Chapter I

SECULARISATION AND COMMUNALISATION: TOWARDS CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

A cursory look at the literature on secularisation will reveal that for the western sociologists it had been a fertile ground for research. Even the researches of a political sociology variety conducted on Indian society on secularisation had been mostly by western scholars. However, there exists a considerable volume of writings and verbal articulations on secularism by the founding fathers of the Indian Constitution, political leadership and legal experts. At the same time, the different dimensions of 'communalism' had been a rewarding area for research for Indian social scientists, particularly historians. It is our contention that these attempts have not systematically dealt with the twin processes of secularisation and communalisation in their dialectical intertwining in the specific Indian context and there exists enormous scope for sharpening these concepts for an in-depth understanding of the empirical reality as it exists in India.

Therefore an attempt is made in this chapter to look at theoretically the concepts of secular, secularism and secularisation and communal, communalism and communalisation with a view to develop an operational definition for secularisation and communalisation and to view them in a process perspective.

Secular

The term secular is derived from the Latin saeculum
which means an age, an infinite period of time or the present age. This translates the Greek word *aion* which means 'age, period, era'. The Greek word *aion* has also been used to translate the Hebrew 'elam' which can mean 'time' or 'world'. Hence, derivatively speaking, secular could mean 'this present age' or 'this world'. The distinction between the 'sacred' and the 'secular' originated in the Christian church. In this distinction, sacred referred to that which is religious and is the direct concern or responsibility of the Church. This distinction did not originally involve a mere valuation in favour of the sacred as over against the secular. It only indicated that there are two spheres of work in the world. Thus to be secular would mean to be concerned with one's own present time and by extension "it will stand for interest and involvement in this worldly affairs". Or as Luthra puts it "the term secular indicates a state of being not connected with and separated from religion".

The term found its origin in the peculiar western milieu, but its applicability has a universality though specific conditions in each cultural-religious contexts may differ. That is to say, in a cultural milieu where there is no institutionalised religion like the church exists, the concept is applicable but defined to suit that situation.

Secularism

Secularism is to be distinguished from supermundane, non-temporal or eternal interests. It is important to make a distinction between 'secularism' as a closed system
of belief and secularisation as a social process. The doctrine of secularism had its origins in the 19th century. C.J. Holyoke was one of the earliest propounders of a theory of secularism. According to him, secularism is "a code of duty pertaining to this life, founded on considerations purely human and intended mainly for those who find theology indefinite, or inadequate, unreliable and unbelievable". But he distinguishes between the doctrine of secularism and the concept of the secular instruction which 'is far more limited in its range than secularisation'. secularism as a doctrine denies existence of a sacred order, approximated more to intellectual agnosticism. So, secularism is considered as a purely materialistic view without adherence to any religion or spirituality. That is an interpretation of life that includes only the natural order of things. Therefore a radical understanding of secularism rejects sacred, mythological transcendent world view and hierarchical social system and substitutes for it the promise of a 'fully scientific, humanistic, empirical, relativistic, immanentistic, evolutionary world view and open, equalitarian social system'. As an ideology it ultimately bases itself on historical and rational authority without any reference to transcendent, divine and mystical. "It proclaims the autonomy and centrality of man (homo faber, not homo religiosus)". Needless to say the systematic formulation of secularism in this sense can be found in Marx.

It may also be mentioned that there are two other strands which defines secularism in a much more open way. (a) Emphasis
on materialistic behaviour with the guidance of morality and some religious principle and (b) stress on spiritualism guided by non-religious morality.

In India secularism is used in connection with our understanding of a 'secular state'. It is suffice to say at this point that while secularism in the west has the philosophical understanding as a way of life of the individual or groups of individuals without much reference to state and religion, in India, as Sethavd puts it secularism "should connote the eradication of all attitudes and practices derived from or connected with religion which impede our development and retard our growth into an integrated nation".

Secularisation

Secularisation as a process is being used in sociology to denote a shift from the sacred to the secular; from its traditional religious and metaphysical moorings to a rational ordering of social, economic and political institutions. The sociological literature on secularisation, looking at it as a social process is vast. However, we may caution here that most of it is written by western sociologists taking into consideration the social realities existing in their context.

Peter E. Glasner in a critique of the concept of secularisation classifies the forms of secularisation processes to their origins. He takes the definitions from Robertson's sociological interpretation of religion and the categories from Cohn's 'On the Problem of Religion in Non-Western Cultures'. Accordingly secularisation process can be classified, based on
whether it has a primarily institutional, normative or cognitive root.

The following figure will make this point clear.

**Figure 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY I</th>
<th>CATEGORY II</th>
<th>CATEGORY III</th>
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<tr>
<td>(primarily institutional)</td>
<td>(primarily normative)</td>
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<th>Type of secularisation process</th>
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<td>1. Decline</td>
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<td>2. Routinisation</td>
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<td>3. Differentiation</td>
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<td>4. Disengagement</td>
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* 'Logics' underpinning category III, number 2 above

Categories I, II and III show how a religion is defined.

