CHAPTER SIXTEEN

SECULAR SOCIETY - A MUST

The Constitution of India, as already explained, contains several Secular features and provides for a Secular State for India. But a 'Secular Society', instead of a 'Sacred Society' is needed in India.

What is Secular Society? :-

A Secular Society means a society based on Secular values of life. It means that the social life should be governed by rational thinking rather than by religious and communal considerations. In a Secular society, social life and social institutions are free from the hold of religion. A Secular Society does not look behind but looks forward. Such type of Secular Society needs both the 'Secular man' and 'Secularization of the Institutions' in the society.

A Secular man is characterised by rationality and psychological mobility. He possesses Secular attitude of
life. 'Secular attitude in its essence is non-religious. It is this worldly of this worldly affairs'\textsuperscript{1}.

What is Secularization? :-

Secular Society needs Secularization of social life of the people. What is Secularization? Secularization may be defined as the emancipation of social and political institution from the hold of religion. It is not a threat to any religion. It is just deciding the place of religion in the social system. It is explained that, 'the process of Secularization starts when institutions of society in the different functional areas resist subservience to established religion and gain a measures of autonomy. In the process, the institutions and functionaries of religion loses their control over several fields of social activities, such as politics, diplomacy, economics and trade, education, medicine and so on.--- Religion does not remain the sole or even the most important agency from which social values, goals and norms of action emanate'\textsuperscript{2}.

\textsuperscript{1} Hamid Dalwai,'Secular Integration', \textit{The Secularist}, No.60, November-December, 1979, PP.142-143.

Means of Secularization:

Secularization of the society can be achieved by means of Legislation, education, scientific and technological development and economic growth in the society.

Secularization through Legislation implies an element of force in it. It, therefore, may not be effective means for the purpose of Secularization. There may be Legislation for Secularization of social institutions, but it would be ineffective, if it is not implemented timely and properly.

In the process of Secularization, education plays a key role. It is, however, necessary to adopt a Secular policy of education at all levels, from Primary to Post-graduation. In this, the importance should be given to both, the Text-books and the Teachers who teach them. The Text books should be free from communal prejudice, and the teacher must be free from communal and local interests. In the process of Secularization, through education, the educational institutions also need to be controlled by the State, because in our society, educational institutions tend to grow on caste and communal basis. Mr. Sikri, has remarked
that "our educational institutions have also failed to foster the growth of Secularism. They neither radiate Secularism nor have they made a determined effort to inculcate in the youth Secular ideas. Instead of helping to harmonise difference between the various communities and groups by cultivating a spirit of large-hearted tolerance of mutual give and take, and of the appreciation of the ways in which people differ from each other, they poison the minds of the youth."

In this connection, it may be suggested that every attempt should be made to protect children from the harmful impact of sectarian religion. They should be taught especially in history, true doctrines of different religions and positive aspect of different cultures. The emphasis should be on the nationalism rather than communalism, regionalism, casteism etc. But we find that the historical prejudices are taught in the name of Indian History.

It is argued that 'our educational institutions do not radiate Secularism.' Most of the prescribed text books glorify the good features of one community and not of all the communities. There are also prescribed Text-books which deal with imaginary ancient wrongs suffered by one community at the hands of another, silently calling for revenge. No educational institution has made a determined effort to inculcate in the youth the Secular ideals.  

The Regional Languages as a medium of instruction have also created problems. It has increased linguism and regionalism. It has also reduced the quality of Text-books. Therefore, to inculcate Secular outlook, the education system in India, requires a revolutionary change at all levels of education.

Secularization can be achieved through technological development and economic growth. With the growth of Scientific attitude, many of the myths and rituals in religion lost their significance. Industrialization and

urbanisation also tend to promote the general Secularization of both private and public life.

The process of Secularization and its speed may vary from community to community in the society. It is evident from the Secularization of the Hindu and the Muslim Communities in India. The Hindu Community has been greatly reformed and Secularized due to the Legislation and the efforts by the reformers. The Muslim community rather lags behind because of its opposition to reforms. Therefore, the Secularization of the Muslim community requires a spread of education among the Muslims and a change in their political organisations which are more or less communal and separatist.

Thus, the foregoing discussion clearly shows that, creating a Secular society is not an easy task. It requires ceaseless efforts by all the Secularists and rationalists in the State and Society in India.