CHAPTER VIII

SUBHAS AND SECULARISM
(A) Concept of Secularism

The concept of secularism which originated in the West recognises and teaches a basic duality between the spiritual and temporal aspects of human life. It, accordingly, preaches "a biblical concept, which states, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's. As such this Western concept of secularism believes in a separation of religion and ethics from politics and aims at making the state independent of religion. Accordingly, the twentieth century Chamber's dictionary defines secularism as "the belief that the state, morals, education should be independent of religion."

That apart, the concept of secularism as it is understood in the West has come to mean "any thing which is distinct, opposed to or not connected with religion or ecclesiastical things, temporal as opposed to spiritual or ecclesiastical. Thus by way of implication, it stresses upon materialism and a materialistic approach to life as opposed to a spiritual approach and orientation.

However, the ideology of secularism provides "a theory of life and conduct" which puts premium on a scientific, modern and rationalistic approach to life and politics of a country uninfluenced by blind belief, superstition and dogmatism. The ideal of secularism or for the matter of that a secular state guarantees freedom of religion, treats religion as a private matter of belief with state remaining neutral in religious matters, deals with the individual as a citizen irrespective of his religious affiliation and believes in an equal treatment towards all religious sects in a county. As defined by Smith "The secular state is a state which guarantees individual and corporate freedom of religion, deals with the individual as a citizen irrespective of his religion, is not constitutionally connected to a particular religion, nor does it seek either to promote or interfere with religion".

Subhas was a man with a religious frame of mind and represented essentially non-materialistic and spiritual outlook to life. As he wrote to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Burma on 16th February 1926: "To us orientals, religion is neither a social convention nor an intellectual luxury nor a holiday recreation. It is life itself. Religion is woven into the

very texture of our daily and social life and it permeates our whole being - individual and national. For good or ill we attach more value to matters spiritual than to things of the earth earthy. And it is on this basis that our philosophy of values, social and moral has been worked out. Nonetheless, Subhas was secularist in his approach and adhered to the ideal of secularism, though he like Gandhi "never used the word secularism" to express his ideas.

(B) Evolution of Subhas's Secularist Outlook

Subhas's secularism particularly in the sense of developing a liberal, open-minded and broad outlook towards the people of all religions castes, and creed proceeded from the environment in which he grew up which was, in his own words, "on the whole liberalizing". As has been indicated in the first chapter he was brought up in "a large family with many brothers, sisters and uncles. In a way, the large size of his family broadened and widened his mind, and developed in him a sense of "sociability", a sense to overcome "self-centredness and

angularity which in turn developed in him a broad and secular outlook.

That apart, Subhas's father, as has also been discussed in the earlier chapters, was a man of a very broad outlook and vision. As a matter of fact, he never thought in terms of narrow parochialism, provincialism or religious exclusiveness. He was looked up to as "a patriarch" by his Muslim neighbours of Oriya Bazar, Cuttak which was a predominantly Muslim locality. He did never mind to keep Muslim servants, even Muslim cooks who were as devoted to him as others. In fact, Subhas and his family members took active part in Muslim festivals like Moharrum and enjoyed their Akhra. That apart, Subhas's early playmates were not only oriyas but Muslims too.

The broad mindedness of his father and the liberal environment - "the atmosphere which was on the whole liberalizing" helped Subhas to develop a secular mind and outlook which in turn enthroned in him the ideal of a broad, integral and composite nationalism, limited neither by region, nor by religion or community. As it were, it even foreshadowed the miracle of national unity in Subhas's Indian National Army.

In a way, Subhas also developed a secular outlook and mind due to the enormous influence of Swami

3. Ibid., p. 5.
Vivekananda on him in respect of his ideas and ideals.

Vivekananda pitched his faith on the rapprochement of the various religious creeds that Ramakrishna Paramahansa had discovered in his life and quest after spiritual illumination. In Subhas's own words, that faith in the rapprochement of diverse religious creeds was to be "the bedrock of India's future nationalism" and that without this "wonderful brotherhood of religions and the spirit of tolerance" we can not build up our nationalism "in this land of diversity that India is".

That apart, Subhas's secular outlook proceeded from his own philosophical conviction.