This is an effective way of understanding secularisation analytically. It is evident from this that if the basis of defining religion varied, the process of secularisation also would concomitantly vary. This means, each religion depending upon to which category it belongs will have a specific secularisation process. It may also be pointed out that there will be considerable interweaving of these different types. For conceptual clarity a word or two about each type may be in order.

(i) **Decline of religion** is seen in the context of religion being institutionalised and is being measured by less attendance in religious gatherings, decline in membership of
religious bodies especially church or similar institutions in the west. This cannot be generalised as it applies mainly to western culture.

(ii) **Routinisation of religious organisation:** That is, a cult which has minimum differentiation and maximum sacredness moves on to become a sect. Sect in an advanced state gets institutionalised; become a denomination or a church. It loses the peculiar socio-ethical characteristics through a general process of routinisation by a necessary coming to terms with the world. Pfautz who did research on Christian Science Movement in America gives a figure to explain this process. The following figure is adapted from Pfautz:

![Figure 2](image-url)

While the schema fits in specifically to American or Western Christian situation in general, this analysis will have its own difficulty when we attempt to explain sects in Hinduism.

(iii) **Differentiation of structures** denotes secularisation process. This is a tendency to give religion a redefined place in the social scene and not elimination of organised religion. The differentiation has resulted in the 'endowment
of secular life with a new order of religious legitimation'.

(iv) Disengagement from ecclesiastical control to public administration in all aspects of social life. This expresses a desire to disengage certain key aspect of social life and to emancipate them from religious tutelage. It is a transformation where the profane world avoids the influence of the church. 17 

Secondly, values and norms are important in the study of secularisation. On this level, four points may be noted.

(i) The Generalising effect the secularisation process has on the over-arching values and norms in the cultural system. 18 Values have a direct relationship with religious tradition. Secularisation does not result in the absence of a religious orientation at the levels of norms and values.

(ii) Transformation of religious values, grounded in divine power to specifically worldly ones. For instance, as Weber has shown, capitalism began to develop a driving force of its own and its religious roots became transformed into utilitarian worldliness.

(iii) Desacralisation: It assumes that no special esoteric supernatural forces operate within the world, life can be lived in accordance with human rationality. A world gradually deprived of its sacred character where the phenomena of the supernatural and elements of mystery play no part. This affects the faith system.

(iv) Secularism as an attempt to establish an autonomous sphere of knowledge purged of supernatural and truth perceptible by the human reason only.
Thirdly, on the cognitive level, secularisation process brings a kind of 'segmentation' in the understanding of society and individual. This results in a diversity of social roles in modern society which allows for a multiplicity of possible 'plausibility structures'. The breakdown of an 'over arching biographical context of significance' results in the emergence of the 'private sphere' with a sense of individual autonomy - a relative freedom to construct a personal identity.

Finally, secularisation process attempts to separate the sacred from the secular or profane. On this continuum, there is a movement. Urbanisation, Industrialisation and Modernisation happen in the process of secularisation. Important cognitive changes occur in this process which in turn accelerate the secularisation process itself.

From the angle of our study, differentiation, values and norms on sacred - profane continuum is most significant.

However, for an understanding of the secularisation process all these types should be taken into consideration. Briefly we look at the classical sociological writers to get an idea of the process, before we draw our own conclusions to build a hypothesis.

Comte, basing his knowledge of society upon empirical observation showed that 'positivism' was the true religion - a logical, natural outcome of the evolution of man's thinking. His famous Law of the Three Stages stated the necessary passage of all human theories through three successive stages - from the provisional - theological (fictitious) to the transitional -
Metaphysical (abstract) to the definitive - Positive (scientific). Max Weber was also concerned with irreversible process of rationalisation which was leading to specifically disenchanted world view. Basing his analysis on the move away from the original practical and calculating rationalism of magic, through the concept of prophesy, Weber noted that the 'goal of religious behaviour is successively irrationalised until finally other worldly non-economic goals come to represent what is distinctive in religious behaviour.' Each prophetic community (ethical and exemplary prophetic communities) realised its religious interests either by attempting to master or control the world as a result of directions from a God or gods (asceticism) or by devaluing or ignoring it (mysticism). In his essay 'Science as a vocation' Weber notes that modern society is characterised by rationalisation and intellectualisation and, above all, by the disenchantment of the world. The ultimate values have retreated from public life into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations. Troeltsch saw in church - sect - mysticism an ideal typical continuum for the analysis of religious organisation and thereby a form of secularisation.

