RELIGION, SECULARISM AND POLITICS:
A CASE STUDY OF INDIA (1990-2010)

By

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To

My Parents and Uncle Salah-Ud-Din (Late)

for

their endless love, support and encouragement

Certification

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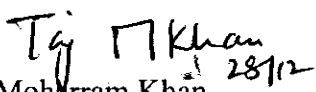
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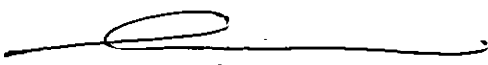
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BJS	Bharatiya Jan Sangh
BSP	Bahujan Samaj Party
CPI (M)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
EU	European Union
IRDP	Integrated Rural Development Program
INC	Indian National Congress/ Congress Party
JD	Janata Dal
JKLF	Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front
JI (Hind)	Jamaat-i- Islami Hind
LOC	Line of Control
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
OBC	Other Backward Classes
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
RSS*	Rashtriya Sevika Samiti
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SC	Scheduled Castes
SGPC	Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandhak Committee
UCC	Uniform Civil Code
UF	United Front
UK	United Kingdom

UPA	United Progressive Alliance
UP	Utter Pardesh
USA	United States of America
VHP	Vishwa Hindu Parishad

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Although India was declared constitutionally a secular state in order to ensure a single common citizenship irrespective of religion, caste, creed or sex etc. and to confer upon every citizen the right to practice any religion, yet religions or religious parties are playing an important and active role in its mainstream politics, which is prominent since the last two decades. The founding fathers of contemporary India were strong supporters of secularism because of its multi-cultural, religious and lingual background/make-up in order to keep it integrated politically. It has helped India in staying united up-to-date. But with the passage of time, all the political parties including the Congress, being the major political party with the claim of being representative of all the communities which had and has been enjoying political dominance in Indian political system, has also diverted from the cherished philosophy of secularism for its respective political gains. Though each of them holds a particular manifesto but has different mindset or ideology.

The most prominent diversion from secularism was reflected in 1990's which set a stage for right wing parties to emerge and used religion as populism for their electioneering. The result was evident in the emergence of the BJP as one of the major political parties on Indian political scene. Prior to this, the BJP had just a nominal representation but the issue of religion was successfully cashed. As a result, it became the second largest party after Congress on Indian political horizon. Secularism of India is further threatened by the existence of a large number of religious political parties and their active participation in the

politics. The dominance of Hindu community and discrimination of other communities on religious basis are, deplorable aspects of the so called Indian secular politics. Among them the down-trodden community, the Muslims, the second largest community to the Hindus in India, is the worst victim of religious obscurantism. So this wave of religious supremacy poses challenges to Indian secular status. Along with these challenges, it has also provided a lot of opportunities to India domestically as well as internationally.

There are various threats which have kept Indian secularist status at stake but in this research it will be measured through the following indicators.

- Religion and secularism in India

- Presence of extremism in India

- Presence of religious political parties in India

- Political implications of Hindu-Muslim conflicts

- Multiple Separatists Movements in India

- Role of religious actors in Indian politics

- Impact of religion on Indian domestic and international policies

1.2 Significance of the Research

The purpose of this research is to know the exact status of secularism in India and to highlight how it is undermined by the emerging bent of the political parties towards religion. Besides, the challenges and opportunities provided by secularism and religion to Indian political system are explored. This research is confined to the last two decades i.e. 1990-2010 of Indian politics.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

According to secularism, the role of religion should not be evident in the politics of the state. But study shows that different religious groups have been flexing their muscles in Indian politics. It is not yet clear why these religious groups are actively influencing Indian politics.

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Now a question arises, either it is because of the loose attachment of the people to secularism or strong affiliation with their religion. The Congress, the ruling majority in Indian political history, was expected that it would strengthen the cherished philosophy i.e. secularism of their founding leaders but on many occasions it had failed to deliver. Such kind of inclinations exhibited practically not only by the Congress but also by all other major political parties is posing various challenges to Indian secularist status in the years to come.

1.4 Research Questions

The research will revolve around the following questions but the main focus will be on the last mentioned question.

Is there any role of religion in Indian Politics?

What is the role of right wing political parties in Indian Politics?

How is the emerging role of religion in Indian mainstream politics threatening the viability of Indian Secularism?

1.5 Hypothesis

Secularism as a fundamental characteristic of Indian constitution has provided a lot of opportunities to Indian society. However, it is confronted by the rising role of religious parties in its mainstream politics which results in communal violence, extremism and fundamentalism, thus paving the way for periodic interruptions to Indian Secularism.

