary affairs minister Ashok Bhatt, recently, has referred to these laws as anti-conversion laws.[372]

1. The Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act of 1968

This anti-conversion law was enacted in face of allegations that the Christian Missionaries were using lure and force for religious conversions. In 1954, the Niyogi Committee set up by the Congress government in Madhya Pradesh

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[371] Ebe Sunder Raj, *The Confusion Called Conversion*, p. 140.
[372] 'Anti-conversion Laws Yet To be Framed,' *The Times of* India, Nov. 7, 2004, Ahmedabad.

accused Christian missionaries of creating 'a state within a state' and observed that the 'philanthropic activities of Christian missionaries are a mask for proselytization.'[373] The Sangh Parivar also alleged that the missionaries were promoting political dissent in the State.[374]

The Madhya Pradesh Assembly rejected the Freedom of Religion Bills of 1958 and 1963. However, this bill was passed in 1968 as 'The Freedom of Religion Act.'[375]

The Madhya Pradesh 'Freedom of Religion Act' requires that a convert produce a legal affidavit that s/he was not under any pressure, force, or allurement to convert but was converting by own will and desire after evaluating the religion properly.[376] Also according to this law, anyone who writes or speaks or sings of 'divine displeasure' (with an intention to induce forced conversion by means of threat) can be imprisoned for a period of up to two years and fined up to five thousand rupees.[377]

Evidently, this law is an open violation of the right to freedom of religion that includes the freedom to propagate one's religion. What is 'divine displeasure' in one religion may not be 'divine displeasure' in another religion. However, without propagation of religion, this cannot be known to a person belonging to another religion. Moreover, if there is no propagation of such fundamentals of

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[373] Subhash Agarwal, 'Law, Order, & Religious Conversions', *The Financial Express,* Sept. 25, 2003.
[374] Hansel D'Souza, 'Christians Awake! The Secular Citizen', June 1995, http://www.hvk.org/Publications/cihp/an1.html
[375] Ebe Sunder Raj, *The Confusion Called Conversion*, p. 140.
[376] *Ibid*, p. 146 & R. Domenic Savio, 'A Descriptive Study of Prarthana Bhavan, Sanjay Koyala Nagar', (unpublished M.A. Thesis, Acts Academy of Higher Education, 2004), p. 81.
[377] Ebe Sunder Raj, *The Confusion Called Conversion*, p. 142.

religion, which distinguish one religion from the other, then there can be no conversions. Therefore, a law prohibiting the preaching of a fundamental tenet such as 'divine displeasure' is an attempt to prevent the citizen from a proper exercise of his/her right to freedom of religion.

2. The Orissa Freedom of Religions Act of 1968

The state of Orissa enacted the Orissa Freedom of Religions Act in 1968. It stated that "no person shall convert or attempt to convert either directly or otherwise any person from one religious faith to another by the use of force or by inducement or by any fraudulent means nor shall any person abet any such conversion."[378] Contravention of this law was punishable with imprisonment of up to one year and/or a fine of up to Rs 5,000. In the case of a minor, a woman, or a person belonging to a Scheduled Caste or Tribe, the punishment was up to two years of imprisonment and the limit of the fine raised to Rs. 10,000.[379]

The Orissa High Court, however, struck down the Act as *ultra vires* of the Constitution[380] on the ground that the state legislature did not have the right to legislate matters of religion.[381] The same year, the state of Madhya Pradesh also enacted the Madhya Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act as seen above. However, the Madhya Pradesh High Court, in contrary to the Orissa High Court, negated the

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[378] Section 3 of the Orissa Freedom of Religions Act, 1968. As cited by Ruma Pal, 'Religious Minorities and the Law', *Religion and Personal Law in Secular India (*Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), http://iupress.indiana.edu/textnet/0-253-33990-1/0253108683.htm
[379] *Ibid.*
[380] Ebe Sunder Raj, *The Confusion Called Conversion,* p. 140.
[381] Ruma Pal, 'Religious Minorities and the Law', *op. cit.*

challenge of some Christians that the Act violated their fundamental right as provided under Article 25 of the Constitution. The decisions of both the Courts were challenged before the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court upheld the decision of the Madhya Pradesh High Court and reversed the decision of the Orissa High Court.[382] The Supreme Court ruling by a full bench said:

> We find no justification for the view that Article 25 granted a fundamental right to convert persons to one's own religion. It has to be appreciated that the freedom of religion enshrined in the Article is not guaranteed of one religion only, but covers all religions alike and it can be properly enjoyed by a person if he exercises his right in a manner commensurate with the like freedom of persons following other religions.
>
> What is freedom for one is freedom for others, in equal measure; and there can be no such thing as a fundamental right to convert any person to one's own religion.[383]

