CHAPTER 1

NATURE OF GANDHI'S SECULARISM AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN MODERN INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT BEFORE THE ADVENT OF GANDHI
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Secularism, as a concept has evolved through ages. In order to study the evolution of secularism, we shall examine the history of Indian Political thought to find out what, if any, was the role and nature of secularism in India. In Ancient India the role of religion was immense. Most of the Hindu scriptures show that the king in ancient India was strongly tied to religion.

A passage in the Aitaraya Brahamana says that the king should employ a brahamana, otherwise the God will not accept his oblations. Priests like Vashishtha were powerful and exercised great influence on the royal court. In the Rigveda, a passage clearly maintains that a king who honoured his priests could win the respect of his people and could secure an easy defeat over his enemies.¹

In Ancient India the state was theocracy of a sort. To some extent, this situation continued in the age of the Vedas and the Brahamanas. Though religion has a prominent place in society, it would be wrong to believe that the Vedic period was a perfect theocracy. Kautilya was the first scholar to separate religion from politics.
A passage in Arthashastra indicates that positive law began to be differentiated from religious rituals and traditional customs. However, during the times of Kautilya, all religions, Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism, flourished alike. The Mauryas favoured the heterodox sects, though they never attacked Brahmanism seriously.2

Ashoka’s concept of Dharma has been interpreted as a synonymous for Buddhism as the State religion. However, Ashoka’s intention was not to build a Buddhist state. Ashoka laid stress on religious toleration. The basis of his toleration was the control of one’s speech, so as not to extol one’s own sect or disparage that of author.

Ashoka laid maximum stress on religious toleration. His toleration was of two kinds, toleration of people themselves and also of their beliefs and ideas. He defined it as consideration towards slaves and servants, obedience to mother and father, generosity towards friends, acquaintances and relatives, priests and monks.3

Religious toleration continued during the Gupta period. The kings of the Gupta dynasty patronized Hinduism. The Brahmans during this period enjoyed effective and powerful status. The brahmans maintained this position, first by regarding themselves as the essential inheritors of the Aryan traditions and secondly by monopolizing knowledge through their
educational system. The Gupta kings gave due respect to Hinduism, but at the same time other religious sects were allowed freedom in the conduct of their religious matters. The principle of religious toleration was deeply rooted in the conduct of religious affairs of the society as a whole.

During the reigns of Harshavardhana, Buddhism was the dominant religion. It received Royal patronage. But other religions, too, prevailed without interference by the State. Rawlinson points out:

Harsha and his family had strong leanings towards Buddhism, and Buddhist establishments were generally endowed. But for reasons of state, the Emperor was eclectic in his religion and paid equal respect to Siva, the Sun (Surya), and Buddha.4

King Harsha had been attracted to the Hinayana school of Buddhism and was greatly impressed by the Chinese pilgrim Hiuan Tsang. This irritated the Brahmanas who hired a criminal to kill Harsha. However, at Prayag, Harsha gave all his wealth to different religious sects. This type of attitude prevailed in India till the advent of the Muslims.

A change from the earlier practice of religious toleration can be witnessed from the tenth century onwards. With the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, we find far-reaching
changes in the entire panorama of Indian life. The state was ruled according to the Quranic laws. The Sultans followed the basic laws of Islam.

The Ulemas (Muslim theologians) became a political voice which could not be disregarded or disobeyed. The Sultan had to show respect for Islamic institutions, and to the Ulemas.

Islam was the dominant religion of the kings. However, they allowed other religions also to co-exist. This period gave rise to the bhakti movement. It sought to free Hinduism from the domination of caste. Similarly, Sufi movement among Muslims helped in bringing the Islamic culture nearer to the Hindu society. A phase of intermixing between the two religions started.