1.6 Literature Review

The topic has been discussed by a number of authors. Survey of the available literature is given below:

1) Fredrick William Wilson (1963) in his book *"Some Indian Problems"* has highlighted some of the early existed problems of India. He has approached it in constructive manner not in obstructive one because he has provided solutions to these problems not just highlighted them. Another main issue which he has addressed is how the cleavage between Hindus and

Muslims should be repaired. But the major flaw in the study is that it has missed completely the perspective of other communities.

2) Shahzana Mallick (1994) in her book *"Hindus Revivalism and the Indian Muslims"* focuses on the rise of Hindus in Indian Politics and how immensely it has affected Muslims of India on various occasions. The demolishing of the Babri Mosque, the nominal representation of Muslims in governmental jobs, the declining literacy rate of Muslims and also the aggressive approach of the right wing Hindu parties towards the Muslims are cases in point. She has discussed only the historical events and no solution for resolving those problems has been given. Besides, the other major flaw in the study is that it has discussed only Muslims' perspective.

3) Brig. Javeed Hassan (2000) in his book *"India: A Study in Profile"* has mentioned the issue of national integration of India and the beliefs of sizable segment of Hindus that the unification of Indian society is just because of the Hindutva. He has explained how it was overcome by the broad vision of Gandhi accompanied by the geniuses of Nehru to get the support of other communities of India and maintain peace and harmony in the country. But he has missed time to time communal violence happenings at regular interval in India.

4) Elliot Hannon (2010) in his article *"Does India still need a Hindu Nationalist Party?"* mainly focuses on the role of BJP in Indian politics. How did it at times shift from one stance to another for obtaining its political gain? Why and when had they diverted/withdrawn from their main philosophy of Hindutva? Consequently, it lost the majority in the recent two elections. In this article, only the BJP policies are scrutinized. How and when had they diverted from the policy of Hindutva?

5) Nitish Dutt and Eddi J Girdner (2000) in their article "Challenging the Rise of Nationalist Religious Parties in India and Turkey" discuss how in the politics of these two countries i.e. India & Turkey being constitutionally declared as secular states, there is the active presence

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of religious parties, which is immensely undermining their claims of being secular. Besides, a comparative study of both the countries has been made without giving any solution.

6) Dr James Chiriyan Kandath (2007) in his article, "Religious Nationalism and Foreign Policy: India and Israel Compared" has made a comparative study of the two ideologies i.e. "Hindutva" believing in only Hindus have the right of citizenship in India and the other one is "Sharonism" which held that only Jews were the citizens of the state of Israel. In this comparison, the flaw is how they will achieve their respective beliefs and goals.

Thus, the lapses and gaps highlighted in the above literature review will be addressed in the given research.

1.7 Objectives of the Research

Basic objectives of the research are:

- To examine the status of religion and secularism in India;

- To find out the role of religious political parties in Indian politics;

- To analyze the happenings of communal violence; and

- To highlight the political and social implications of communalism on Indian society.

1.8 Research Methodology

The research is of qualitative type. Both primary and secondary sources are used in the study. The primary sources include various official documents, reports, white papers, interviews etc. However, the secondary sources consist of books, articles, newspapers, periodicals and other materials related to the study. Moreover, the method adopted is descriptive-analytic and data thus collected are analyzed accordingly.

1.9 Detailed Outline

The thesis will comprise of six chapters. Chapter one will briefly discuss the topic and the reasons and how this research will be conducted. The second chapter will discuss the major

philosophies of religion, secularism and politics and the relation between them along with a brief discussion on secularism and the role of religion in India will also be discussed. The third chapter will highlight the role of religion in Indian politics by analyzing the impact of different religions on Indian politics. Chapter four will analyze the nature, role, and the status of Indian Secularism from different perspectives. Moreover, chapter five will highlight the challenges to India secularism and also the opportunities, it had provided to Indian Society. In chapter six findings and recommendations are given.

CHAPTER 2

Conceptualizing Religion, Secularism and Politics

2.1 Introduction

Religion has always remained a dominant factor in politics throughout the history of mankind. Historically, it has operated the political and social affairs of Empires, Kingdoms and States. It is always regarded as the major reason of conflict among different nations of the world. The role of religion as a political entity for the first time was challenged in 1648 as a result of "Treaty of Westphalia" made at the end of the bloodiest war which the whole Europe had fallen prey to. The result of this treaty came in the shape of privatization of religion and since then it was made a personal matter of an individual and the role of Church was separated from the affairs of the State.[1]

So for the sake of politics, religion was separated. Now a new ideology was required to operate the politics of the world. This gave birth to a new philosophy in the form of secularism. The basic theme of this philosophy at that time was to separate religion from politics. Within very short span of time, it adjusted itself in the vacuum created by religion in the politics. As the world was going through transitional phase and moving towards modernization, it further increased the popularity of secularism and the comeback was made tough for religion into politics. Secularism confined itself not only to Europe but also gained popularity among the various colonies of the British and France, in particular. Despite tough

