Chapter - I

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Secularism is a topic which can be discussed any time and at any length. In the Indian situation today, nobody can deny the significance and importance of secularism. Unfortunately different people interpret secularism differently. Also, different religions interpret secularism in their own way. This has created problems not only in the understanding of the term secularism but even in the use and the application of secularism as well.

People like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru have also contributed immensely to the proper understanding of secularism and therefore it has played a major role in the development of Moral-religious, political, economic and social fields in our country. Hence the topic is very important and equally relevant. Therefore we have decided to bring out in this study the major contributions made by these leaders to enhance communal harmony, economical and political status. We do feel, with the proper understanding and application of secularism many of our problems will easily be understood and solved.

The attainment of independence was a great event for India as it was the dawn of a new era. In the process of development as an Independent State, the day to day activity of an individual is
guided by the bitter experiences of the pre-independence day. However, the past still becomes more important when it comes to politics and religion. Even though religion may not be an important or real guiding force for the fulfillment of the interest of the vested political groups, its impact is felt at all levels of decision-making. After independence the problems of religion minorities gave rise to communal conflicts. They became a challenge to national Integration.

It was assumed that the spread of science and technology and economic development would result in greater secularisation of Indian society and polity. But assertion of fundamentalism both on the part of the majority and minorities make this assumption debatable. Most of the political parties too are manipulating caste and religions sentiments more openly blatantly then ever before. The political processes in India are getting more and more communalised.

Communal disturbances are taking place with the increasing ferocity and greater involvement of the vested interest groups. Under these circumstances responsibility lies on the students of political science to examine Gandhi's and Nehru's concept of secularism for finding out solutions to the existing problems. Therefore I have chosen this area of study.
Secularism emerged as a movement in 19th century and conditioned by the circumstances and philosophy of the time. During this time, people realised the science as final authority in knowledge and considered technological progress and human welfare as goals of life.

Secularism has been viewed differently by different thinkers in different ways specially in India. Though secularism is basically western concept it came into existence in the conflict between state and church. So it traveled to India in the early 19th century through western education introduced by British government. A large number of western educated Indians were attracted towards democracy and secularism. Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru have been regarded as exponents of secularism and democracy.

It is my intention to consider and evaluate the great contribution of Gandhi and Nehru for secularism in India. So here an attempt has been made to understand the views of both these leaders in comparative perspective.

The study is divided into six chapters. The first chapter contains a brief introduction, aims and objectives and methodology which is employed to investigate the various aspects and views of
both Gandhi and Nehru on secularism. In addition, perception of the problem, also discussed in detailed.

The second chapter deals with the concept of secularism as understood by Gandhi. In this connection detailed observations have been made like, Gandhi's life, ideology and thoughts on secularism, his ideas on religion, secular society, secular state in national integration perspective.

Gandhiji conceived his non-violent society on the equality of all religion. He was a staunch believer of secularism. He was a man of profound religious connections and wanted to incorporate moral values, which are the essence of religion and politics.

In the third chapter Nehru's views on secularism are discussed. The present study focuses its attention on the problem of secular state as comprehended by Nehru and its impact on the Indian Society. Here an attempt is made to understand and analyse in its proper perspective the concept of secular state as advocated by Nehru at different levels. His concern for social equality, spiritual equality, fight for the unity and integrity of India, desire to uplift the untouchables, downtrodden people and other minorities are analysed.

In the fourth chapter a comparative analysis has been made regarding Gadhian and Nehruvian views on secularism. There are
many similarities between Gandhi and Nehru. There are agreement on different matters namely secularism, Secular State, religion and National integration.

In the fifth chapter, I tried to estimate the secularism of Gandhi and Nehru and its impact on Indian society.

In the sixth and final chapter, attempts were made to put together the summary of previous chapters in order to provide a clear understanding on the concept of secularism of Gandhi and Nehru and its relevance to the study of modern India. Further, it is said that no leader, no party, and no citizen of India, can come up to the expectation of Gandhi and Nehru. It is unfortunate that so far, very few attempts are made in this direction. The present study intends to fill this gap.

1.1 Meaning of Secularism:

The term secularism was coined by George Jacob Holyoke in the middle of the 19th century from the Latin word “Seculum”, which meant originally ‘age or generation’. He used the term ‘Secularism’ in the context of a social and ethical system.¹ Holyoke defines ‘Secularism’ as follows;

“Secularism is that which seeks the development of the physical, moral and intellectual nature of man to the highest
possible point as the immediate duty of life which inculcates the practical sufficiency of natural morality apart from Atheism, Theism or Bible which selects as its methods of procedure of promotion of human improvement material means”  

According to the Shorter Oxford Dictionary, ‘Secularism’ means the doctrine that morality should be based solely on regard to the well-being of mankind in the present life.