The distinction of sacred and secular or profane within the sociology of religion is an important one. Movement along this continuum is considered as evidence of secularisation. The continuum postulated by Ferdinand Toennies, writing in the Germany of 1880, has Gemeinschaft (community) and Gesellschaft (association) as its polar types. Religion in Gemeinschaft
is fundamentally ritualistic, based on tradition and related to maintaining feelings of communality and harmony. Gesellschaft is based on rationality and actions are performed individually. In Gesellschaft society religion becomes impossible because the relationships which religion sustained are no longer present (the binding of the group, the common heritage etc.). The secularisation process is the inevitable by-product of the move from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft. This implies that secularisation goes with individualisation. It must be emphasised here that it need not be a total process. That is, it can be a segmental process. For instance, in traditional societies like India one can find individualisation taking place in some aspects of life while retaining communal orientation in others. The process of secularisation is more a change of emphasis since Toennies was only concerned to isolate predominant variables within a society, rather than a distinct institutional transformation.

Durkheim's two polar types of social solidarity are mechanical and organic. In the mechanical solidarity, social relationships are face-to-face and social control is vested in the group which can be identified as society. In the organic solidarity, relationships are secondary with social control stemming from the complex inter-relationships of groups within society. Nevertheless, religion is an integral part of both. Durkheim, besides distinguishing the forms of the division of labour found in mechanical and organic forms of social solidarity, isolates a possible transitional stage which he
describes as exhibiting abnormal or pathological forms of division of labour. Durkheim had said "Men cannot celebrate ceremonies for which they see no reason, nor can they accept a faith which they in no way understands". Hence religion in the particular sense founders in the face of societal contradiction, even though the recognition of the 'sacred' will always remain. The secularisation process is linked directly to the development of these contradictions, but it is a temporary (though not necessarily short lived) phenomenon which precedes the advent of the ideal organic forms of social solidarity.

Robert Redfield extended the basic conceptualisations developed by Toennies and Durkheim. Redfield's more anthropologically oriented folk-urban continuum is based on empirical observation of primitive and urbanised society. The sacred prevails over the secular in folk society. Urbanised society fulfils the opposite. Howard Becker in his sacred-secular continuum anchors on Durkheim. The continuum is seen as a scale ranging from maximum readiness to change. He has constructed four types of society - proverbial, prescriptive, principal, and pro-normless - but a great deal of inter-mixing can occur. No society is seen as all of one piece.

Traditional forms of religion necessarily change. Hence the logic is to treat religion as a dependent variable. This view can be traced to the work of Marx and Engels with their emphasis on the primacy of the material-economic base as the instigator of social change. Marx lays emphasis on the explanation of values and ideologies - thus the religious factor - on
social structures, its development. Therefore,

Morality, religion, metaphysics, and all the
rest of ideology as well as the forms of cons-
ciousness corresponding to these, thus no
longer retain the semblance of independence.
They have no history no development; but men,
developing their material production and their
material intercourse, alter, along with this
their actual world, also their thinking and
the products of their thinking. It is not
consciousness that determines life, but life
that determines consciousness. (32)

The theme of Simmel in his discussion of 'metropolis and mental
life' is coming nearer to the primacy of economic structure.
He considers the effects of a money economy upon the nature of
social relationships in an urban setting. Individual's outlook
is transformed completely and all his social relationships are
affected, including religious ones. This forces him to a more
secular (defined as non-traditional) viewpoint. He concludes
that individualism is the hallmark of metropolitan life and
that it results either in individual independence (and existen-
tial religion) or in an elaboration of individuality itself.

Harvey Cox comes to a similar conclusion from another
direction when he emphasises the anonymity and mobility which
characterise urban living. However, his conclusion regarding
secularisation assumes a continuity between pre-urban and urban
religion. Another sociologist who stresses this continuity is
Kingsley Davis. He introduces the category of 'ordinary' in
between the holy and unholy. According to Davis the holy and
the unholy are closely related because of the highly emotional
attitude toward them. They both stand in contrast to the
ordinary. "For this reason" says Davis, "the usual distinction
between the sacred and the profane is ambiguous. It is not
always clear whether the unholy is included in the sacred or the profane. Its implication for secularisation is that "the tendency toward secularisation probably cannot continue to the point where religion entirely disappears".

Secularisation and Modernisation

At this point of our review of the selected sociological writings on secularisation process, it may be necessary to look at it from the angle of modernisation. When we see religion primarily based on cognition the resulting secularisation has a relation to modernisation process. The figure 1 on p. 5 shows that the underpinning logic of such a secularisation is industrialisation, urbanisation and modernisation. When religion is defined on the basis of institution and norms this correlation cannot easily be established. Modernisation according to Rustow is a process which 'comprises many specific changes' denoting 'rapidly widening control over nature through closer co-operation among men'. It includes all the more specific changes such as industrialisation, rationalisation, secularisation and bureaucratisation. However, modernisation has to be viewed critically. Generally, there are two main lines of criticism (a) the concept is vague, unsystematic, ahistorical; and it is a conservative ideology (b) it is a programme for the expansion of western capitalism counterposing it against 'communism' and socialist revolution. Our aim is not to dwell upon the details of this criticism but to mention them in passing.