In the beginning, Akbar was under the influence of Shiva’s teachings and mysticism of Persian Poets. Akbar himself was inclined to Suficism and visited Sufi retreats at Ajmer and Sikri. In 1562, Akbar, married a Hindu Rajput princess. He prohibited the killing of cows and animals which the Hindus consider worthy of worship. Akbar’s court was open to Hindus and they were even given high Mansabs, e.g. Raja Mann Singh was given the rank of 7000 mansab.
Akbar held discussions with people of different religions in his Ibadat Khana (The Hall of Prayer) which he had built at his new capital, Fatehpur Sikri. In 1582 Akbar, promulgated a new religion, the Divine faith (Din-i-Illahi). This religion was not enforced on the subjects by Akbar, as is evident from the fact that only a small number of courtiers actually joined this new religion. Akbar tried to emphasize the concept of Sulhkul or peace and harmony among religions. He ordered the translation of important Hindu scriptures. All this, however, does not imply that Akbar was against Islam. This, does, however, establish that Akbar was not a muslim fanatic. He was eclectic in his religious beliefs and practices.

The successors of Akbar, his son Jahangir and his grandson Shahjahan also followed Akbar's policy in matters of religion. However, it was Dara Shikoh (1615-1659), the eldest son of Shahjahan, who took exceptional interest in the study of Hindu philosophy and mystical practices of Hinduism. The Orthodox Muslims even did said that Dara threatened the religious integrity of Islam. Aurangzeb (1658-1707), the brother of Dara Shikoh, took advantage of the situation and condemned him as a heretic. Aurangzeb reversed Akbar's policy of religious toleration. He was a Sunni Muslim. His state was ruled according to the Hanafi School of Muslim Law. In the beginning of his reign, Aurangzeb did move away from the Shura and issued some
orders in which standing temples were not to be demolished. However, no new temples were allowed to be built. In 1665, Aurangzeb reversed his policy and ordered the destruction of the Somnath Temple. Later on, a number of other temples were also destroyed.

Example of Aurangzeb’s communal policy was the reimposition of Jizyah. He was determined to convert India into a land of Dar-ul-Islam. It is true that a large number of his nobility was constituted by the Hindus. On this basis, it can be said that Aurangzeb was after all not that fanatic and that he has been more sinned against than a sinner.

Tarachand has classified the different Muslim rulers and religious leaders of the Mughal period into three categories, namely, (1) Traditionalists or Externalists; (2) Internalists; and (3) Synthesists, who sought to bridge the gulf between the two schools. The first was the school of the traditionalists or the conservations who insisted upon strictconformity to the literal meaning of the sacred texts and unquestioning obedience to religious injunction based upon revelation. They discounted a rational approach to dogma and doctrine.
To sum up, Akbar and his successors further encouraged freedom of thought by ordering the preparation of Persian translation of such Hindu religious books as the Arthashastra, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and the others.

After Aurangzeb, conditions in India moved rapidly towards chaos. The Mughal empire was on the verge of its disintegration. It was Shah Wali-Ullah of Delhi (1703-1762) who rose and talked of flexibility and religious toleration as the two pre-conditions for the survival of Islam in India.

The British conquest of India was different in character from all the previous conquests of the country. It was during the British rule that the foundations of secularism were laid in India. It was the officials of the East India Company, who brought with them the Western ideas and notions of secularism to India.

It was during the British rule that foundations of the Modern Indian State were laid. The British started questioning Indian religious ideas, customs and practices. They also started questioning the prevailing social ideas, customs and institutions. They started making distinction between Human Law and Divine Law, and they learnt the distinction between loyalty to their religion and loyalty towards the state.
Among the Britishers, there were two different view-points about the nature of British rule in India. The Christian missionaries looked upon the British conquest as an opportunity to convert vast masses of Indians into Christians. In these efforts they sought the support of the British rulers.

The advocates of second view-point can be described as the traditionalists were opposed to mass-scale religious conversions and were against radical changes in social and cultural lives of Indians. This school was against the use of state power for converting Indians to Christianity. They stood for religious toleration.

India would save Britain's imperial interests. They had nothing, but complete contempt for the native religions. Their activities were a constant source of irritation to the people of India. The gulf between the rulers and the ruled was widened as a result of their activities.

