CHAPTER SECOND

WHAT IS SECULARISM?

For a proper understanding of the term 'Secularism', it is necessary to understand the meaning of the terms like 'Secular'; 'Secularist', 'Secularity'; 'Secularization', 'Secular Society and 'Secular State'. All these terms have variously been used and explained by the prominent authors.

'secular' :-

The Oxford Dictionary of current English defines the term 'Secular' as 'concerned with the affairs of this world, temporal, profane, Lay, not distinctly, Sacred or ecclesiastical not monastic'.

According to the Encyclopaedia of Britanica, the term 'Secular' means non-spiritual, having no concern with the religious or spiritual matters ... anything which is distinct, opposed to, or not connected with the religion or ecclesiastical things, temporal as opposed to spiritual or ecclesiastical'.

"The term 'Secular' indicates a state of being not connected with and separated from religion"\textsuperscript{2}.

"In its most universal usage in social sciences the term refers to worldly, the civil or the non-religious as distinguished from the spiritual and ecclesiastical. The secular is that which is not dedicated to religious ends and uses"\textsuperscript{3}.

The term 'secular' means 'Temporal' or 'worldly'\textsuperscript{4}.

Thus, 'secular' means 'worldly' 'related to activities connected with present life only', things different from religion'.


'Secularist':

Encyclopaedia of social sciences defines the term 'Secularist' as one who theoretically rejects every form of worship, religious and faith and influence, derived from the present life and one who believes that education and other civil matters should be managed without introducing any of the religious elements. 'Secularist' means a man who believes in secular ideas or "one who advocates secularism".

'Secularity':

According to A New English Dictionary, secularity means 'absence of connection with religion'.

Webster's Third New International Dictionary defines the term secularity as 'quality or state of being secular'.

7. Ibid.
Secularization means 'act or process of Secularizing, the condition of being secularized'\(^8\). Another essential element in secularization is rationalism, 'comprehensive expression applied to various theoretical and practical tendencies which aim to interpret the universe purely in terms of thought, or which aim to regulate individual and social life in accordance with principles of reason and to eliminate as far as possible or to relegate to the background everything irrational'\(^9\). The term 'secularization' is used to describe 'the conversion of an ecclesiastical or religious institution or its property to secular possession and use, and by extension, to shift the authority, basis or emphasis from the religious to the secular. Hence art and education becomes secularized when their subject matter shifts from sacred to secular. A society is secularized as religion comes to play a less and less dominant role.'\(^{10}\)

8. Ibid, P.2053.
The term secularization implies that what was previously regarded as religious is now ceasing to be such, and it also implies a process of differentiation which results in the various aspects of the society, economic, political, legal and moral becoming increasingly discrete in relation to each other.\textsuperscript{11}

'Secular Society':-

A dictionary of social sciences explains the term 'secular society' as "A secular society can be viewed as one that engenders in or elicits from its members, by any or all appropriate means, readiness to change customary orientation towards, and/or definition of values regarded as essential in that society. More succinctly, a secular society is one bringing its members to willing and able, in whatever measure to accept or pursue the new as the new is defined in that society.\textsuperscript{12} According to plain meaning of the term the 'secular Society' simply means a society


which recognises the secular values, and in which more importance is given to material or temporal affairs of life.

'Secular State':

The term 'secular state' is given a variety of meanings at different times and by different people. Generally, the term is used to indicate the separation of the State and the Church. The term 'Secular State' is also employed to describe the opposite character of the State which is called 'Theocratic State'. The Theocratic State is a State in which God is sovereign, the Government is based on the divine will and religion of the people. The Theocratic State can be called as a religious State. In it there is fusion of politics and religion. This is avoided in the secular state. Smith D.E., defines the term as "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 seeks either to promote or interfere with religion" 13.

According to Dr. Luthera, "a Secular State is one which is separated, unconnected and not devoted to religion"\textsuperscript{14}. In the opinion of Dr. Sexena, "a Secular State is that, which works for the benefit of all the citizens without any distinction of caste, colour or religion"\textsuperscript{15}.

It may be said that a Secular State is one which is divorced from religion, and which is concerned with the temporal affairs of life of man. The Secular State views the individual as a citizen irrespective of his religion, creed, caste, or colour. Divorce from religion, absence of State religion, tolerance of all religions, material developments in the society, and equality of rights of a citizen can be called as the characteristics of a Secular State.

'Secularism' :-

The term 'secularism' is given a variety of meanings

\textsuperscript{14} Dr. Luthera V.P., The Concept of Secular State and India, Oxford University Press, First Edition, (1964), P. 15.

and it has come to mean different things to different people. Oxford Dictionary of current English explains the term 'Secularism' as "doctrine that the basis of morality should be non-religious, policy of excluding religious teaching from schools under state control". Holyoake, who formulated the Concept of Secularism in its modern form and published his book 'Principles of Secularism' in 1859, has attempted to define Secularism as "that which seeks the developments of the moral and intellectual nature of man to the highest possible point, as the immediate duty of life".