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[1] Benjamin Straumann, *The Peace of Westphalia as a Secular Constitution*, U.K: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008, pp.3-4

hurdles made for the religion, its presence in the social life of the masses was impossible to replace with any other alternative.[2]

The political role of religion was eliminated for centuries but its comeback into politics had never been out of expectations. In the world of politics, the Iranian Revolution of 1979 is regarded as the comeback of religion into politics. But the emergence of religion into politics has been felt much earlier than that in the shape of decolonization process in the sub-continent as the region was purely divided on religious lines. The freedom movements were completely architected under the influence of religion. Moreover, the creation of Israel in the Middle- East in 1948 is also regard as the revival of religion into politics. But this rebirth of religion in politics is regarded to be of great political significance. Now a question might be asked why Iranian revolution is considered as the return of religion into politics. In a way of explanation, it was followed by a series of political events that not only changed the structure of the region but it had global impact in the shape of disintegration of one of the world super powers, USSR, at the hands of Afghan Mujahedeen accompanied by mujahedeen from all over the Muslim World under the full support and backing of the United States during Afghan war of 1979. This ultimately resulted in transforming the world from bi-polar to a uni-polar power structure.[3]

This chapter will consist of two major sections. In the first part, the key terms of religion, secularism and politics will be defined with different perspectives of the eminent scholars on the topics. In the second portion, relation of religion and politics will be highlighted globally as well as relation of Hinduism with politics. Moreover, the portion in focus will also highlight secularism and world politics along with brief introduction to the Indian secularism.

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[2]Jeffrey Haynes (ed.), *Religion and Politics*, New York: Rutledge International Handbooks 2005, p.4.
[3] Ibid 4-7

2.2 Definition and Operationalization of Key Concepts

2.2.1 Religion

To make a universal and precise definition of religion is tough task as consensus over one standard definition is impossible to achieve. The reason behind this disagreement is held that the adherence of all world religions are fanatically convinced that their respective religion is the only way to be followed and its outlook is the only path that makes sense. They consider it as the ideal path to be followed by the whole mankind. These are the common claims of all the major world religions. As all the religions vary from each other in their beliefs and practices, therefore, to understand this complex phenomenon, point of views of various schools of thought should be analyzed.

Literally, the word, 'religion', means "continuously tying all together". The most common perspective about religion is laid down by William James. He explains that religion is to believe in the divine authority. The basic purpose of the human beings should only be to adjust themselves in the framework of practices and beliefs that the authority has laid down. He is supported by H.L Menken as he defines religion as the struggle of man to fulfill the desire of his God Who has the control of his destiny, and by sincerely obeying his commands, man is rewarded with good fortunes in his life.[4]

Contrary to the above discussed approaches, there are scholars who discuss religion completely with different perspective. One amongst them is Karl Marx who considers religion as an intoxicating agent made by the lower class of the society as their demands and rights are exploited by the upper class of the society. This was how religion got its birth in the society where the oppressed could register their protest against the oppressors. In the words

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[4]William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, U.K: University of Edinburgh, 1901, pp.44-46.

of Karl Marx religion "is the sigh of oppressed creature, the heart of heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions; It is the opium of the people."[5]

Similarly, Michael York of Bath Spa University expresses his opinion while defining religion as a three dimensional phenomenon consisting of the world we live in, humanity and supernatural authority. The relations among these three are regularized through set rules and regulations under the cover of religious laws. But he further explains that religion is not limited only to these three factors as some of the world religions do not follow these rules yet they attract a large number of followers. Anthony Wallace also defines religion as "a set of rituals, rationalized by myth, which it mobilizes Supernatural powers for the purpose of achieving or preventing transformations of state in man or nature".[6] From, Sufism perspective Khalil Jibran in his book "The Prophet" gives the simplest definition of religion while referring to the story of a saint whom people asked his understanding of religion. He replied them that "all actions and all thoughts" is what he understands of religion.[7]

From the above discussed varieties of definitions of religion, although it is hard to conclude keeping in view the complex nature of the term but even then it could be concluded as the unification of masses who surrender their rights in favor of the divine authority and lead their lives according to the rules and regulation laid down by that authority to smoothly and peacefully operate the system of life socially as well as politically. Keeping in view the above discussed definitions the role of religion in politics will be analyzed in this research.