Though Subhas believed in God and in the existence of a Supreme Being, he took the position of "a relativist" and had an attitude of "benevolent agnosticism" in that regard. As he said: "Truth as known to us is not absolute but relative". As a matter of fact, Subhas believed, that the nature of truth is "relative to our common mental constitution - to our distinctive characteristics as individuals - and to changes in the same individual during the process of time". The aforesaid attitude of "benevolent agnosticism" and his adherence to the position

11. Ibid., p. 120.
of a relativist made him believe in Vivekananda's philosophy that "Man proceeds not from error to truth but from truth to higher truth". The aforesaid attitude cultivated under the influence of Vivekananda widened and broadened his mind and accordingly gave his mind the "scope for the widest toleration". This helped him to develop a broad-open-minded and secular approach.

Subhas's concept of secularism also proceeded from his philosophy - the philosophy of synthesis of Indian civilization and culture. This was instrumental in not only creating a broad-minded, liberal and secular approach in him, but in turn led to his composite and integral nationalism untinged by narrow and divisive appeals of religion, region, community, caste and creed.

(C) SUBHAS'S CONCEPT OF SECULARISM

Subhas was a man with a religious frame of mind. As has been said about him. He was "a mystic par excellence and not a politician". As a matter of fact, he had left his home in search of a religious preceptor during his youth and obviously his earliest inclinations were towards renouncing a worldly life and going in for the life of a Sanyasi. This man with a religious frame of mind and "a mystic par excellence" who was looked upon and rightly too as "a budding Vivekananda" though later on

12. Ibid., p. 121.
transformed himself into a political activist and revolutionary, always retained in him the religious and mystic fervour. Even as late as 1936 when he was lost to his early love—his craze for the Himalayas—and was in the midst of high politics for the realization of Indian freedom, he in his letter to Swami Sundarananda from Europe expressed not only his immense gratitude to Ramakrishna and Vivekananda for having awakened him and his life. He said "If Swamiji had been alive today, he would have been my Guru or I would have accepted him as my Guru." As it has been further said about his faith in God and about his religious fervour: "He constantly sought the guidance of God though the only symbols of his religiousity were a rosary of beads and a miniature copy of the Gita, which he always carried with him." As a matter of fact, he very often used to visit the Ramakrishna Mission in Singapore and putting on a Silk Dhoti spent some time in meditation and prayer.

Thus, Subhas was an embodiment of Indian culture and civilization in respect of his "essentially spiritual outlook" of life which appears as a contrast to the concept of Western secularism which by and large is a "negative, atheistic and amoral concept" and which also is materialistic in tone and accent.

However, inspite of this essentially spiritualistic outlook to life and inspite of the fact that he did not use also the term secularism while expressing his ideas, Subhas stood for the ideal of secularism in many respects.

A secularist approach emphasises upon a rational, scientific and critical sensibility. It closely dissociates itself from dogmatic beliefs practices and superstitions. Accordingly Subhas castigated certain weak traits in Indian character. Analysing India's downfall in the political and material sphere he said "After all what has brought about India's downfall in the material and political sphere? It is her inordinate belief in fate and in the super-natural-her indifference to modern scientific development-her backwardness in the science of modern warfare, the peaceful contentment engendered by her latter-day philosophy and adherence to Ahimsa (non-violence) carried to the most absurd length." 17

In India, people are susceptible to the influence of "Avatars, priests and gurus". Gandhi also began to be worshipped and adored as an Avatar in some parts of the country. As a matter of fact, such was the magic and influence of Gandhi that even in a politically conscious province like Bengal, resolution to the effect "that the

goal of the Congress was not spiritual Swaraj but political Swaraj was defeated in April, 1923 at the Jessore provincial conference. That apart, without any rationality behind, the warders in the prisons' department simply could not believe that the Mahatma has been put behind the bar. As they said "Gandhi was a Mahatma, he could assume the shape of a bird and escape from prison any moment".

In this country political issues are often unnecessarily mixed up with ethical issues. Sometimes they are not considered on the "cold light of reason". Accordingly, condemning the Swarajist policy at the Gaya Congress in December, 1922 Mrs. Sarojini Naidu said "councils were places of Maya where Congressmen would be tempted by bureaucratic overtures.