Ruma Pal notes that this decision of the Supreme Court has been justifiably criticized for its failure in distinguishing between conversion by force and conversion by persuasion.[384] Even advertisements make use of the art of persuasion. The right of freedom to choose one's own religion has no meaning if the very means of choice were removed. Choice between religions is unthinkable in the absence of an intellectually persuasive propagation of religion. Thus, the Supreme Court's ruling that disregards the fundamental right to freedom of propagating one's own religion is unjustifiable. As H.M. Seervai notes:

> Art. 25(1) confers freedom of religion—a freedom not limited to the religion in which a person is born. Freedom of conscience harmonizes with this, for its presence in Art. 25(1) shows that our Constitution has adopted a "system which allows free choice

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[382] *Ibid.*
[383] Ebe Sunder Raj, *The Confusion Called Conversion,* p. 140.
[384] Ruma Pal, 'Religious Minorities and the Law', *op. cit.*

of religion." The right to propagate religion gives a meaning to freedom of choice, for choice involves not only knowledge but an act of will. A person cannot choose if he does not know what choices are open to him. To propagate religion is not to impart knowledge and to spread it more widely, but to produce intellectual and moral conviction leading to action, namely, the adoption of that religion.[385]

Thus, the Orissa Freedom of Religions Act of 1968 cannot at all be considered a Freedom of Religions Act since it takes away the very means of freedom to choose and practice one's own religion.

3. The Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act of 1978

This Act was enacted to prevent the tribals of Arunachal Pradesh from converting to other religions. It reads:

> 3) Prohibition of forcible conversion.
>
> No person shall convert or attempt to convert, either directly or otherwise any person from indigenous faith by use of force or by inducement or any fraudulent means nor shall any person abet any such conversion.
>
> 4) Punishment of Contravention of the Provision of Section.
>
> Any person contravening the provisions contained in Section 2, shall without prejudice to any civil liability, be punishable with imprisonment to the extent of two (2) years and fine up to ten thousand (10, 000) rupees. (i) whoever converts any person from his indigenous faith to any other faith or religion either by himself performing the ceremony for such conversion as a religious priest or by taking part directly in such ceremony shall, within such period after the ceremony as may be prescribed, send an intimation to the Deputy Commissioner of the District to which the person converted belongs, of the fact of such conversion in such forms as may be prescribed.[386]

Evidently, the meanings given to the word 'inducement,' namely 'the offer

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[385] As cited by Ruma Pal, *op. cit.*
[386] Ebe Sunder Raj, *The Confusion Called Conversion,* pp. 141-2.

of any gift, or gratification, either cash or in kind and also include grant of any benefit, either pecuniary or otherwise,' in the law can dangerously affect social work by religious groups, even though their intentions are charity-oriented. Such ambiguity within the law is a clear indication of the State's intention to restrain individuals from using their right to freedom of religion.

4. The Tamil Nadu Anti-Conversion Act of 2002.

The Tamil Nadu Anti-conversion Act of 2002 stated that 'No person shall convert or attempt to convert directly or otherwise any person from one religion to another either by use of force or by allurement or by any fraudulent means.'[387] The immediate provocation for this Act, supposedly, 'was the threat of hundreds of Dalits of Koothirambakkam village, near Kancheepuram, to change religion because their decades-old demand that their right to enter and worship at the common village temple be protected by the government had not been conceded.'[388]

There had been great protest against this ordinance from various corners. Police arrested 10 people who were planning a mass conversion on December 6, 2002 in protest to the new anti-conversion law. About 3,000 Dalits were to be converted to Christianity and Buddhism, without applying to the local magistrate to approve their conversion in accordance to the new law, on this day according to this

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[387] 'Anti-conversion Ordinance Decried', *The Times of India,* Nov. 6. 2004,
http://www1.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/cms.dll/articleshow?artid=2469800
[388] *Frontline*, Dec.3, 2004, p.10.

plan.[389] Apparently, the Dalits saw this law as violating their fundamental rights and also ridding them of the opportunity to rise. However, President of the Maharashtra branch of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Ashok Chowgule, congratulated the Tamil Nadu government on the ordinance. He said conversions cause social tensions.[390] The State Council of the All-India Democratic Women's Association also opposed the bill as being unjustified and opposed to the rights of minorities and Dalits ensured in the Constitution.[391]

On May 7 2004, the Prohibition of Conversion Act Protest Committee appealed to the electorate to vote for the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam-led Democratic Progressive Alliance (DPA). The DMK was said to have in its manifesto a promise to repeal the Anti-conversion law.[392] However, soon after the defeat of the BJP led coalition in the 2004 elections, the Tamil Nadu Government led by Jayalalitha repealed the law in June to the chagrin of many Hindu Fundamentalists and Nationalists.[393]

5. The Gujarat Freedom of Religion Act. Soon after its victory in Gujarat the Narendra Modi government decided to accord "top priority" to the commitment given in the BJP poll manifesto and enact a law against religious conversions in the

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[389] 'Crackdown Over India Mass Baptism', *BBC News,* South Asia, Friday, 6 December, 2002, 04:56 GMT .