The term 'Secularism' means 'a view of life or of any particular matter based on the premise that religion and religious considerations should be ignored or purposely excluded --- a system of social ethics based upon a doctrine that ethical standards and conduct should be


determined exclusively with reference to the present life and social well being without reference to religion.\textsuperscript{18}

According to Eric S. Water-house, Secularism is an ideology which provides 'a theory of life and conduct as against one provided by religion'.\textsuperscript{19}

Secularism has often been equated with anti-religion, atheism and materialism. 'Materialism implied for Marx a radical rejection of religion, indeed a militant atheism.\textsuperscript{18}

Religion supplies imaginary or "fantastic" satisfactions that misdirect any rational effort to find real satisfaction.\textsuperscript{18} It is "The opium of the people", a soporific that prevents the oppressed from making any effort to better their lot by resisting their exploiters. Materialism meant for Marx, as it has continued to mean for Marxists, an anti-religious Secularism, regarded as the pre-condition of any thorough-going social reform.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{18} Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Vol. III, P. 2053

\textsuperscript{19} Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. XI, P. 348.

Lenin, Stalin and Others Communist Leaders in Russia were atheist. They were against religion and religious institutions. They repudiated God. Similarly, MaoTse-Tung and other communist leaders in China were also atheist and considered religion as an evil.

M.N. Roy, viewed the Secularism as against religion. According to him, true spiritual freedom means not freedom to choose from among various religious doctrines, but freedom of the human spirit from the tyranny of all of them.\textsuperscript{21} M.R. Masani equated Secularism with atheism and asserted that only communist countries were secular.\textsuperscript{22}

Refus M. Jones, describes Secularism as a 'real rival to Christianity in the world today', and defines it as 'a way of life and an interpretation of life that include only the natural order of things and that do not find God, or a realm of spiritual reality, essential life or thought.'\textsuperscript{23}


\textsuperscript{22} Quoted by Sinha V.K., (Ed.), Secularism in India, Lalvani Publishing House, First Edition, (1968), P.VII.

\textsuperscript{23} Quoted by Dr. Luthera V.P., Op. cit., P.154.
According to Dr. Radhakrishnan 'Secularism here does not mean irreligion or atheism, or even stress on material comforts. It proclaims that it lays stress on universality of spiritual values which may be attained by a variety of ways'. Dr. Luthera interprets the term 'Secularism' as the principle of separating the State from religion. He prefers the term 'jurisdictionalism' with reference to India, and says that 'India can be described as a jurisdictionalist State'.

In the words of Dr. Sexena 'Secularism certainly means a doctrine having been religious morality, tolerance and reasonable margin for freedom of worship and faith to each and all citizens of a country irrespective of their colour, caste, sex, sect, religion, faith, nationality and other conditions of birth.'

Badrudin Tyabji explains the term 'Secularism' as "that Secularism does not mean obliteration of individualism, the imposition of uniformity but rather the even handed operation of the rule of the law in regard to belief.--- It should function like a gaint pergola under which a Thousand flowers may bloom, irrespective of their colour, size, shape or perfume" 27.

The term 'Secularism' explains as many meanings as the people who have used it. It is stated that 'the term "Secularism" has been expanded to include a formidable list of objects of attack in the contemporary scene. Let me summarise that list:-- Scientific humanism, neutralism and materialism, agnosticism, and positivism, intellectualism, rationalism, existentialism, and philosophy, nationalism and totalitarianism, democratic faith and communism, utopian idealism, optimism and the idea of progress, moralism and amoralism, ethical relativism, and nihilism, the industrial revolution and its divorce from nature, modern education in separation from religion, historical method when applied

to the biblical revelation, mass atheism and depersonalization of man.\textsuperscript{28}

Thus, the meaning of the term 'Secularism' varies greatly especially when it is considered along with the religion. Some of the exponents of Secularism assume a kind of contradiction between secularism and religion, while some admit the co-relation, between the Secularism and religion. Nandy Ashis has explained, recently two kinds of Secularism. 'Secular' Secularism and 'Non-secular' or 'religious' Secularism\textsuperscript{29}.

There can be no agreed and precise definition of Secularism, as it is a dynamic Concept. Definition given to-day becomes out-dated tomorrow. But it may be said that Secularism is not only a political Concept. It is a philosophy of life, and its ideal is progress in human life in the present world, irrespective of man's religion, sect, caste, colour etc. Secularism does not accept any thing which makes difference between man and man. Humanism based on reason, not religious dogmas, is the salient feature of Secularism.

\textsuperscript{28} Quoted by Dr. Luthera V.P., Op.cit., PP. 153-154.

\textsuperscript{29} Nandy Ashis, 'New Ideology of Religious Tolerance' \textit{The Times of India}, 22nd January, 1981.
Distinction between the Concept of the Secular State and Secularism:

It is necessary to explain the distinction between the terms 'Secular State' and 'Secularism'. These two terms are often referred to, particularly in India, as if they are having the same meaning. Actually, however, there is distinction between the two. And the distinction is made clear when we see that there are persons or organisations which accept the Concept of 'Secular State' but oppose the Concept of 'Secularism'. It means that some people uphold the separation of the State from religion but reject the idea of separation of religion from the social life. The people are not prepared to separate religion from the social institutions like: Marriage, family, caste and language and education. Thus, 'Secular State' is mainly a political Concept, and covers the subjects like relationship between the State and individual, and relationship between the State and religion. 'Secularism', on the other hand, is broader than the Concept of 'Secular State'. Secularism includes the total relationship of individuals in the existing society.