The aforesaid weak traits in Indian Character, their susceptibility to an inordinate belief in fate and the supernatural, undue craze for mysticism, excessive and undue stress on spiritualism and mixing up unnecessarily political and ethical issues seemed to Subhas an unhealthy sign in a nation to evolve into a modern and progressive state. As he said; "For a people, so prone to mysticism and supernaturalism the only hope of political salvation

18. Ibid., p.127.
19. Ibid., p.127.
lies in the growth of a sane rationalism and in the modernisation of the material aspect of life.  

Subhas's attitude towards mysticism, supernaturalism and his emphasis on material aspect of life shows his secular approach to the politics of the nation.

Subhas underlined the need of a modern, scientific, rational and secular approach for India's progress and resurgence. He was of course proud of India's spiritual heritage and culture but simultaneously emphasised upon development of science, a scientific outlook and stress on material and physical side of a nation's life. As he said "...emphasis on the intellectual and spiritual side caused us to neglect the development of science and left us comparatively weak on the material and physical side of life."  

India, according to Subhas, would made her mark when it could be able to "strike the golden mean between the demands of spirit and of matter, of the soul and the body" and progressed simultaneously on both fronts.

The relationship of religion and ethics on the one hand and politics on the other has been an important theme of recent political controversy particularly in India. Although both Gandhi and Subhas possessed spiritual and

20. Ibid., p.127.
religious personality "as the golden nexus between them" yet they held divergent views in respect of relationship between spiritualism, ethics and politics. To Gandhi, religion, society and politics were an integrated field of activity. As a matter of fact Gandhi held the view that "there was no politics without religion" and that "those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means". Gandhi's credo was "spiritualization of politics" and he tried his best to introduce religion into politics with a view to spiritualize it. As a matter of fact, religion and ethics got mixed up in India's struggle for freedom under Gandhi's leadership.

Subhas, on the other hand, was disinclined to such intermingling of religion and politics from the standpoint of India's long-term interest. In his view "the introduction of the Khilafat question into Indian politics was unfortunate". As it has been said, "this Pan-Islamic movement based on an extra territorial allegiance of the Indian Muslims cut at the very root of Indian nationalism."

It is of course true that Subhas never seriously probed into the relationship between religion and politics but he seems to have been fully convinced about the wisdom of delinking politics from religion and ethics. Hence, one of the important objectives of the Forward Bloc was "while every Indian would have full freedom of religious worship, religion and mysticism should not dominate politics and political affairs. Political affairs should be guided by political, economic and scientific considerations".25

As the head of the state of the Provisional Government of Azad Hind Subhas did not want to publicly identify himself as a Hindu and could not appreciate the idea of going to the Chettiar temple at Singapore to ask for funds so badly needed for the freedom movement. What he said there to the priests, is significant with regard to his attitude towards the relationship between religion and politics. As he said "the temple was a place of worship and everyman was free to worship as he liked but that religion should not be mixed up with matters of state".26

During his college days as has been indicated in the earlier chapters, Subhas was a member of a distinct group i.e. the Neo-vivekananda group. It aimed at bringing


about "a synthesis between religion and nationalism not merely in the theoretical sphere but in practical life as well. But with the maturity of age and experience in the arena of politics, Subhas seems to have realized the wisdom of separating them for the larger interest of our nation. As a matter of fact Subhas was very rigid about his principle that religion should not be mixed up with our nationalism. While in Germany, Abid Hasan, a comrade at arms of Subhās approached him to approve of a common prayer in the name of "Malik" (which means Lord) which was accepted by Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims and others as the "Best prayer". By way of reaction Subhas said "what do you mean? "Best prayer". I do not want religion to be mixed up with this affair at all. Their approach was going to be only on the basis of nationalism. You are going to join them now in the name of religion. They can be divided also in the name of religion. They have got their Gurudwara, they have their mosques, they have got their temples, anybody who wants can go there. But in my world there is going to be no approach unless it is nationalistic and political."

Jawaharlal held identical view with Subhas on the need to keep religion out of politics. He was anguished over the growth of religious element in our politics.

According to him Gandhi's stress on the "religious and spiritual side of the movement" took on "a revivalist character" and as he said "I did not like it at all". Even Gandhi's frequent reference to Ram Raj as he said "jarred upon me".28

This advocacy of separation of politics from religion and ethics is a part of the idea and ideology of secularism.