2.2.2 Secularism

The concept of secularism took birth in Europe during the middle ages under the philosophy of enlightened rationalism. It got momentum and got popular support at the end of the

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[5]Martin Griffiths, *Fifty Key Thinkers in International Relations,* London: Rutledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2007, pp. 31-34
[6]William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* U.K: University of Edinburgh, 1901, pp.48-49.
[7]Khalil Gibran, *The Prophet,* Alfred A. Knopf, 1923, p.1-3.

bloodiest thirty years of war within the Europe. This war ended in 1648. As a result of the Treaty of Westphalia, for the first time, in history the political authority of the Church was transferred into the hands of Kings. The religious authorities were subordinated to political authorities and were limited only to perform religious duties. This philosophy i.e., the separation of church and politics was further strengthened and popularized because of 1789 French Revolution as people of the world moved one step further towards modernization and the role of religion was paralyzed. The word secularism was coined by George Jacob Holyoake in 1851who was an eminent scholar of England. At that time the philosophy of secularism was regarded as an ideology built for progress. While in modern times, this ideology is regarded as the alienation of religious institutions and symbols from the society.[8]

The word secularism has Latin origin from the word "Saeculum" which means age or era. The term secularism is mostly used in the countries having Protestants majority who have no official state religion. While the countries having Catholic majority used for the same philosophy the word "Laicism" which has the Greek origin from the word "Laos" which they used for the people. The difference lies in the name as both secularism and laicism support same philosophy which is to minimize or completely eliminate the role of religion from the politics. The only difference between secularism and laicism is that the former stands for the separation of church from state affairs while the later supports the idea of distinction between people and clergy.[9]

There are three major approaches to secularism namely Atheist, Pluralists and Humanists. Atheists used an extremist approach as far as role of religion in politics as well as public life is concerned. George Jacob Holyoake, the founder of word secularism, represents this school

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[8] Tambiah Stanely. *The Crisis of Secularism in India*, in *Rajeev Bhargava (Ed). Secularism and its Critics*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, p.42.
[9] Marco Mavromaras, *The Definition of Secularism: Do people really have the right to practice their religion?* Social Commentary, Volume: 3, Issue 5, 2007.

of thought as he sets three necessary principles for secularism. According to him, secularism improves world life through material means rather than utopian things. Secondly, he regarded secularism as the only suited philosophy to modernization because of the reason that it is created by the man for the man and it has no imposing authority. Finally, he rejects the concept of any other life; as he suggests that one should focus over this life and perform good deeds to smoothly run the affairs of his present life as it is the only reality.[10]

Dominec Marbaniang is the other supporter of atheist. school of thought as he defines secularism in these simple words that "Secularism is the complete divorce of religion from all the avenues of human life."[11] In Indian political system, Nehru fully supports this philosophy for Indian polity as he was of the opinion that any discrimination against any religious community of this multi-religious society will result in weakening the spirit of unity among them.[12]

Pluralism is the other popular approach used to define secularism. It is operational in countries having multi-religious societies. It also favors the church-state separation but this separation should be through peaceful and diplomatic means. They support the idea of respecting and equal treatment to all the religions rather than putting them into water tight compartments. By showing respect to all the religions, harmony could be achieved. Virigluis Fern, in his Encyclopedia of Religion, defines secularism as a form of utilitarianism. The ultimate aim of which is to improve the status of mankind without any discrimination. To achieve this aim one should use means of human reason, science and social organization. He further elaborates secularism as a philosophy that aims at to bring positive changes to human

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[10] Ibid
[11] Dominec Marbaniang, *Perspectives on Indian Secularism*, 2009. p.1
[12] P.C. Joshi, *Gandhi Nehru: Tradition and Indian Secularism*, (www.mainstreamweekly.net/article432.html) accessed on 23 may, 2011.

present life and their social wellbeing.[13] M.K Gandhi in Indian polity represented this form of secularism as he was of the opinion that a complete separation of religion from politics is impossible. It is so deep-rooted in the lives of Indian people that complete elimination of religion from their lives will inflict serious consequences.

Humanist approach is the other one towards secularism. It is the reformed form of Atheist Approach. They approach secularism through the concept of morality as they are against the concept to replace religion from human life with any other alternative. It addresses every aspect of human life which makes it broaden from atheist approach. Robert Green Ingersoll defines religion from the humanist perspective in these words that secularism rather than being an anti-religion is the religion of humanity that deals with man's life. The basic purpose of it, like any religion of the world, is to provide welfare to the people. It is strongly against the church tyranny, slavery and the concept of wasting this life for any other life. It strongly supports the concept that one should live for himself rather than any other utopian world.[14] As far as this thesis is concerned, secularism in Indian politics will be analyzed under the light of basic concept of secularism that is the separation of religion from politics.