If we take modernisation conceptually as a historical concept it includes such specific aspects of change as
industrialisation of the economy or secularisation of ideas. Peter Berger has brought out the relationship of the two concepts when he says that modernisation has brought with it a massive threat to the plausibility of religious belief and experience. In other words, modernity has been antagonistic to the dimension of transcendence in the human condition. Here, one may pose two questions: (a) whether modernisation without secularisation is possible in different cultural contexts; (b) in different dimensions within a cultural context. But even in societies which have strong religious values (e.g. Islam) the secularising effects of modernisation have been felt. The common explanation of secularisation in terms of the impact of modern science and technology has merit but equally important are the consequences of the pluralising and ipsi facto relativising forces of modernisation. But the important point to remember is that secularisation does not mean that religious beliefs have disappeared, but the meaning and the province of religion have undergone changes.

**Westernisation and Modernisation**

The question about the correlation between westernisation and modernisation also needs mention here. According to Toynbee there is no distinction between modernisation and westernisation. But Srinivas, Lerner, Ames and others who studied traditional societies consider these two concepts as different. For Srinivas, secularisation is subsumed under westernisation. He makes a point that westernisation has given birth to communalism and 'casteism'. His point is that while 'western' instruments
of modernisation like colleges, books, pamphlets, journals were proliferating, it was a necessary condition to create communal consciousness or caste consciousness. Although there is an element of truth in it, at best we can say that these results are unintentional or latent.

This point can be seen in the theoretical approach of Parsons, Berger and others. Parsons maintains that

Looked at by comparison with earlier forms, religion seems to have lost much. But it seems to me that the losses are mainly the consequence of processes of structural differentiation in the society, which correspond to changes in the character of religious orientation but do not necessarily constitute a loss of strength of the religious values themselves. (46)

Parsons comes to the same conclusion, much more forcefully in a later article when he discusses Christianity to say that secularisation (differentiation) has resulted in the 'endowment of secular life with a new order of religious legitimation'. Berger speaks the same idea when he says 'secularisation of course has not meant that religious belief and practice have disappeared'.

Secularisation and Economic Ethos

In the preceding survey we find two broad divisions; almost opposite in their emphases and approaches to the process of secularisation. On the one side we have the school which puts emphasis on the decline and disappearance of anything which can be termed religious. Comte, Lynd and Lynd, Bryan Wilson, Mehl, Shiner, Howard Becker and others support this view. The second school of thought is that secularisation will carry with
it religion, religious values and communities based on religious identity. Parsons, Bellah, Luckmann, Berger, Durkheim, Misheb, Pfautz, Herberg, Greeley, Srinivas and others support this view.

The first school postulates secularisation and religious identity of groups as a zero-sum game. That is, there is an assumption that there is a dichotomy between the two. Whereas for the second group, it is not necessarily a zero-sum game, here the assumption is that it is a continuum. Whereas for the former, it is a replacement process, the latter considers it as only a transformation.

One of the most important causes as well as effects of secularisation is the economic base. The Marxian emphasis on the material matrix capable of changing values and norms should be taken special note of. That is to say, in a society's value judgement, worldly success can be considered a necessary condition for secularisation process to take roots in that society. Reinhard Bendix touches upon this point briefly when he comments on Weber's ideas as causes and consequences. The secularisation undermined the Asiatic way of life (meaning thereby extreme religiosity) and 'impacted an ethos of planning and self-control to all economic activities' encouraging worldly success. Analysing the puritan tradition he comes to Weber's conclusion of acquisition of possessions. This was true of methodist revival too. A passage of Wesley is revealing. "...continual decay of pure religion...I fear wherever riches have increased, the essence of religion has decreased in the same proportion.... For religion must necessarily produce both industry and frugality,
and these cannot but produce riches". As Bendix puts it, "These reflections point to the massive process of secularisation in the course of which utilitarian industriousness replaced the search for the Kingdom of God and created a specifically bourgeois economic ethos". We may add here that the above observations are based on the empirical experiences of the Christian West. We find the situation in the Islamic countries especially in the Arabian Gulf areas, to the contrary.

Therefore, pursuit of gain was a very important aspect of secularisation. An "amazingly good conscience" concerning the acquisition of money and the unequal distribution of worldly goods superseded earlier ideas. Religion (Asiatic monastic life) when released to the world outside, built 'the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order' and 'material goods have gained an increasing and finally an inexorable power over the lives of men as at no previous period in history'. The phenomenon of religious roots becoming transformed into utilitarian worldliness.