Subhas was imbued with firm faith in India's fundamental unity. As he said, "though geographically and ethnologically and historically India presents an endless variety to any observer, there is nonetheless a fundamental unity underlying this diversity.29 He asserted that India through her "long and chequered history" has been able to absorb different races and assimilate them into "one common culture and tradition".

Subhas believed in a type of synthetic nationalism of Indian people consisting of diverse religious faith which was at the root of his composite and integral nationalism. As a matter of fact the philosophy of "reconciliation between one and many, between God and creation" preached by Ramakrishna and Vivekananda and the

philosophy of synthesis of Indian civilization under whose impact he came from his school days subscribed to his doctrine of integrated nationalism accommodating people professing diverse faith within its embrace.

Subhas was a great exponent of the ideal of a free and united India. He warned time and again about the British policy of "divide and rule". In his Haripura address as the Congress President he warned against the possibility of partition of the country in consequence of British policy of divide and rule "I have no doubt" said Subhas "that British ingenuity will seek...some device for partitioning India and thereby neutralise the transference of power to Indian hands".

For the ideal of a united India Subhas was uncompromising in his commitment. For the sake of averting Pakistan he even suggested that in the event of a joint struggle by the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress taking place "Mr. Jinnah would be the first Prime Minister of Free India". This broad minded act of political generosity displays Subhas's secular approach and outlook.

As a staunch advocate of India's fundamental unity, Subhas launched upon a life long attack against...

the hydra-headed monster of communalism.

Emphasising upon the need of a broad and multi-faceted strategy he stressed upon "cultural rapprochement" and more particularly "a secular and scientific education". As he said "Fanaticism is the greatest thorn in the path of cultural intimacy and there is no better remedy for fanaticism than "secular and scientific education".32

This emphasis on a secular and scientific education displays his commitment to the ideology of secularism.

Subhas was a social realist. He well realized that poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and servitude affect all religious communities alike. As a matter of fact, Hindus, Muslims or any minority community for that matter unite in the same trade union and develop a class solidarity which cuts across communal divisions. As he said "there is much more in common between a Hindu peasant and Muslim peasant than between a Muslim peasant and Muslim zamindar. Therefore, what is needed to combat communalism is to educate the different religious communities on their common economic problems and interests so that they do not become pawns in communal feuds".

Advising this secular prescription of rousing economic consciousness Subhas said; "The dawn of economic consciousness spells the death of fanaticism[^33] and helps the growth of a healthy nationalism in this country. He, further said that by "emphasising on common interests, economic and political" we can "cut across communal divisions and dissensions"[^34].

Subhas was dead against the system of separate electorates which was introduced in the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 and was continued in the Government of India Act, 1919. He felt that it was a clever device calculated to promote communal division and communal antagonism with a view to frustrate an united opposition against British rule in India.

As a conscious nationalist wedded to the principle of secularism and a composite integral nationalism Subhas rightly supported a system of joint electorates. Condemning this unfortunate introduction of separate electorates as a part of the British policy of divide and rule, he said "Nationalism and separate electorates are self-contradictory. Separate electorates are wrong in principle and it is futile to attempt to build up a nation on a bad principle."[^35]

[^33]: Ibid., p.33.
[^34]: Ibid., p.72.
[^35]: Ibid., p.37.
In respect of his opposition to separate electorates on the basis of religion, Subhas stands out as a secular nationalist.

Subhas was a broad-minded nationalist. He stressed upon the need of a right and proper mental attitude to deal with the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity. The tendency of one community dominating over other or others instead of solving the problem of communal disunity aggravates it all the more. As it is said Subhas "is against domination of any one community by the other". In fact this was the "Keynote of Swarajist policy". The Bengal Pact (1923) authored by his political preceptor C.R. Das for the settlement of the communal question was a gesture of political generosity towards the Muslims. This pact which was rejected by the Coconada Congress on the ground that it "showed partality for the muslims and violated the principle of nationalism" distressed Subhas.

Subhas, though a broad-minded nationalist believing in the principle of good will, understanding and political generosity towards the minorities did not favour a policy of appeasement to solve the problem of communal disunity. "The Congress" said Subhas, "should only care for an agreement between Nationalist Hindus and

36. J.S. Bright, Subhas Bose and His Ideas, Indian Printings Lahore, p.91.
Nationalist Muslims.*... ...and that the Congress need not bother what other anti-nationalist elements thought or said.38

Caste and religion create artificial barriers for the evolution of a secular political system. As a matter of fact, these two forces far from becoming an instrument of social and national integration have come to emerge as a challenge to secularism in India.