2.2.3 Politics

To come up with a precise definition of politics is not an easy task. The reason behind it is that politics is directly or indirectly connected to almost every aspect of human life. In the simplest words, politics can be concluded as "struggle for power". Before discussing the point of views of various scholars, first we will discuss the origin of the word. The word politics is derived from a Greek word "Polis". The term was used for city or city states. This word gave birth to another word "Polities" that was used for the people. Hence, the word

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[13]Dominec Marbaniang, *Perspectives on Indian Secularism*, Sept 10, 2010, from
http://archive.org/details/IndianSecularism
[14] Adrian Guelke, *Terrorism and Global Disorder: Political Violence in the Contemporary World*, New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2006, pp.231-236

politics was used for governing of states and people. The word "polis" is still used in modern times while referring to modern or developed cities. However, the word with a little bit modification Metro-Polis is often used. While the Roman origin of the word politics is from the word "Politicus" which they used for any activity related to state.

Like the above discussed terms, politics also has a lot of variations with regard to its definitions. As power politics is regarded as a struggle for power whereas the liberalists consider politics as a struggle for consensus rather than acquiring power. However, the liberal-idealists further elaborate politics to be an agreement among world community over common values and mutual cooperation.[15] In this era of globalization, two new concepts about politics have emerged with the names of 'low politics' and 'high politics'. The former concept stands for the role of international organizations in politics as politics addresses the global issues related to masses. These are social, economic, environmental, and demographic issues as well as the relations between government and people. While the later one addresses the geostrategic issues of national as well as international security that helps in determining war and peace situations.[16]

To Idealists, politics is the science of government that deals with rules and regulations and to promote peace and stability in the state. It also strengthens unity through nationhood to counter any foreign adventurism. The last and the most popular approach that has been followed since ancient times is the realists' approach. They fully support the concept of power politics as they regard the system to be anarchic and the only way to survive is none other than power. They simply define politics as "the activities aim at getting another actor to do something he would not do otherwise."[17]

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[15] W. Kegley Jr, E.R.Wittkopf, *World Politics: Trends and Transformation 9th edition*. London: Wadsworth, Thomas Learning Inc., 2004. pp. 33-35.
[16] Ibid. 448-445
[17] Ibid. 405

Winston Churchill concludes politics in these words *"The ability to foretell what is going to happen tomorrow, next week, next month and next year and to have the ability afterwards to explain why it did not happen."*[18] Mathew Quay also explains politics keeping in view W. Churchill's perspective. According to him, politics is "the art of taking money from the few and votes from many under the pretext of protecting one from the other."[19] In this research, the term politics will be analyzed in the context of definition given in American Heritage Dictionary. The definition thus follows as "The art or science of government or governing especially the governing of political entity such as nation and the administration and control of its internal and external affairs."[20]

E.E. Schattschneider, one of the prominent scholars of the 20th century and leading political scientist, gave his model of politics in 1960 in his research publication entitled "The Semi-Sovereign People: A Realists' View of Democracy in America". In this model, he regards politics as a conflict and how these conflicts attract or expel parties. With the addition of new participant, a new set of ideas and approaches are added that pollute actual conflict. Defining these conflicts is the most important task of the politics. He further explains politics as to be fully dependent on people and how these people are divided into different factions, parties, and sects. Issues determine the status of each and every individual in a political system as to which group he belongs to and also expose to him who is with him and who is against. What is the strength of opposition that helps him in concluding who will be victorious? He concludes politics as to eliminate conflicts or resist conflict or exploit the conflicts. So

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[18]William James, *The Varieties Of Religious Experience*, U.K: University of Edinburgh Press, 1901, pp.44-46.
[19] Ibid.
[20]John Anderson, *Religion and International Relations*, in Trevor C. Salmon, *Issues in International Relations*, London: Rutledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2000, pp. 207-217.

politics is how issues are formed and defined as well as how conflicts are created and removed.[21]

2.4 Religion, Secularism and Politics

Since the past four decades, there is a popular debate in international politics over the resurgence of religion but this point of view is always nullified by the secular school of thought who considers secularism to be a popular political philosophy up-to-date and there is hardly any serious threats to it. Despite the secularists' denial, there is no doubt that religion has made a comeback into politics since the last forty years after being kept separated for more than two centuries. This return is considered to be of great political significance. But this does not mean that it had completely outshined secularism from the world politics. It remains to be the popular philosophy among the industrialist western democracies as far as its role in the third world or underdeveloped countries is concerned. It has been seriously challenged by the rebirth of religion into the world of politics. The reason behind the popularity of religion as a political entity in this part of the world is the emotional attachment of the people with their religion. Thus, this relation is exploited to the maximum by the politicians of these countries as they mixed religion with nationalism. This mix-up finally resulted in the emergence of sectarianism and communalism. Moreover, it is also used as a tool to politically motivate the masses.[22]

India, like other secular democracies for maintaining its constitutional status, has to counter various threats on regular intervals that are posed to it in the shape of ethnicity, communalism, the presence of religious political parties and organization. To understand this triadic relationship of religion, secularism and politics, religion and politics, in general,

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[21] E.E. Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People: A Realists' View of Democracy in America.* 1960, pp.45-60
[22] Jeff Haynes, *Religion, Secularization and Politics: A Postmodern Conspectus.* Third World Quarterly Volume: 18, (4) September 1997, p.702.

keeping in view Hinduism and politics of India will be discussed. Similarly, secularism and politics, along with brief discussion over Indian secularism, will be dilated upon.