The Missionaries did not succeed in their efforts to Christianize India. Their efforts, however, had indirect consequences of far-reaching. The reaction against these efforts started the process of religious renaissance in India, which was not only religious, but also social and cultural.
Secularism as a concept never existed in India. It is of Western origin. It came to India mainly through Benthamite radicalism. It came to India in three different ways. Those Indians who went to England or other European countries came in contact with the secular thought of the Western intellectuals and brought the ideas of secularism with them into India. Secondly, British educated Indians came in contact with the secular ideas of Benthamite radicals and other writings of the secular thinkers of the West. Thirdly, secularism was introduced in India, by the British officials who were followers of Bentham and other secular thinkers of the West. Benting introduced for reaching social reform. He abolished sati he sought to remove radical differences in the administration of the justice for Indians and Englishmen.

It was during the liberal imperialism of the days, Bentick Metcalfe and Macalay that the process of secularisation started in India. It was also during this period that the idea of secularism penetrated the mind of Indian intellectuals. The mutiny of 1857 was a great set-back to the process of secularisation in India. Those who dominated the British thinking on the Indian scene were the British tradionalists. After the mutiny, secularism was replaced by policy of religious toleration.
Once the idea of secularism had penetrated into India, it could not be wiped out, despite reversal of the British policy of secularism. Once the idea had penetrated it had come to stay.

**The Early Modern Indian School of Thought**

In the early nineteenth century, there were two Indian responses to secularism. One was the response of the conservatives and the other was of those who accepted Western reformism as the desired goal for modern India. The conservatives can be variously described as orthodox or revivalists. The other group of Western reformists can be described as liberals, progressives or even radicals. Impact of the Western ideas and of Christianity was very profound. During the course of renaissance, many socio-religious movements came into being. Before we describe them briefly, let us point out the essential elements of this renaissance. These elements included the rise of the rational view of life and its application to the physical as well as the metaphysical world. There was, in a limited sense, the rise of the scientific temper. It were these elements that helped the origin and growth of secularism in India. Secular tendency and Indian contact with the British got encouragement from various social and religious reformers of the time.

These reformers attacked blind faith, religious rituals and superstitious practices and sought social reforms. They also
pleaded for secular education instead of religious instructions. The central figure of the Hindu Renaissance of the nineteenth century was Raja Ram Mohan Roy. He has been regarded as the father of all progressive movements in India. He founded the Brahma Samaj in Calcutta. Raja Ram Mohan Roy pleaded for the introduction of Western education in India. He pleaded that secular education was more important for the Indians than pure religious instruction. In the year of 1823 he protested against the establishment of a Sanskrit college by the British Government in India and demanded instead that the college might be utilised for imparting a liberal and enlightened system of instruction embracing mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy and other useful sciences through the medium of English. In a letter to lord Ahmerst on English education, he emphasised:

No improvement can be expected from inducing, young men to consume a dozen years of the most valuable period of their in acquiring the niceties of Sanskrit Grammar. Neither can improvement arise from such speculation as the full-owing which are the themes suggested by Vedanta. In what manner the soul absorbed in the deity? What relation does it bear to the divine essence?

The Arya Samaj was founded by Swami Dayanand. It was also a reform movement. Dayanand was not against the introduction of Western science and secular education in India, he rather
pleaded for it. After Swami Dayanand, the DAV’S (Dayanand anglo-vedic) institutions played a very significant role in providing secular education to the Hindus in addition to religious instructions.

The Moderate School of Thought

Dadabhai Naoroji was the first founder of secular nationalism in India. He wanted that religion and politics must be separated. He went even further than this and asserted that religion must be subordinated to politics. It was because of this type of secular nationalism that Dadabhai attained a very high place in the hearts of the Indian people.

Dadabhai Naoroji firmly believed that Indian could get Swaraj (self-rule) only after its people had realised that a thorough political union of all the Indian people belonging to various creeds and classes was absolutely necessary. In his own words:

"All the people in their political position are in one boat. They must sink or swim together. Without this union all efforts will be vain."§

In his Presidential address in 1886, he pointed out that a meeting of the mind that took place in the sessions of the Indian National Congress was not possible either during the Hindu period or under the Muslim period of Indian history.
Sessions of the Indian National Congress symbolised and represented Indian Nationalism in which people of all religious communities had a role to play. Such a thing was not possible at all even in the days of the best of the Hindu rulers, i.e. king Vikramaditya.