Subhas who stood for justice and freedom for all realized pretty well the imperative necessity of ensuring equality in the social order. Religion and Caste create artificial barriers on the path of equality. Hence, while outlining the objectives of his "strong and disciplined party" he said "In order to ensure justice and freedom for all, the party must stand for the principle of equality and work for the destruction of all artificial barriers whether of religion, creed, caste, sex or wealth".39

The aforesaid stand of Subhas on caste and religion runs in conformity with the concept of secularism or the concept of a secular political system.

In his Haripura address (1938) as the Congress President, Subhas in course of emphasizing on the Congress Policy towards minorities showed his commitment to the

ideal of secularism. He stressed upon, the citizen's freedom of conscience and right to profess and practice his religion, the protection of the culture, language and scripts of minorities and the neutrality of the state in regard to all religions. He equally condemned the Communal Award (1932) of the British Prime Minister Mr. Ramsay Mac Donald as "anti-national anti-democratic" and as "a barrier to Indian freedom and the development of Indian Unity".

Apart from emphasising upon the Congress policy he said "only by emphasising on our common interests economic and political can we cut across communal divisions and dissensions". As he further said "A policy of live and let live in matters religious and an understanding in matters economic and political should be our objective".40

Subhas, However, was concerned with the minority problem as a whole which embraced all minority communities. As a matter of fact apart from expressing his anxiety to settle the problem of muslim minorities, he was equally concerned about the problem of depressed classes and was desirous too of doing justice to them.

Subhas looked to the problem of minorities in India neither in & isolation nor as the problem of

a religious denomination. Taking a secular and non-religious approach to the problem of minorities Subhas said; "The Congress stands for the political and economic rights of the Indian people as a whole. If it succeeds in executing its programme, the minority community would be benefited as much as any other section of the Indian population."

A secularist attitude is that which views life and its problems from a non-religious parameter. Subhas, by looking to the problem of minorities in India obviously from that angle, provides evidence of his secularist attitude. As it has been rightly said "secularism is an ideology which provides a theory of life and conduct as against one provided by religion".

During the Azad Hind revolution in Germany and subsequently in South East Asia Subhas could bring about a wonderful sense of unity among the Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. This remarkable achievement of Subhas has been appreciated and acknowledged almost unanimously. Even Gandhi felt inspired by Subhas when he said "The greatest lesson that we can draw from Netaji's life is the way in which he infused the spirit of unity amongst his men so that they could rise above all religious and provincial barriers and shed together their blood for the

41. Ibid., p.73.
The unique achievement of Subhas in bringing about a remarkable sense of unity that transcended both religion, region, caste and creed was made possible, due primarily to the nature of leadership and vision of Subhas. This leadership and vision of Subhas was a secular leadership and secular vision. That was precisely the reason as to why it could transform and galvanise almost an entire people of Indians in Germany and South East Asia into united national action diffusing, even obliterating and transcending all the narrow appeal of language, caste, creed, religion and region.

The Free India Centre which Subhas established in Germany passed four resolutions on 2nd November, 1941. The four resolutions were "our war cry Jai Hind", "the title of National hero Netaji", "our national Anthem Janagana Mana", our "national language Hindustani".

Subhas who aimed at liberating India by organising an armed struggle outside the country realized the inestimable value of unity and integration to facilitate the realization of his goal. When the idea of evolving a War Cry came to his mind he considered two important things. In the first place, it must be wholly

and fully nationalist. Secondly, the war cry must be secular in a comprehensive sense which will not belong to any religion, region, caste and creed.

Thus, emerged Jai Hind meaning Victory to India as a brain child of Subhas, the outcome of his deep study of Indian situation and reality. It obviously reflects his nationalist cum secularist vision. As has been rightly said "with Jai Hind as a common national greeting it was thought possible to bring about Unity in diversity and at the same time to remind us our great aim and objective of Free India".43

Bankim's slogan of "Vande Mataram" had come to be sung at different Congress and other meetings. It was a reflection of the concept of motherland "as a manifestation of the mother, the symbol of creative energy of God. Here the motherland is identified with Kali, Durga, Jagadatri, Bhabani and all other great symbols used by Hindu Sakti worshippers". Subhas, as has been indicated, earlier, was impressed by this concept which gave a spiritual foundation to his concept of nationalism.