Nisbet argues that Weber's concept of rationalisation as the underlying basis for change has specific political and organisational connotations. "The process of secularisation results in the novel respect for values of utility rather than of sacredness alone". The process of secularisation in the case of Europe meant dissimilar forms of behaviour and thought. It was expressed in the form of the structure of the modern state, entrepreneurial system in the economy, modern science as well as distinctive forms of philosophy. Regarding the rise of
modern technology Mribet says:

Technology may be described as the institutionalisation of utilitarian norms. It is the largest category within which all norms of utility, convenience, efficiency, organisation and human reason may be placed. (56)

Simmel is echoing the same point when he points out that money economy has effects on the nature of social relationships in an urban setting. Individual’s outlook is transformed completely and all his social relationships are affected including religious ones. Thus individualism becomes an important aspect of such a metropolitan life resulting in individual independence (existential religion) or an elaboration of individuality itself in some areas of life. In other words, it meant essentially the rise of individualism from a primordial relationship which had its religious roots.

Communal, Community and Primordial

This primordial relationship which has its religious roots has to be understood in terms of 'community'. The Gemeinschaft as Toennies puts it has this predominant characteristics. Speaking about 'guild' in Gemeinschaft Toennies says, it is a religious community and as such is the town itself; (art religion and art/is based on religious feeling) are the highest and most important functions of the whole town. The concepts like Gemeinschaft, folk society, sacredness, mechanical solidarity - all these have the religious roots as a most important element in it. This is the primordial element which is an important aspect of our study. Following Edward Shils, we
define primordiality as a state of intense and comprehensive solidarity through a common territory of origin and residence, a common place of work or ties of blood and sexual connection. This is characterised by intense attachments to symbols where religious symbols play an important part. The solidarity which results from it has an extreme 'we consciousness'. Shils has made an important observation about primordiality when he says that the attachment of members in a primordial group like family or religious sect was not merely to the other members as a person but as a possessor of certain specially 'significant relational' qualities which could only be described as primordial. The attachment to another member of one's kinship group is not just a function of interaction but a certain ineffable significance is attributed to the tie of blood. In religious groups the tangibility of the attachment to the other person by virtue of our perception of his membership in the group is clearly in evidence. After a study of religious groups existed in Greek and Roman empires Shils comes to the conclusion that 'primordial property too could have had sacredness attached to it' and 'could be the objects of attachments of different degrees of intensity'.

The most significant aspect of primordiality is its 'community' orientation. The community has the meaning of a group with distinctive racial or cultural characteristics and thereby imply a religious bond in terms of belief systems, values and ritual practices are concerned. In sociological literature, generally, community is used in three ways: a) a
group of people living in a locality or territory; b) as a partial social system i.e. a sub-system of a nation, the former being not in a position to reproduce itself in all its aspects; c) any group potentially and in actuality capable of developing a 'we feeling' e.g. caste, religious, feminine, student collectivities.

It is in the third sense that the notion of community is used in India. Our operational definition approximates to what Robert Hardgrave Jr. says about community. According to him "in India, community usually refers to a racial, caste, linguistic or religious group rather than to a locality as in the United States". The emphasis here is that community has little reference, in usage, to an ecological setting. However, if we apply this understanding in its strict sense we may run into difficulties. We must take note of the fact that there are situations in India where this term has a 'territorial' or 'ecological' meaning also, for instance, a co-terminality between language and territory or caste and territory exists. Thus in the case of linguistic community, it is quite possible that most of the people who speak a language is concentrated in a locality. So also a caste or cultural group could be located in a specific region.

The western sociologists, especially North Americans use 'community' and 'ethnic group' synonymously. Allen Grimshaw comments that "the term, 'community' has the meaning in India of ethnic group". Daniel Bell in his study of 'Ethnicity and social change' discusses the relative merit of primordiality, ascriptive group, community and ethnic group and
comes in favour of ethnic group as a category when he says:

Though there is an obvious difficulty in using the term 'ethnic' in any consistent way, that common designation for a culturally defined "communal group" is too pervasive to escape and by and large it will have to serve. (64)

For Bell, 'communal' denotes "the largest and most important category of group membership (particularly in its ability to rouse emotional feelings)"; "individuals feel some consciousness of kind which is not contractual"; "involves some common links through primordial or cultural ties". Individuals who 'retain strong emotional identification with the religion' comes under these primordial or cultural ties, although institutional religion might have lost its ability to be an over-riding group membership.

William Petersen in a study of sub-nations of Western Europe says that 'community' is etymologically excellent compared to ethnic group. Ethnic group is used to designate a variety of entities: religious denomination, race, smaller subdivision of races and so on. The advantage of the notion of community is that it encapsulates all these social collectivities and yet precise in its connotation. But as far as Europe is concerned, this has 'geographic location' and that cannot be challenged successfully. But in India this problem does not exist as the adjective 'communal' is invariably used to denote 'religious denomination' than geographic location.