[390] 'Anti-conversion Ordinance Decried', *The Times of India,* Nov. 6. 2004.

[391] 'Anti-conversion Bill unjustified: AIDWA', *The Hindu,* Nov. 12, 2002. http://www.hinduonnet.com/2002/11/12/stories/2002111204290500.htm

[392] http://www.hindu.com/2004/05/08/stories/2004050803510400.htm

[393] http://www.hindu.com/2004/06/09/stories/2004060905050500.htm

state.[394] Accordingly, the Gujarat Assembly passed the Freedom of Religion Act in March 2003.[395] It was called the Dharam Swatantrata Vidheya[396] (Freedom of Religion Act). Narendra Modi called the Act as one of the main 'achievements' of his government's one year in office.[397] Evidently, anti-conversion law is a significant part of BJP agenda. The law prohibited conversion by force or inducement.[398]

All the above anti-conversion laws violate the Constitutional provision of fundamental rights to the citizens of India. Thus, it has been seen that the various anti-conversion laws are a direct contravention of the provisions given in the Constitution.

Also, the opposition of conversion is, evidently, an attempt to destroy the citizen's right to freedom of religion and desecularize Indian society. Though it is known that this attempt is futile in this globally connected world of information explosion, yet many of the Sangh activists are actively busy in trying to stop conversions, reconvert non-Hindus to Hinduism, and make India a Hindu nation. Back in 2002, L.K. Advani, the then Deputy Prime Minister of India, told the parliament that 'India can never be turned into a Hindu nation.'[399]

True to Advani's statement, India can never be turned into a Hindu nation because of the educational, economical, social, and political foundation that the

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[394] http://paknews.com/PrintPage.php?id=1&date1=2003-01-11&news2=main1
[395] http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/382992.cms
[396] *BBC News,* Tuesday, 25 February, 2003, 17:25 GMT,
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/2798771.stm
[397] http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/382992.cms
[398] http://paknews.com/PrintPage.php?id=1&date1=2003-01-11&news2=main1
[399] *BBC News,* 5 December, 2002, 19:08 GMT,
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/2546023.stm

British and the early leaders of Independent India laid.

CONCLUSION

Secularism is not absolutely new to India. It has been argued in Chapter 2 that traces of secularism could be found in India in the pre-colonial period. The 'this-worldly' philosophy of the Charvaka and the religious policies of both Ashoka and Akbar evince their rationalist and secular leanings. The humanist approach of Ashoka and Akbar to religion that promoted respect for all religions is well known in history. Sadly, however, their religious policies could not find permanent place in Indian politics for several centuries owing to several reasons prominent among which were the non-separation of state and religion, disunity of the land, absence of a democratic form of government, lack of a written constitution, and lack of scientific education. Inspite of all such shortcomings, India has seen several syncretistic and harmonising attempts by religious saints such as Kabir and Nanak. Hinduism has often seen pluralism as the only solution to religious plurality in India. However, it has failed to understand that its pluralistic approach can not appeal to monotheistic religions such as Islam and Christianity. The basis for inter-community relationship must be sought in something apart from religion, and secularism in its rational and humanist form best answers this problem.

Secularism in the West originated in Grecian Classical philosophy and made a considerable impact on Christian Scholastic thought by influencing the separation of faith from reason in the thirteenth century. It gradually crept into arts, history, and politics. During the Reformation, the necessity of the separation of Church and State became apparent. Thence began a gradual decline of religious influence on politics, academics, arts, and society. The dawn of the scientific era dealt severe

blows to several religious beliefs by depicting them as mythical and superstitious concoctions. Thus, the influence of secularism as a philosophy occurred. This, however, did not mean that atheistic secularism had become an essential feature of politics in the West. Rather, it was becoming more and more obvious that the religion was losing control over several areas of the individual's world. The individual became free to believe and propagate whatever satisfied their intellectual and spiritual quest. Whereas, in the past a scientist such as Galileo was threatened with death unless he recanted his discovery that went against the Catholic tradition, now a half-certain Darwin freely propagated his theory of evolution. The government no longer interfered. The French and the American Constitutions as described in Chapter 1 well illustrate this Western secularist policy.