Secularism emerged as a movement in the 19th century and conditioned by the circumstances and philosophy of the time. During this time people-realized that science as the final authority in knowledge and considered technological progress and human welfare as goals of life.

Secularism is a product of, and it strengthens the process of Secularisation. According to Cox, “secularisation implies a rejection of all closed worldviews, supernatural myths and sacred symbols”. It expresses the general tendency of individuals to turn their “attention away from worlds beyond and towards this world and this time” secularization is characterized by “profanity”, which is explained by him as expressing “a secuman’s wholly terrestrial horizon. That is to say, a secular or profane man “view this world not it terms of the other world but in terms of itself.....
Profane man is simply this worldly. He contends that the forces of secularization are not interested in prosecuting religion. “Secular individuals and institutions are interested in the affairs of this world only. Which indirectly undermines a religious approach. As religion is denied and role in social life, it is privatized.”

Above all, secularism asserts the autonomy of secular institutions, implying their complete freedom from the dominance of religion (Church). This autonomy of secular life and institutions has now become so integral to western thought and social order that even theologians assert it with equal emphasis. Not only state, laws, family relations but also education and morality, or knowledge and are now acknowledge as autonomous, or independent of religious authority.

In India, the concept of secularism began with the Renaissance, which was brought to India by the British imperialism. It was first seen in the field of education then in law and administration. In those days, western education was considered as a liberating force. Ram Mohan Roy who was the pioneer of the Indian Renaissance attempted to bring about social reforms through liberal humanism in our country became full of the possibility of developing an uncompromising secular outlook.
However, it is believed that in India the concept of secularism had been evolved from the ancient Indian cultural heritage.

Hence, leaders of freedom struggle pleaded for the secular principle to have Indian society. Therefore, they have repeatedly preached secular views of life in the freedom movement. At the same time, the British Government was following the policy of state neutrality with regard to religious matters, during its rule for a period of about two hundred years. Indeed, it would have been easier for the national leaders to have secularism in India while framing the Constitution. In the later period gave constitutional justification by incorporating the word 'Secular' by the 42nd constitutional Amendment in 1976. However, it was not defined. India is called a secular state which is distinctively different from the Western states so far as its meaning is concerned. Hence, it has become a matter of debate among the scholars and academicians in India since 1970's over its meaning. Thus, secularism has come to mean different things to different people. Political leaders as well as scholars have used it in different and contradictory ways. Although, the pluralistic view of secularism and the western view of secularism. There were two opposite views in India regarding the meaning and thrust of secularism. Some politicians have argued that secularism in the Indian context only means that religion should not enter into the functions of the state
there are some philosophers who have suggested that secularism could be interpreted to mean Sarva Dharma Samabhavana (equal regard for all religion). The first group of scholars and national leaders developed the ideal of religious toleration in terms of equal regard for all religions in response to the specific Indian situation, and them declared that this is also the meaning of secularism. The second group of scholars and leaders have taken the opposite stand; and they have argued “first, that the western concept of religion is both definite and final; second, that the negation of religion is unbolt in it; and third, that Indian understanding and profession of secularism in terms of equal regard for all religions are mere distortions of the secularist ideology, and hence are to be rejected.”

Secularism has come to be accepted as a basic feature of our Constitution and our political system. India has been since times immemorial a markedly religious society where many religions and cultures mingled together to bring about a varied and rich synthesis. Then, secularism emerged in our freedom struggle as a complementary value to democracy and nationalism. All this lent a very strong normative component to secularism. Indian secularism can be characterized neither as non-religious nor as irreligious. The prime concern of the leading lights of our national movement
was to unify the India people-people belonging to various religion, linguistic cultural and ethnic ideates-into a nation and therefore prudence as well as foresight impelled then to adopt a positive approach in the matter of religion. Therefore, our secularism does not demand divorce of religion from public life altogether. It does not warrant our state to be non-religious. It only warrants, that a secular state will separate religion from governance; its institutions will not be used to propagate any particular religion or sect. Remarkably enough, the authorized Hindi translation of the term secularism figuring in the preamble of our Constitution is “Parthnirpeksha” not ‘dharma nirpeksha’. India is a secular, state that is, it is not a theocratic state rather it does not belong to any particular religion. Thus, secularism clearly enjoins that state shall not have a religion of its own and that it shall not have a religion of its own. It is quite obvious that equal treatment of all religious beliefs and their followers would not be possible if the state were to have religion of its own, if it were to prefer to promote a particular religion. This also entails that the state must not mix politics with religion. Basically, Indian secularism has come to mean separation of religion from politics, economy education and large areas of social relations and culture and treatment of religion as a private personal affair. There is another aspect of secularism which is generally ignored. Secularism is definitely antithetical to
obscurantism. Where obscurantism dogmatism and revivalism prevail, a genuine letter, its spirit will be awfully missing. A genuine secular political culture will grow and be sturdy only if it is imbued with a nationalist and scientific temper. It is with this view that one of the Fundamental duties enshrined in our constitution is humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform.