It is important to further explore the possibilities of using the term 'ethnic group' in specific Indian contexts.
However, since the term is 'too pervasive' as Bell puts it, we will be using the term 'communal' in our study generally, except in cases of specific context where ethnicity usage becomes relevant. We conclude this section by saying that in the Indian cognitive map 'communal' is often not a value-neutral term. D.E. Smith is nearer this truth when he says that sometimes the term 'communal' has a neutral adjectival form as used in 'communal representation' for instance; but it is generally associated with a narrow, selfish, divisive and aggressive attitude on the part of a religious group.

**Communalism**

R.A. Schermerhorn has said, "the term 'communal' is India's favourite epithet for tarring political opponents with the stain of ill-repute". Therefore, communalism cannot escape the negative prejudicial sense.

Following our definition of community and communal on a religious basis, communalism has the same religious bias. For instance Geertz views communalism in India as "religious contrasts".

Two subtle distinction of communalism may be attempted here.

(a) Communalism as a political doctrine,

(b) Communalism as a behaviour based on community sentiment.

The first implies the political doctrine based on religio-cultural differences to achieve political ends. Prabha Dixit in a study of the development of communalism in India
observes "It is only when a deliberate choice is made by a community to initiate political demands on the basis of religio-cultural differences that communal awareness turns into communalism in the form of a political doctrine". D.B. Smith's definition incorporates in it the negative aspect of communalism and in a general sense comes under this category. For him communalism in India is "the functioning of religious communities or organisations which claim to represent them, in a way which is considered detrimental to the interests of other groups or of the nation as a whole".

The second has in it the idea that even after the basis for religious faith has been lost, people born in a particular faith may continue to feel and act like a community. Louis Dumont says

Communalism, on the one hand, differs from nationalism in the place that religion seems to play in it, while on the other, the religious element that enters into its composition is but the shadow of religion, i.e., religion taken not as the essence and guide of life in all spheres, but only as a sign of the distinction of one human, at least virtually political, group against others. (72)

Satish Saberwal more or less in the same vein argues that communalism is concerned with the setting for man's relations with his society. "Communalism" says Saberwal "in our sense, means the channeling of personal sentiments and actions primarily with reference to the ascriptive group whose boundaries are determined by the accident of one's birth". The strength of the communal boundaries, therefore, is a function of
(a) perceived hostility of the stereotypes concerning and actions towards, one's group in the larger society;

(b) of the group's shared interests having been articulated and organised by an effective leadership. Notwithstanding these clarifications Saberwal comes to a hasty conclusion: "If secularism is a threat, it is so to communalism. If secularism can be effective, communalism would vanish". The assertion that secularism can displace communalism restricts our understanding of empirical situations as they exist.

We will be using communalism as "...an attitude which emphasises the primacy and exclusiveness of the communal group and demands the solidarity of members of the community in political and social action". The dysfunctional aspect of communalism for a holistic approach to society underlines our arguments in the following pages. The distinctions made here cannot be established with neat boundaries. Overlapping areas are considerably vast. At best they are heuristic devices for analytical purposes. But for our study what Louis Dumont and Satish Saberwal have said provides a pointer towards communalism being viewed as a social phenomenon bereft of its religious overtones.

**Communalisation**

The above understanding gives us the link to proceed with the assumption that the community ties which emerge in the process of secularisation, are with less ritual significance, or 'a decreasing affectual orientation' as Pfautz would like to
put it. It is nearer to Weber's formulation of "basically a
confessional association of individual believers, not a ritual
association of kinship groups". That is, Weber has said
about the medieval city that there the parish was in the hands
of lay elders in legally binding actions of the community.
Parish was the centre of action for the community though it was
in the hands of lay people. Thus there was a change in form
but the content remained the same for the time being. That is
a change in the functions of the communal groups is possible.
Although the basis of group formation is primordial there can
be situations where the groups pursue instrumental collectivism.
In short, the process change but structure remains. Of course,
ultimately depending on the degree of the change in content,
form also will undergo transformation. That is a process of
secularisation. It is not atomisation but a sort of segmenta-
tion that is happening.

So parallel to the secularisation process, there is what
we may call a process of communalisation is also taking place.
The communalisation as a process could be seen thus: In a
plural traditional society, secularisation cannot destroy all
the manifestations of religious groupings and man finds his
primordial loyalties in terms of religious (including caste)
identities a valuable instrument to maximise economic advantages,
political power and social status. That is, a community with
religious identities devoid of transcendent ritual or spiritual
significance organising itself to bargain for larger or pro-
portionate shares in wealth and power commensurate to its
numerical strength is communalisation. Individuality is the norm of economic activity but communality becomes the operational norm of the community threatened by secularisation. The group becomes the source of strength and support as secularisation brings hitherto unknown forces into a traditional society, challenging its old values. Increasing commercialisation, quest to enhance status, consciousness about deprivation, realisation of the importance of political power, recognition of a rival reference group, are causes and consequences of communalisation. The secularisation process and reinforcing of religious group identity need not be a zero-sum game. Communalisation is a process of change where material (economic) resource/incentive is a crucial variable.