During the rule of Vikramaditya, there was a process of empire building, but not the process of nation-building. Dadabhai Naoroji pointed out that even Hindu nationalism was not possible under the rule of Vikramaditya because even Hindus of different provinces of his kingdom could not have collected and spoken as one nation. Dadabhai also pointed out that the extent of the Muslim empire was even greater than that of the Hindu emperors. He emphasised that even under Akbar a meeting like the session of the Indian National Congress, cross cutting the religious boundaries was not possible.

According to Dadabhai Naoroji, the significance of the sessions of the Indian National Congress was that they were assemblies composed of all classes and communities, all speaking one language and all having uniform and high aspirations of their own. In one word, they were inspired by the sentiment of Nationalism. Dadabhai Naoroji, tried to create loyalty to the nation on non-religious grounds. He realised that the economic consequences of the British rule in India were disastrous for
all Indians alike.

Therefore, people of India belonging to different religions could come together and unite against the British rule in India on the ground that it brought economic union. One important reason why he admired the British rule in India was that it had brought with it the notions of nationalism and secularism. Dadabhai Naoroji subscribed to these ideas. He propagated them among the educated middle class in India.

He was acceptable to people belonging to different religious sects of India. He was also acceptable to the moderates and the extremists alike. This clearly demonstrated the secular nature of his personality. His prolonged leadership of the Indian National Congress also demonstrates the secular nature of the Indian National Congress itself. Dadabhai Naoroji promoted the cause of secularism in India in various ways. Dadabhai Naoroji, even as a member of a minority religious group of India, had fundamental faith in the idea of religious toleration. The very survival of the Parsee community to which he belonged was possible because of the prevailing atmosphere of religious toleration.

Dadabhai Naoroji’s idea of secularisation implied and represented nationalism, anti-imperialism and anti-communalism.
He pleaded with the people of India that they should subordinate their loyalty to their religion at the alter of their devotion to the nation.

It must be emphasized that the nature of his anti-imperialism was quite different from that of the early Indians. To provide contrast, we might make a reference to the leaders of the 1857 events. In 1857, the protest against the British rule in India was mainly on religious grounds. On the other hand, Dadabhai Naoroji’s protest against the British rule in India was not based on religious grounds, but on material and moral grounds. In his essay, his thesis was that the principal cause of India’s degradation was the employment of the aliens in the Government of the country and the consequent material loss to and the drain from the country. He calculated the economic consequences of the British rule in India, pointing out that on the moral side loss was even greater. In his own words, the moral consequences of the British rule in India for the Indians were as follows:

They could not rise; they could not develop their capacity for higher government, because they had no opportunity; the result was, of course, that their facilities must be stunted. Lastly, every European displaces an Indian who should fill that post. In short the evil of the foreign rule involved the triple loss of wealth, wisdom and work.
Through his research, he tried to establish that poverty in India was because of the nature and character of British rule in India. It is on the basis of his analytical research that he asked the people of India to change the existing relationship between England and India, that is pleaded for building up economic nationalism in India. The religion demanded devotion and loyalty from the people of India. This was his contribution in the process of secularisation in India.

Sir Pherozeshah Mehta had friends among leaders of different religious communities of India. He said that a Parsee would be a better Parsee or a Muslim would be a better Muslim or a Hindu would be a better Hindu, more he was attached to his country and more he was bound in brotherly affection to all the children of the soil. He said that we must consider ourselves Indians first and Hindu, Christian or Muslim only afterwards. Creating loyalty for the congress among the people drawn from different religious faiths is an important part of the process of secularization. Although he was a Parsee, Sir Pherozeshah became the chief strategist of the moderates who were drawn largely from amongst the high-caste Hindus.

But Surendra Nath Bannerjee said that the Indians should forget their differences and realize that they have a common destiny. Like the other moderates, he wanted that Indians of all
creeds should be loyal to their country, irrespective of their affiliation to a particular religion or community. In this respect he is different from other moderates like Dadabhai Naoroji and Sir Pherozeshah Mehta. Dadabhai Naoroji wanted to build nationalism only on the basis of secular consideration and sought a complete divorce between religion and politics.