In India, the colonial period ushered in a new era in Indian political history. It saw the end of politically backed religious persecution and the beginning of religious freedom. The integration of the land, enforcement of secular laws, education, and the printing press played a key role in the promotion of secularism in India. Secularism in India came to mean, in time, the non-interference of religion in politics. However, as has been shown in Chapter 6, the 'Freedom of Religion' laws that were enacted by certain state governments in the past do not conform to the principles of secularism. They threaten the very fundamental right to freedom of religion of the citizen.

By far, however, the greatest threat to Indian secularism is seen in the form of the Sangh Parivar. The fundamentalist and communalist Sangh Parivar views secularism as its enemy. It describes secularism in India as a Western concept

unsuitable for Indian culture and Indian society and has also accused the Congress and its allies as being 'pseudo-secularists' bent on 'appeasement of minorities'[400] at the expense of the majority Hindus. The BJP advances all such high-pitched propaganda to cultivate Hindu vote bank thus seriously damaging inter-community relationships.[401] Despite such attempts, nevertheless, secularism survives in India. Following are some reasons behind the survival of secularism in India, as has already been discussed in the previous chapters: Democratic Government, Secular Education, Written Constitution, Free Press, Single Families, and Increasing Globalisation.

1. Democratic Form of Government. The democratic form of government that makes mandatory the involvement of all citizens in government, irrespective of class, creed, colour, language, or culture, has been an important factor in both the emancipation of the religiously oppressed people and freedom from religion-based politics. While earlier on, politics was restricted only to the Kshatriyas (though with considerable influence of the Brahmins), in the present system politics has become open to all groups. Democracy, thus, played an important role in the survival of secularism in India.

2. Secular Education. Modern secular education made prominent in the colonial period has greatly contributed to the promotion of secularism in India. In fact, it has been, to a considerable extent, instrumental in the elimination of several superstitions and social evils. Secular education, thus, played an important role in

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[400] Asghar Ali Engineer, 'India Shining', http://www.islamicvoice.com/march.2004/view.htm
[401] *Ibid*.

the demolition of several false religious ideals and, in their place, the construction of several socially and psychologically healthy concepts.

3. Written Constitution. The written constitution of India checks Indian democracy from turning into 'mobocracy' or mob-rule, in other words, the rule of the majority against the minority. It ensures that the country is governed by the *rule of law* and not by the *rule majority* or the *rule of majority culture*.[402] The right to constitutional remedies provides that a citizen can move the Supreme Court for the enforcement of the rights enshrined in the written constitution. Thus, the secularity of the constitution is preserved.

4. Free Press. The Press, again a gift of the colonial reign, maintains a healthy and open criticism of government and society, thus keeping in check any measure or procedure that threatens secularism and the freedom of the citizen.

5. Single Families. The growth of single families against joint families, in the past few decades, owing to the rise of industrialisation and non-traditional employment opportunities, has played a major role in the decline of religious or traditional influence over the family. Thus, single families have also aided in the secularization process.

6. Increasing Globalisation. Information explosion, global marketing, sports, entertainment media, and several other globalizing factors have contributed to the shrinking of the world. Such increasing globalisation has greatly aided the citizen to come out of his/her narrow shell of religious bigotry and gain a wider

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[402] Vishal Mangalwadi, *India: The Grand Experiment* (Surrey: Pippa Rann Books, 1997), p. 259.

view of the world. This too has been an important factor behind the survival of secularism in India.

Given that all the above factors remain intact, it is possible to predict that secularism is going to survive in India. However, possibilities of political overturning and constitutional alteration, in the name of amendment, do exist. It has been seen in Chapter 6 that a few state governments have been successful in restricting the citizen's religious freedom through laws falsely labelled as 'Freedom of Religion' laws. There is possibility that such unchecked strides may be taken by some central government, under pretext of majority vote of approval. Therefore, any anti-constitutional bill or act of the government must be strongly protested against.

It is also important to pay heed to the quality of education in India. Measures need to be taken to check promotion of communal and anti-national feelings within Schools and Colleges. Along with secular education, in a scientific temper, a comparative study of religions with reference to high humanist ideals must be encouraged at the school level, so as to promote inter-religious understanding and tolerance. This should be done from a scientific and humanist perspective with objective of gaining an understanding of religiosity and higher spiritual ideals. However, dangerous superstitions and social evils must be criticized. Literature, movies, albums, etc, that promote communal feelings must be identified and, if possible, prohibited.

Religious leaders too have a major role to play in the survival of secularism in India. Ideas do conflict but ideas must not be personalised. An example of such

personalization is antagonism against Brahmins instead of Brahmanism. The unity and dignity of human needs to be upheld. Love of fellow humans must be encouraged.

Thus, the researcher believes that a proper orientation of education, a healthy criticism by the press and media, and promotion of inter-religious understanding can play a very important role in the survival of secularism in India. Thus, secularism will surely live on in India.

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