It is observed that there are very few studies related to the study of secularism from the viewpoint of Gandhi and Nehru. Therefore, in the present study an attempt is made to fill this gap in one understanding of secularism and its relevance to the modern India.

1.2 Objectives of the Study:

Mathma Gandhi and Nehru, when assumed the leadership of nationalist movement the need for secularism and the relevance of a secular state came to be felt more strongly item ever. However, after the independence, the way to accept secularism was open. Secularism, as different from notion of secular state, is a key variable to understand the Indian political system.

Gandhi and Nehru tried to bring about communal changes in Indian society. They used the philosophy of secularism as remedial masseurs to prevent communal disorder or communal evil. The idea and opinions which they formulated in their times
are very much relevant even to the present conditions. Both Gandhi and Nehru through different directions had realized the need of establishing a secular state for Independent India. Both sought to achieve their objectives through certain ideas and principles and here we have to deal with aptness and relevance of the ideas and principles put forth by them.

1) The present study intends to understand Gandhi's views on secularism and assess his contribution to the field.

2) To ascertain the Nehru's concept of secularism, whether his views and ideas are concerned with the problems of secularism for Indian people and Indian society.

3) A comparative study of Gandhi and Nehru as far as secularism is concerned is also intended.

4) To assess the concept of secularism of Gandhi and Nehru and find out whether their philosophy of secularism have any direct link with their concern for social, political and communal changes in Indian society.

5) To find out whether Gandhi's and Nehru's concept of secularism is relevance to Indian society.

6) Finally, because of its interdisciplinary nature, the study will help us understand the relationship between religion and society according to Gandhi, in particular and relationship between Gandhian studies and social sciences.
1.3 Research Methodology:

Methodology is an important aspect in research work. Although, there are different methods prescribed regarding research works in different subject and for different purposes, one basis tenet remains true that the method should be based on scientific approach. Thus, the systematized research may not ensure cent percent accurate result but near to it. Of course, society is not static but dynamic. So also human thought changes according to changing conditions. So that political ideas and institutions are also subject to change.

Historical Method

The present study of research falls on historical approach and covers both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are writings of Gandhi and Nehru; secondary sources are works and writings of different authors on Gandhi and Nehru, and also News papers Periodicals (National and International), Journals (National and International). Historical method is a very popular method by which social sciences are studied. Political ideas are studied through this method as well. Every political idea or institution has its birth, growth and decay. Thus, historically, one can study the origin, growth and decay of concepts and ideologies. So also, the concept of secularism can be studied its origin, growth
and decay. Through this method, past, present and future relevance of secularism can be understood. The past has its influence over the present and the future. The aim of the study is not to repeat the mistake but correct the concept with the help of past experience in order to make the future prosperous and reliable.

1.4 Perception of the Problem:

India is a vast country, geographically placed in the seventh position in the world second in population. It has been the home of heterogeneous cultural groups, speaking different languages and harmoniously pursuing different ways of living. It has been since times immemorial and markedly religious society where many religions and cultures mingled together to bring about a varied and rich cultural synthesis. Then, secularism emerged in our freedom struggle as a value complementary to democracy and nationalism.

However, in course of time, the result is negative. Secularism was an outcome of the awareness of that secularism, as was conceived and it has been practiced in India has not created the inter-community or religious harmony that was exacted. Indeed, "secularism has become the most contested issue in recent
decades. The atmosphere is clouded with cries of "the doom of secularism"

The study focuses its attention on the problem of secularism as talked by two great National leaders. Here, an attempt is made to understand and analyze the Gandhian and Nehruvian perspectives of secularism at different levels and their concern for religion, social equality, spiritual equality, struggle for unit and Integrity of India and their desire for upliftment of untouchables and other minorities by practice of secularism. As a result communalism, communal violence and politicization of religion are on the rise. It is necessary to debate and clarify that theory, practice and contemporary critique of secularism. The context of growing ideological polarization and communal violence underlines the urgent need to focus to dimensions of the debate with a large degree of conceptual clarity and theoretical rigor, documenting post-independence politics as well as Civilization tradition and dilemmas.
REFERENCE:


5. Quoted in 1 Loud greeing faith’s new age, 1980 p 263.


7. Ibid – P. 42.

8. Ibid – P. 42