Ranade's secularism had many aspects. The most important dimension of his secularism was that he tried to secularize Indian politics, by pleading for secular nationalism and particularly for Hindu Muslim unity. In his speech to the Indian Social Conference, 1899, he stressed the importance of Hindu-Muslim cooperation. He pointed out that during the time of Akbar, Hindu-Muslim unity was possible and was achieved. However, during the period of Aurangzeb, there was an atmosphere of religious intolerance. As a result of this, the Hindus and the Muslims were separated and this was the main reason why the Mughal Empire collapsed. In his view, the great virtue of Akbar was that he had realised that the Hindus and the Muslims had common interests. It was in the interest of both the communities to bring about a fusion in the thoughts and feelings between them. Ranade believed that in order to create national unity, the Hindus and the Muslims should give up the idea that their interests are separate and distinct. They should realise that any such attempt to create separation was harmful for both the
communities. He also asserted that Indian history provides many instances when there was clash and hatred between different communities. It was necessary in the interest of national unity that the same is not repeated. He wanted that Indians must learn what Akbar had practised. However, the people of India should avoid doing what Aurangzeb had done and should realise the great risk in preaching what Aurangzeb had preached. It should be useful here to allow him to speak for himself on the important problem of Hindu-Muslim cooperation. In his speech to the Social Conference, he said:

No progress is possible unless both Hindus and Mohamedans join hands together, and are determined to follow the lead of the men who flourished in Akbar’s time and were his chief advisers and councillors, and scrupulously avoid the mistakes which were committed by his great grandson Aurangzeb. Joint action from a sense of common interest, and a common desire to bring about the fusion of the thoughts and feelings of men so as to tolerate small differences and bring about concord. These were the chief aims kept in view by Akbar which formed the principle of the new divine faith formulated in the Din-i-Illahi.7

Ranade admired the British rule in India mainly because it gave secular education, secular culture and secular values. He believed that, with the help of the British rule, Hindu and Muslims would be so friend that they will catch up with the people of Western Europe. Another significant contribution of
Ranade in the field of secularism was that he strongly pleaded for an expansion of the powers and functions of the state.

According to him:

The state is now more recognised as the national organ for taking care of national needs in all matters in which individual and co-operative efforts are not likely to be effective. This is the correct view, to take true function of the state.

He was the first great Indian who emphasized on the need of state building and insisted that industrialization, modernization, capitalism and radical social reforms are agents of secularism. Like other Moderate leaders, Gokhale divorced religion from politics. He did not want to use religion in the process of creating sentiments of nationalism in India. So, he insisted that everybody who was a member of his society "Servants of India" must take seven vows related to secular nationalism. The first vow was that the country will always be first in his thoughts. This meant that loyalty to the country was primary and all other loyalties were secondary. This also implied that loyalty to the country was superior and would supersede one's loyalty to religion. This idea of devotion to the country was reinforced by another vow which said that the members of the society would regard all Indians as brothers and would work for the advancement without distinction of caste or creed. It was admitted in the constitution of this society that
secularism had become the established creed of the educated middle class. In the preamble of the constitution of this society, Gokhle had pointed out that:

The growth, during the last fifty years, of feeling of common nationality based upon common tradition, common disability and common hopes and aspirations, has been most striking.  

The Indian moderates were the first nationalists of India. They were the first to preach the idea of secular nationalism. They stood for the unity of India through co-operation between different religious communities. They believed in religious toleration. They pleaded for secular education instead of religious instruction.

**The Extremist School of Thought**

The extremist school led by the famous trio Nationalist leaders, Bal, Pal, Lal - introduced religion in their political action in arousing nationalism among the Indian people.

The whole attempt of extremists was to transform the Indian National Congress in a popular mass movement. For this purpose, they appealed to three principal ties which are common to all Indians. These ties are language, religion and history and it was easily understood by the masses.
As against the Western reformism of the Moderates, they talked of revivalism. They reminded Indians of their glorious past. They used religious symbols and terminology to mobilise their devotion to the motherland. They advertised the heroic and patriotic examples of Rana Pratap and Shivaji. They described the revolt of 1857 as the first war of Indian Independence. In the words of Bipinchander Pal:

The Hindus constitute a distinct people. The regulative idea in the evolution of Hindu character, the idea which has given a particular shape and colouring to the entire history of the race, is their innate consciousness of the spiritual and the eternal.