2.4.1 Religion and Politics

The core aim of religion is belief. The brief definition of religion remained a daunting task in the past when it had no political significance. It is difficult even today and is always regarded as a complicated puzzle to resolve. R. Bellah has defined religion briefly as "a set of symbolic forms and acts which relate man [sic] to the ultimate condition of his existence."[23] Similarly, R. Therborn sets two basic principles through which religion can affect this world. These are by what it says and by what it does. The principle of what it says is a pure doctrine of theology while the later one is considered as a social phenomenon which has its relations with politics, political parties and institutionalization of it.[24]

The worst exploitation of religion in politics is to fuel hatred, superiority and dominance. This politicization of religion gave birth to the element of intolerance in the society and created room for the critics of religion who sought its separation from politics. Religion as a philosophy of extremism gave birth to three major schools of thoughts. The first school of thought considers all the religions of the world to be of violent nature. They are of the opinion that no religion is free from violence. Similarly, they think that no violence is possible without having any link to religion. To them, religious violence exists because people consider their respective religion to be the only and true path to be followed. So confrontation through violence against other religions is considered to be the struggle between good and evil. This is the only reason why people take lives of each other in the names of their respective gods and spread terror among the humanity. They justify their

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[23]R. Bellah, *Religious Evolution*. American Sociological Review Volume: 29, (3) 1964, p. 358.
[24]G. Therborn, *Another way of taking Religion seriously, Comment on Francis G. Castles*, European Journal of Political Research Volume: 26, (1) 1994. p.103.

violent act in the name of their religious duty to preach and spread the message of their respective religion by any means. The prominent scholars among this school of thought are Hent De Vriesand Mark Juergenmeyers.[25]

The second school of thought is represented by Samuel P. Huntington, Daniel Pipes, Bernard Lewis and Jessica Stern. They, instead of all religions, target only Islam to be the religion that has polluted the role of religion in politics. They provide their support in favor of secularism and blame Islam to be incompatible with it. They opine that Islam wants everyone to be submitted. But Islam is not the only religion to demand so as all the other religions of the world seek to demand the same. They consider Islam to be the network of radical terrorists who do not want peace to be developed in the world. They label Islam with derogations like a bunch of cold blooded killers, evildoers etc.[26]

A complete opposite approach to the above discussed two approaches has been adopted by Ted Gurr. He defines the relation between religion and politics with positive approach because he concentrates on the reasons why religions move towards extremism. Like others, he does not put direct blame on religion. He gives the reason that it is a common perception that poverty leads towards extremism. But the various case studies of extremism have proved that religious extremists are not the poorest of the poor in the society rather they are well educated and have stable economy. Ted Gurr regards deprivation to be the root cause of all rebellious movements rather than any religion.[27]

The debate over the religion and politics relation can be concluded by accepting the fact that religion has made a grand comeback in politics. It is visible in international politics since last forty years in different shapes i.e. the Iranian Revolution, the civil conflicts in most of the

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[25]Arshi Saleem Hashmi, *Pakistan Politics, Religion and Extremism*, New Delhi: IPCS, 2009. p.2.
[26] Ibid
[27] Ibid. 2-3.

African States, the demise of Communism in Eastern European States and the demand for political change in the Islamic World and the troubles of South Asian region. A brief analysis of the relation of Hinduism to politics will be discussed as it is the religion of the majority in India.