The nature and function of religious institutions and organisations become a dependent variable (dependent on secularisation). If the state is not responsive enough to meet their demands and aspirations, people turn to religious organisations (primordial institutions) to accumulate wealth, gain status and power. For some time, these religious organisations will be an instrument to bargain with the state. In one sense, religious affinity gains strength and respectability because of its effectiveness to gain economic and political power. That is to say, in communalisation what really happens is, within the framework of primordiality, a movement from mechanical (Durkheimian sense) organisation to a voluntary organisation occurs to achieve maximum material status symbols. Communalisation gains a respectable position through its close
affinity and attachments to non-religious (secular) instrumentalities.

The communalisation process has little to do with free and public practice of religion of a community but "it is based on the issue of which group shall gain benefits or hold power of a wholly secular sort". That is the right to economic or political advantage of the individual adherents of a religion or sect. Perhaps the secularisation process is seen as a shift of emphasis on culture of religion per se to 'interests' of the members of the groups circumscribed by religious boundaries which they get by birth. Just like an ethnic group becomes a focus of mobilisation for the pursuit of group or individual interests, community is an effective focus.

Finally, in the communal conflicts or competition to maximise economic benefits or other interests of groups there is another important variable - the State. The notion of welfare state in the modern period which has transformed many private worries into public issues assumes great significance in this context. "The State becomes a crucial and direct arbiter of economic well being, as well as of political status and whatever flows from that" says Glazer and Moynihan. Thus a welfare state has to be responsive to communal claims in so far as it embodies people's aspirations and demands. In other words, the content of citizenship determines the intensity of communal bargaining, conflicts and competition.

The Argument

Our argument is that secularisation process need not
The following paradigm sums up our discussion so far.

**Figure 3**

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necessarily replace man's identity in terms of religious affinity in spite of the fact that individualisation is an important mark of secularisation. While we reject displacement theory, two alternatives can be postulated (a) reinforcement of man's identity based on religious sentiments and affinity; (b) change in the functions of religious collectivities - a shift from ritual to secular functions (we emphasise that in both cases religious affinity exists side by side with secularisation process). Thus, when the latter happens, the function of the 'community' based on religious sentiments tend to be an instrument to enhance economic, social and political achievements. These three: economic achievement, status maximisation and sharing (controlling) political power will be the variables, affecting the character of the community and thereby religious organisations at a given time. Therefore, when people move on the continuum from sacred to the secular, or from primordial ties to civil ties what is important is not just the symbols of the community but the social uses of these symbols; the loyalties it reflect and the underlying socio-economic interests of group members.

This leads us to take for granted the existence of a set of institutional arrangements which recognises "the salience of communal cleavages and legitimises communally based social structures and political activity as essential to peaceful and consensual co-existence".

By its own logic, as we saw in the writings of Comte and others, occupational and class interests were expected to
cross-cut and weaken the grip of communal solidarities on modern man. Since communal solidarities are primitive modes of association, they were considered aberrations in universalistic, achievement oriented, modern nation states. But our assumption is that under certain given conditions in old as well as new societies, the pull of communal loyalties need not lessen instead it may become a norm.

To illustrate this point let us take the case of an old society and a new one. The study of communal situation in South East Asia (an old society), has been attempted by Milton J. Esman who conclude that even where communal interests and class-interests coincide the struggle in a plural situation is likely to be articulated in communal language because "it draws on deeper layers of identity and consciousness than the latter". He continues:

contrary to earlier expectations, urbanisation which has been regarded as a modernising phenomenon in which traditional, particularistic, communal loyalties become irrelevant is having the opposite effect. Rapid urbanisation tends to aggravate communal antagonisms in close-quartered competition for scarce jobs, housing, educational opportunities and political influence. (36)

This, also implies that communalisation is the function of inadequate resources, imbalanced distribution and of under development. The question to be posed here is: if these negative factors disappear, then, will the characteristics and pulls of communal solidarities disappear? Our premise is; it will not; but its functions will undergo a change.

Our example of a 'new society' is that of United States of America. Although not strictly on the communal lines, as
we have defined and understood them in the Indian context, but on ethnic terms, the identity of the people has not lessened in spite of increase in education, increase in income, and adaptation to middle class styles, geographical dispersion like occupational and class mobility and increased intergroup contacts. On many occasions these social processes have served to activate a new and positive appreciation of one's ethnic identity resulting in group defensiveness or group militancy.

The questions we have to grapple with then, are:

(1) Granting that in certain societies in spite of the rapid development of education, modern science, communication, economic development and rise of individualism, the feeling of community bond is not only not weakened but in fact strengthened: What is its social, economic, political functions? How does it express itself? (2) How does the community bond act as an instrumentality for the achievement of status, power and wealth at the onset of the process of secularisation?