The extremists expressed their nationalism in religious terms. Aurobindo, the militant nationalist, identified his concept of nation with Dharma itself. India of his conception was:

The Hindu nation was born with the Sanatan Dharma. With it, it moves and with it, it grows. When the Sanatana Dharma declines then the nation declines and if the Sanatana Dharma were capable of perishing with the nation it would perish. The Sanatana Dharma, that is nationalism.

To Lala Lajpat Rai, nationalism mean:

One common name, a common ancestry, a common history, a common religion, a common language and a common future.
From the point of view of the extremist leaders, the problem with the concept of secularism was that even if it was a desirable objective in the Indian condition, it had limited applicability in the modern social context. The extremists had realized that in order to spread nationalism among the masses it was necessary to make use of religious symbols for political purpose.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was the first Bengali Hindu who employed the triple appeal of language, history and religion to built Hindu Nationalism at the mass level. He encouraged writing in Bengali. His historical novels in Bengali talked of India's glorious past. His national song "Bande-Matram" mixed religion and politics in a very effective emotional manner.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak has been hailed as the prophet of mass nationalism in India. He has, however, been criticized in his role in retarding the process of secularism in India. M.N. Roy, the first Indian Marxist revolutionary criticized Tilak's concept of nationalism. To Roy, Tilak did not seek secular foundation for his nationalism, as his nationalism was ingrained in indigenous culture, tradition and history of the people. Tilak frankly admitted that Indian Nationalists could not be secular and it must be based on Hindu orthodoxy. In M.N.Roy's opinion, the role of Tilak and his school was reactionary, as it
retarded the process of secularism in India and encouraged reactionary forces that contributed to the doctrine of integral nationalism stood revealed when Tilak declared that Indian Nationalism could not be purely secular, that it must be based on Hindu orthodoxy.

Lajpat Rai, like all other extremist leaders employed the triple appeals of language, history and religion to recreate Hindu nationalism at the mass level. He believed in religious toleration and was in favour of Hindu-Muslim co-operation. He argued that the clash of creeds among the Hindus and Muslims was the main cause of Indian’s continued bondage. He insisted that Hindu-Muslim unity in the political field was a pre condition to India’s freedom.

He insisted that Hindu-Muslim Unity in the political field was imperative before they could be relieved from there bondage of British rule. Lajpat Rai was particularly opposed to the system of communal representation and separate electorates. He said that accepting the Muslim demand of separate electorates, some amount of temporary unity may be created. However, this unity would be based on hatred and not love.

Bipin Chandara Pal was very clear in his mind that the concept of nationalism as had arrived from the West was never developed and existed in ancient India. He believed that
nationalism could not be a mere political sentiment. He felt that nationalism could be strong and permanent only when it based on religious foundations. In fact, he repudiated the idea of separation of politics and religion. The major effort of Bipin Chandra Pal was to attract the masses towards the idea of spiritual nationalism. With this view, he brought about an identity between nationalism and religion. In his own words:

It is something very tangible, something very concrete. It is both word and thought, both on idea and is symbol and manifestation - it is both abstract and concrete. It concrete elements are place and persons sanctified by noble historic association.13

Like Bipin Chandra Pal, Aurbindo believed in the idea of the spiritual nationalism. He argued that nationalism is religion by which we are trying to recognise the presence of God in the nation and in our fellow countrymen. According to him in very talk of religion and politics as unconnected aspect of humanadivity provokes laughter. In his own word:

Here everything that claims popular attentions must have the sanction of religion. Neither does religion concern and other subjects intimately as possible.14

Pro-British and Nationalist Muslim School

We shall briefly point out the role and contribution of some prominent Muslim leaders in the process of secularism. The
extremists, promoted the growth of nationalism in India. But in the process of doing so, they also retarded the growth of secularism in the country.

Sir Syed Ahmad had full faith in Hindu-Muslim unity. However, he was opposed to the establishment of the Indian National Congress. He was opposed to the establishment of the Indian National Congress. He advised the Indian Muslims not to join it. Badruddin Tyabji represented another viewpoint among the Indian Muslims. He was a nationalist. The distinct feature of his group was that it consisted of nationalists. It supported the Indian National Movement and the Indian National Congress. Badruddin Tyabji was among the secular Muslim Nationalists.