Subhas, however, did not favour Vande Mataram to be our national Anthem primarily on two counts. In the first place, it might create a sense of grumble and murmuring in that the concept of mother India or Vande

43. N.G. Ganpuley, Netaji in Germany, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1964, p. 42.
Mataram is associated with Hindu mother goddesses. The rejection of Vande Mataram reflected the secular vision of Subhas. As a matter of fact, Subhas had now acquired enough of maturity in his thinking and was still evolving himself in respect of his philosophy and outlook.

As has been indicated earlier, Subhas opted for Jana Gana Mana as our National Anthem in place of Vande Mataram. As a matter of fact, he considered it more suitable since "it defined India more comprehensively as "a union of all provinces and religions".  

Subhas realized that a great number of Indian people speak and understand Hindi. Therefore, Hindustani, in his view, had a just claim and qualification to be our "common language". But Hindustani as a language emerged as a synthesis between Hindu and Urdu, the language of the Hindus and the Muslims. This indicates Subhas’s secular approach to "common language" that synthesises the sentiments and susceptibilities of two major religious communities.

As regards script, Subhas favoured Roman script not only because it would bring us into the line with the rest of the World "but over and above it would solve the knotty problem of whether our common language, Hindustani should be written in Devanagari or Arabic.

44. Ibid., p. 44.
Subhas, when asked about the miracle of national unity in his Azad Hind Revolution just replied "Because here is no British". However, he also followed a deliberate, enlightened and farsighted policy of vision.

Subhas injected an indelible touch of his pan-Indian outlook into the Indian Legion. The Indian legion had two training centres, while sending army volunteers to both these centres Subhas tried to ensure that both these centres represented a picture of the "multi-national Indian State" As a result, "in both the training centres the stresses and strains as well as the potentialities of Indian nationalities, religions and castes were visible in cross section and their solution and synthesis became the common interest of all".\[45\]

That apart, Subhas dispensed with the divisive policy of segregation which operated in the British Indian Army. As a matter of fact he desired to see to a complete dissolution of the units based on religion. Under his leadership, therefore "Indians were united in the smallest tactical unit, the section, regardless of religious profession".\[46\]


\[46\] Ibid., p. 53.
The dissolution of the units based on religion and idea of uniting Indians in the Indian legion regardless of religious profession conformed to Subhas's nationalistic and secular credentials.

According to Dr. Albert Seifriz one of the German officers in charge of training of Indian legion, Subhas's experiment to integrate Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Punjabis, Bengalis and other people in his Indian legion and to galvanise them into action was "crowned with success".47

Subhas respected every man on the basis of talent and merit. He did not bother about what religion somebody belonged to nor the place or region from where he came. As has been said "He respected every one for what he was worth and not for his religion or the province he came from".48

Subhas embodied in him and symbolised a concept of integral composite nationalism. He had many Muslims in important and strategic assignments in his I.N.A. Movement. As a matter of fact, he thought of India as a whole in his mental make up. He was above narrow and petty considerations of religion, region caste or creed. Such considerations did not determine his conduct as

47. Dr. Adelbert Seifriz, Preface to N.G. Ganpuley's Book "Netaji in Germany".
either the Head of the Provisional Government or as the Supreme Commander of the I.N.A.

According to S.A.Ayer there was "not the slightest trace of provincialism in Netaji's mind at any stage...he took all India in his mental sweep.... He showed in his deeds, day after day that he was far, far above any such petty considerations like the mother tongue or the birth place of an Indian. That the man was a son of India was more than sufficient for Netaji." 49

As has been indicated earlier, Subhas, was a mystic par excellence", a religious soul who even as a boy had left his home in quest of a religious preceptor. As a matter of fact, his faith in God and in the supreme being was an "inexhaustible reservoir of courage and optimism" His intense spiritual faith gave him not only "courage and optimism", but gave him also "poise, tranquility, quite strength, infectious self-confidence, tolerance, charitability, natural humility and most important of all a touching and over-powering spirit of humanity".