2.4.2 Hinduism and Politics

Unlike the other major religions of the world, Hinduism has distinctive features. It is limited to its geography. It is limited to the region of South Asia which is the motherland of the religion. Only two percent of its total population lives abroad. The other feature that makes it unique from other religions is its nature of plurality. It believes in a number of gods and goddesses. Moreover, its believers also worship the Sun and animals. The pluralist nature makes it less important in the field of politics.[28]

The fact that politics is less important in Hinduism remained true till the last decade of Twentieth Century as this was the period of Hindu revivalism in Indian politics. Mobilization of Hindu community was done under the philosophy of unity through hate under the mother philosophy of Hindutva. This fanatic action was launched against the Muslim community. This was the main reason behind the demolishing of Babri Mosque in 1992. It was followed by the worst communal violence in Indian history. This proved to be a successful launching pad for the philosophy of Hindutva. The basic concept of this philosophy is to convert India into Hindu Rashtra (Hindu State). It could only convert India into a Hindu State once the whole population gets converted to Hinduism. So they demanded of each and every individual living on the land of India either to convert to Hinduism or leave the land. The role

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[28]James Chiriyankandath, *Hinduism*, in Jeffrey Haynes (ed.), *Religion and Politics*, New York: Rutledge International Handbooks, 2005, p. 74.

of Hinduism in politics made its presence felt in the 1990s in the shape of BJP coming into power for two consecutive tenures from 1996-2004.[29]

2.4.3 Secularism and Politics

Secularism although is a western originated philosophy but today it has become a global one. It is regarded to be of plural nature. The main object of this philosophy is to marginalize the role of religion in politics. It can be defined as an anti-religious philosophy. Moreover, it seeks to eliminate the role of religion from politics. It is a complete ideology which has its own political doctrine with system of governance. Secularism can also be regarded as a moral philosophy that helps to understand the world we live in. Scientific methods are enough as it can counter completely the issues of mankind. Therefore, one could not make religion as a compulsory tool to operate the affairs of the world.[30]

Defining secularism is a complicated and tough task as it is often mix with secularization but there is a thin line of difference between the two. Secularization is the term used for the process of modernization of the society. It is an evolutionary process in which slowly and steadily the religious contents are reduced from the state institutions. Sometimes, it also abolishes the religious role from political, educational and economic setup of the state or society. It is under the process of secularization that world has seen the changes in the shape of Protestants Reformation in Europe during the Middle Ages. The introduction of new political setup in the politics of the world in the form of Nation States which proved to be an absorbing agent for the successful launching of secularism along with these major changes that have brought new dimensions to the politics of world as the world moved from traditionalism towards modernism and liberalization. Secularization also brought major

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[29] Ibid 82
[30]Slavica Jakelić. *Secularism: A Bibliographic Essay*. (www.iasc-culture.org/HHR Archives/Fall2010/Jakelic lo.pdf)

changes in the fields of education, law and domestic politics and diverted the attention or dependency on religion.[31]

Historically, the origin of secularism is linked to the emergence of battle between reason, progress and modernity against the religion in the West. Here, it is referred to the bloodiest thirty years of war between Protestants and Catholics which influenced the whole Europe. While some regard its emergence to the victory of science over religion. But it was the result of an evolutionary process as the stage for its launching was only made in the time that has been discussed above. The history of secularism started the time when the people started to believe in themselves that they can construct and reconstruct their destiny and also society according to the wishes of their own. They refused to put their destiny in the hands of any ecclesiastical authority or divine authority.[32]

The word Secularism was introduced in 1851 by an English philosopher George Jacob Holyoake but has links to ancient times which are clear from the writings of Ancient and Medieval Western political philosophers. The writings of Immanuel Kant suggested that there should be demarcation between what is moral and what is miraculous in religion. These were evident signs of his demand for eliminating religion or church authority from public life. Similarly, John Locke addressed this issue by openly referring to church as its relations are linked to spirituality that is why it should be eliminated from state affairs that are linked to worldly matters. Auguste Comte is another philosopher who emphasized on church-state separation. He demanded of the replacement of traditional religion with the new religion of humanity as the latter is an imaginary while the former is a reality. Similarly, Karl Marx prophesied about the disappearance of religion from politics at the end of history. These are

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[31] Ibid
[32] Micheal Allen Gillispie. *The Theological Origin of Modernity*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008, pp.30-48.

all the historical proofs of secularism existed in one way or the other in the thoughts of ancient scholars.[33]

In political terms, secularism is often referred to the separation between politics and religion. More specifically, it is the separation between state and religious institutions. The important supplement for nurturing secularism is that of democracy which helps in achieving the goal to establish an open society under the principle of equality regardless of individual identity or background. It is the philosophy that provides its full support to the democratization of the world. However, all the secular countries from East to West and from North to South failed to observe the fundamental spirits of democracy as they fail to marginalize the role of religion and religious institutions in their respective states. At present, politically secularism is going through crisis either it be in the West or America, South Asia or Africa because world is going through the phase where religious fundamentalism is spreading in its full force. Besides, it is challenged by the modern concept of globalization because mass immigration has converted majority of the societies into a religiously plural one and to eliminate religion from their lives is a tough challenge to ask. So this rebirth of religion in the global politics is of great value. It felt its presence at regular intervals while posing serious challenges to secularism to maintain its popularity among the masses.[34]

2.4.4 Indian Secularism

Like all other secularism of the world, Indian secularism sticks to the basic concept of the philosophy that rejects religion to be made official of the state. It also pursues the policy to eliminate the role of religion in the politics. But as it is culturally, socially and politically different society from that of the Western societies, the architects of Indian secularism made

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[33] Ibid
[34] Winifred F Sullivan, *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005, p.43.

various changes in their form of secularism to make it presentable before their own masses. There are various distinctive features of Indian secularism that make it unique from western form of secularism. Followings are some of its features that give it a unique status of its own.