To conclude, the basis of group formation in traditional societies has been the primordial ties but the goals they pursue are secular; instrumental collectivism. The kind of change that is likely to take place in all traditional societies and especially a country like that of India with its intense caste base has this contradiction inherent in it. Given the structures we have, we cannot dismiss this as a traditional, revivalistic process. Perhaps this is the only way out. This is where, we have to be cautious in simply transplanting western models to comprehend our empirical reality. Further, we should not and
perhaps cannot expect the processes of change in our context to be similar to those of the West. What follows in this thesis is an attempt to explicate this position with empirical evidence from one of the states in India, namely Kerala.
Notes and References


9. Ibid., p. 11.


11. Ibid., p. 29.

12. Secularisation means the transfer in the sphere of work or responsibility from the sacred or religious or ecclesiastical to the secular or worldly or civil. It was in this sense that the word 'Secularisation' was first used in the treaty of Westphalia in 1648. Part of the terms of that treaty, which marked the end of the thirty years war of religious strife in Europe, was the partition of lands which had traditionally been under the
administration of the church (i.e., the Archbishopric of Bremen and Bishopric of Verdom). The lands were transferred to some of the contending parties as a form of indemnity or compensation. This transfer of authority, of course, was a bitter blow to the Church and to mitigate the diplomatic feelings involved, a more or less neutral term was needed to characterise this ownership and authority. The word 'secularisation' was happily hit upon as a fitting term. Thus, it is precisely, this shift of responsibility and control from religious to secular authority which lies at the root of the ideas of secularisation. James Hastings Nichols, History of Christianity 1650-1950: Secularisation of the West, New York: Ronald, 1956, p. 6. Cf William Walker, A History of the Christian Church, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959, p. 426.

Values are 'conceptions of the desirable', norms are patterns of desirable behaviour which implement values in a variety of contexts. Ratna Dutta, *Values in Models of Modernisation*, New Delhi: Vikas, 1971, p. 34. According to Parsons, the values and norms "are differentiated according to the particular functions of agencies concerned and the specific situations in which they operate" quoted by Dutta, *ibid.*, p. 34; Cf. Parson's definition of values and norms. "Values - in the pattern sense - we regard as the primary connecting element between the social and cultural systems. Norms, however are primarily social. They have regulatory significance for social processes and relationships but do not embody 'principles' which are applicable beyond social organisation". Talcott Parsons, *Societies: Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1966, p. 18.

"Just as values are shaped primarily by religious tradition - a culture's solution to the problem of 'Absolute' and 'relative dependencies' - norms are shaped primarily by the exigencies of organised activity" says Dutta, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

Plausibility structures are 'solid base' that is real to actual human beings.


Peter E. Glasner, *op. cit.*, p. 43.


34. Harvey Cox, *op. cit.*

36. Ibid., p. 544.


42. The motive for using the word 'modern' instead of 'western' for the introduction of science and democracy is merely to save face, for, "it goes against the grain to admit that one's own ancestral way of life is not adequate to the situation in which one now finds oneself" says Toynbee, *The Present day Experiment in Western Civilisation*, London: Oxford University Press, 1962, p. 24.

44. M.N. Srinivas, op. cit., p. 118.
45. Ibid., p. 55.
49. In zero-sum game 'the gains of some are exactly balanced by the loss of others'. The wide range of situation in which this concept is useful are economic, political, military and strictly social in nature. See Oskar Morgenstern, "Game Theory: Theoretical Aspects", Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, vol. VI, David L. Sills, ed., The Macmillan and The Free Press, 1968, pp. 62-63.
52. Quoted in Protestant Ethic, p. 175.
56. Ibid., pp. 244-5.
59. Ibid., p. 133.
60. Ibid., p. 142.
61. Ibid., p. 142.


Admitting that the ethnic group category has its own difficulties Bell's objection to primordial and ascriptive group categories is that "some sociologists have sought to escape these confusions by talk ing of primordial groups as the sociological category for primary ties reserving the particular designation of national, lin guistic or religious groups for the specific historical context. The term primordial however, also includes clans, tribes, or even extended families, and thus has its own limitations. The term ascriptive groups has been proposed for those whose ties are "bound" or given in some way, as against achievement groups; but the term is embedded in an analytical sociology that is too austere to be used for sociographic purposes."

Ibid., pp. 156-7.

Ibid., p. 155.


R.A. Schermerhorn, op. cit., p. 177n.


Prabha Dixit, op. cit., p. 1.


Ibid., p. 57.

Ibid., p. 57.
76. Ibid., p. 57.
79. Ibid., p. 74.
81. Ibid., p. 8.
85. Ibid., p. 416.
86. Ibid., p. 416.