Mohammad Iqbal represented the third viewpoint among the Indian Muslims. He believed in Pan-Islamism. He raised religion to a status much higher than the state or the nation. In fact, he did not accept the idea of nationalism at all because of his belief in Pan-Islamism.

The important dimension of his personality was that he pleaded for Hindu-Muslim unity and talked of composite Indian nationality. Iqbal condemned liberalism. He was against the application of reason in religious matter. It must be pointed out here that most of the Western philosophers who impressed Iqbal belonged to the intellectual school.
Iqbal was opposed not only to religious reform but also to social reforms. He pleaded with fellow Muslims not to follow the Western culture or civilization. In the social field, he wanted them to conserve what was traditional.

In the political field, Iqbal started as a poet of composite Indian Nationalism. He composed certain poems which clearly established his identification with Indian nationalism. Iqbal was totally opposed to the idea of secular nationalism and he pleaded for Muslim Regionalism and Pan-Islamism.

We have dealt so far broadly on the Western and the Indian conceptions of secularism until the advent of Gandhi on the Indian political scene.

Social Reform—Before the Advent of Gandhi

Ram Mohun Rai was the first person to rise above the most distressing and depressing social anarchy in Indian history at the beginning of nineteenth century and kindle the light of reform. Ram Mohun Rai was prepared to start a crusade against the prevalent religious, social vices and injustices. He used four methods for this: (a) establishment of religious associations. (b) publication of books and tracts and, (c) holding discussions and debates and removing ignorance by setting up educational institutions. He had already formed a religious association, the Atmiya Sabha and published the book,
Ram Mohun Roy was the first reformer in the 19th century who raised his voice effectively against the prevailing religious and social maladies. He did not want to introduce any new religion. He only wanted to get back Hinduism in its pristine form and purity.

Among the early reformers of Bengal, in the 19th century Ram Mohun Roy alone had a clear idea of the evils of the caste-system. He categorically asserted that the distinction of caste introducing innumerable divisions and sub divisions among Hindus has entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling and the multitude of religious rites.\(^{15}\)

Ram Mohun mentioned in an issue of the political dissension among the Hindus which in turn had brought about their subjection of foreign powers for centuries.\(^{16}\) He published in 1827, with a Bengali translation, the first chapter of a Sanskrit tract against caste system, the Vajra Suchi written by Mritunjay Vidyalankar. He himself crossed the seas and broke one of the most unreasonable and harmful restrictions imposed by the caste system. His utterance was of little avail as the caste system was deep rooted in those days.
But it goes without saying that against all the anti-social and immoral tendencies which are rampant in the 19th century; Ram Mohun Roy fought like a patriot and as an earnest social worker. He was no blind imitator of the West. He stood for all that was best in the Western civilization. His agitation was a movement for the complete emancipation of mankind. He wanted to free men of India from all religious and social prejudices. It has rightly been observed that all modern reform movements - educational, social, political have started from him and his chief purpose was to reform Hinduism and to promote social reform. He opposed idolator, untouchability, prohibition, widow-remarriage and the restrictions of caste system.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1853) rejected Western ideas and sought to revive the ancient religion of the Aryans. However, he was not an orthodox Hindu nor was he revivalist. He fearlessly denounced the evils of post-vedic Hinduism. It is because he was an aggressive social reformer that is why he has been called, the father of India. He and the Arya Smaj, which he founded, also helped in the process of secularization in modern India.

In the field of social reforms the Arya Samaj laid down some principles to be observed by its members, they were: (1)
the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man; (2) the equality of sex; (3) absolute justice and fair play between men and men and nations to nations; equal opportunities for all according to their Karma and merit; and (4) love and charity towards all. He denounced caste system the greatest benefit of Hindu society rendered by Arya Samaj was its reclamation of Hindu converts to other religions. It also had the policy of converting persons from other religions to Hinduism, of course, of their own volition.

In the sphere of religion, Dayanand introduced the spirit of enquiry and rationality. More than a religious reformer, he was a social reformer. It is true that he wanted social reforms to be carried out through reinterpretation of Hindu religious texts and traditions. But he was a radical social reformer.