Yet the term secular, as has been indicated earlier, means "non-spiritual having no concern with religious or spiritual matters...anything which is

distinct, opposed to and not connected with religion or ecclesiastical things, temporal as opposed to spiritual or ecclesiastical. Hence Subhas, a God-believing man with his faith in the supreme being and concerned with spiritual matters too apart from his national goal of realizing freedom of India, cannot in the above context of Western secularism be regarded as a man with a secularist approach.

But, such a concept of secularism is not only narrow but over and above is alien to Indian culture and heritage which has an essentially spiritual outlook to life.

However, Subhas inspite of his faith in God and his commitment to religious and spiritual values kept them absolutely as private matters of belief—strictly as personal affairs. As a matter of fact, he never spoke of God, religion, divinity or any such thing of spiritual concern in public. "The only external symbol of his Godliness" as it has already been said, was "a tiny little leather bag..., holding the two and half inches Gita, the small rosary of beads(Tulsi Mala) and his spare reading glass". Even then this external symbol of his Godliness was hardly known by anybody except his own personal attendant. As S.A.Ayer observes: "For a
longtime only his personal attendant knew about this symbol, none else. This was itself typical of the strictest privacy in which Netaji lived with his God. His faith was not an article for parade.\(^50\)

The aforesaid attitude of Subhas towards religion, keeping it strictly as a personal affair which was never reflected in his public conduct, runs in conformity with the concept of secularism.

That Subhas was staunchly committed to the ideal of secularism and the concept of a secular state is clearly evident from his vision of the attitude of Free India towards religion and caste. As he said in his address to students of Tokyo University in November, 1944:

"I should like to mention the attitude of Free India towards religion and caste. This is a question that is frequently asked.

India has several religions. Consequently the Government of Free India must have an absolutely neutral and impartial attitude towards all religions and leave it to the choice of every individual to profess or follow a particular religious faith.\(^51\)

To sum up, though Subhas was a man of religious frame of mind with a firm faith in God and Divinity, he in

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\(^51\) Subhas Chandra Bose, Fundamental Questions of Indian Revolution Netaji Research Bureau, Calcutta, 1970, p. 82.
his mind, outlook vision and action adhered to the ideology of secularism. As a man he was free from any blind belief, superstition, and dogmatism associated with institutionalised religion. He had a rational and scientific approach to things that a secularist attitude demands. Moreover, in the India of his vision Subhas displayed a characteristically modern, rational and scientific outlook. For India's progress, prosperity and resurgence, he stressed upon the development of science, the need of a scientific temperament and outlook and emphasised upon the development of material and physical sides of national life. In respect of his advocacy of separation of Religion and politics, he adhered to the ideology of secularism. To combat communalism he emphasised upon the need of a secular and scientific education and advocated too a secular prescription in the sense of rousing the economic consciousness of the people of different religions, so that no body becomes a victim to communal politics but becomes a partner in the common struggle against poverty, hunger, destitution and suffering. His secular and national approach to politics led him to strongly oppose the policy of separate electorates based on religion and he was out and out for joint electorates. He advocated a spirit of political generosity towards the minority communities as a step to ease communal tension and discord.
However, he was deadly opposed to a policy of appeasement of communalists. He well realised the artificial barriers created by religion and caste in India which stand as a challenge to the evolution of a secularised and egalitarian social order and was committed to destroy such artificial barriers. He looked, moreover, to the problem of minorities in India from a secular and non-religious parameter. Subhas in Germany and subsequently in South-East Asia also displayed a leadership and vision which was thoroughly secular. His choice of Jai Hind as a common National Greeting, his rejection of Bankim’s song Bande Mataram in favour of Jana Gana Mana of Rabindra Nath Tagore as the national Anthem, his dispensing with the divisive policy of segregation in the British Indian Army, complete dissolution of units in the Indian Legion and subsequently in the Indian National Army in South East Asia based on religion, and the idea of uniting Indians regardless of their religious identity as the parameter, display a commitment quite akin to the idea and ideology of secularism. Moreover, he respected every man for what he was worth and not on the basis of his religious affiliation. He stood for freedom of religion and the neutrality of the state in matters of religion. Religion was treated by him as a matter of personal belief, a private affair. That he was for a secular state in free India is
unmistakably evident from his address to students of Tokyo University in November 1944. Thus Subhas inspite of his religious and spiritual frame of mind was a secularist out and out.