Dayanand’s main concern was revival of Hinduism in Western India where Sikhism, Islam and Christianity had been increasing their number by too conversion every year. In this respect Arya Samaj worked ceaselessly and helped to a great extent the regeneration of Hindu society.

The Ramakrishna Mission was also engaged in social work and social reform.
Vivekananda justified even the caste system and recognised idolatory as useful for those who need idols. However, he interpreted these ancient practices in a way that brought them into harmony with the Western ideals of social and religious equality. His interest in the poor and the down trodden masses was a role which can be considered as a part of the process of radical social reform. The Ramakrishana Mission accepted the caste system but condemned the inequalities associated with it. In this manner their social reform activities have been as aggressive against religious obscuration as that of the Western reformists.

Ranade was actively associated throughout his life with numerous public bodies including the Indian National Congress. His chief interest lay in the sphere of education and social reform. In the matter of social reform Ranade followed a liberal policy. He tried to introduce the principle of rationalism in the field of social practices and social relationships. He believed that the Hindus were a backward people because of their ancient social system and believed in fictitious differences between man and man due to heredity and birth. Hindus were passive on-lookers on social injustices that existed in their social system for the thousands of years. Hindu family system was irrational and unjust because the woman was enslaved. Caste system among the Hindus was unjust and irrational because the
lower caste were enslaved. Rationalism was lacking not only in the Hindu social system, but in their cultural system as well. Ranade tried to introduce reason in Hindu social and cultural system.

More than anything, Ranade was a social reformer and it is throughout his social reforms that he made his greatest contribution in the process of secularization of Indian politics. He fully realized that Hindus had talked of the spiritual progress but had ignored secular well being. Their religion had made them orthodox and fatalist. Ranade admired the British rule in India mainly because it have secular education, secular culture and secular values.

The distinction of Ranade’s secularism was that he introduced rationality and the spirit of injury in the field of religion. Ranade was a follower of Ram Mohun Roy and on the parallels of Brahma-Samaj, he established the Prarthana Samaj in Bombay presidency.

He was a great critic of Hindu orthodoxy and Hindu revivalism. He refused to accept the authority of the Hindu religious leaders even in the field of religion. He would not accept religion and religious practices which were clearly irrational. Ranade wanted to play an extensive role in various fields. He wanted the state to help in the sphere of social
reforms. He wanted the state to help in bringing about capitalist growth in India. He had very exalted opinion about the role of the state.

According to Vivekanand in the 19th century India had to face two obstacles. One was Indian orthodoxy and the other materialism of the West. 18

Although Vivekanand was proud to belong to the Hindu race and Hindu civilization, he was conscious of their drawbacks too. He was a better critic of the defects of Hindu society. Vivekananda condemned the practice of untouchability and caste restrictions in no uncertain terms. He bitterly criticised untouchability which drove thousands of men and women to the fold of Christianity and Islam. About social reform, Vivekanand considered that blind acceptance of things would lead to nothing but frustration and bondage. He said that he was neither a caste breaker nor a social reformer in the sense in which it was understood then. He had nothing to do directly with caste or with Indian social reformers “Live in any caste, he said,

"but that is no reason why you should hate another men or another caste. It is love and love alone that I preach and I base my teachings on the great Vedantic truth of the sameness and omnipresence of the soul of the universe." 19
In India everything had a religious basis. Therefore the social reformers from Ram Mohun Roy to Ranade had to interpret and quote from scriptures to justify the social change they contemplated. They had to find some parallels in the religious texts to gain the confidence and support of the common masses for social reform.

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Vivekananda and Dayananda were convinced that mere official enactments and ceremonial breaking of existing local customs would not bring about social change.

In assessing the progress of social reform in India, the importance of the Christian missionaries cannot be minimized. They were the first to criticise, rather ridicule the religious beliefs and social practices of the people of India. They withered the educated Indians to have a re-look at their society and its evil that brought about a social ferment and was the source of the social reform movement in the 19th century.
REFERENCES


2. Ibid. p.82


18. Complete works of swami Vivekanand, Mayavati Memorial Editions, Vol III, p.131