Western Secularism believes in the complete divorce between the religion and politics and complete abolishment of the religious authority's role in politics. Indian secularism has no such features or intentions as the people of India are culturally and socially so much attached with their religion. The complete elimination of religion from their political life is, therefore, impossible. Moreover, Indian secularism is distinctive as religious matters are in the hands of religious authorities while public issues are dealt by the state.[35]

The second distinctive feature of Indian Secularism is that of the equality of all before state. India is the land of multiple religious identities. The unification of this diversity under the umbrella of Indian Nationalism is only possible when the religions of minorities are also placed on equal footing with the religion of the majority. However, any discrimination would result in weakening the concept of nationalism or unity. India has, therefore, no official religion. Besides, it preaches the concept that no one should be favored or harmed because of one's religious affiliation.[36]

India has uniform criminal law and most of the civil law and personal law are based according to one's religious beliefs. The critiques of Indian Secularism often criticize this feature of Indian Secularism as no secular country has such characteristic. It is also against the basics principles of secularism. Indian Secularists justified it on the ground that India is the land of diverse nature in respect of religion, culture, and social practices. So to unite them under uniform civil law is not possible. That is the reasons why matters of personal law are based on the religious customs of one's respective religions. The critiques of this feature

[35]Mani Shankar Aiyar, *India Destiny: Secularism or Hindutva?*, Islamabad: Pan Graphics (Pvt) Ltd, 2003, p.4.

[36] Ibid

belong to the religion of the majority i.e. Hindus of the state. They also enjoy the same right but they criticize that no such right should be given to any religion of the minority.[37] This is the most unique feature of Indian secularism which no other secular states have.

Along with religious freedom, religious authorities are fully independent in establishing their educational institutes for the preaching of their religious thoughts and transferring them to the generations to follow. The basic reason for this is that people should feel themselves religiously secure and the state has no intentions to develop an irreligious society. Constitutionally, India is a secular state, and, therefore, religions are free to exercise according to their doctrines and also free to expand.[38]

The concept of multi-secularism is also its unique feature as India is the land of multi-religions where religious freedom is ensured to every religion. So each religion has different perspective of secularism. This develops the concept of multi-secularism and various definitions of secularism.[39]

2.5 Conclusion

This triadic relationship of religion, secularism and politics is very complex one. They replace each other status in the politics of world on regular interval. Historically, religion remained to be the dominant element in operating the public as well as political life of the mankind. It has operated the affairs of diverse political societies of the world from empires to kingdoms and from Khilafat to modern nation states. It used to be the sole authority in legalizing the rule of kings, emperors and caliphs. With the emergence of modernity, serious questions have been put to the sovereignty of religion in world system or politics. Finally,

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[37] Ibid
[38] Rajeev Bharqava, *Political Secularism*, (www.queensu.ca/edg/Bhargava_Political_Secularism.pdf), accessed on 14 May 2011.

[39] Ibid

under the umbrella of Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 with full consensus of the people, it was decided to marginalize its role in the politics.

When religion was eliminated from the politics, an alternative came in the shape of secularism. Without facing any competition, secularism easily adjusted itself in the shoes of religion to command the affairs of world politics. Moreover, modernity gave birth to two other new ideologies i.e. democracy and nation state. This troika is made interdependent on each other. So the existence or strengthening of one completely depends on the existence of the other. People attracted towards it as they were made free from religious obligations and were made convinced to the point that scientific knowledge was enough to address the issues of humanity rather than depending upon any imaginary philosophy.

Religion, being an integral part of human lives, cannot be kept away from the public lives. This was the reason that its comeback was expected. It made a grand comeback in the world of politics that started with the removal of Shah of Iran and the conversion of Iran into an Islamic State. This was followed by the incidents like the disintegration of USSR at the hands of Afghan mujahedeen, the war between Iran and Iraq. Thus the revival of religion is of great importance in those eventful years and created room for its emergence in the years to come.

Chapter 3
Religion and Politics in India

3.1 Introduction

In India- the land of multi religions-the importance of religion is recognized from the fact that the region that constitutes India was divided on the basis of religion resulting in the formation of Pakistan which represents the residence of Muslims majority and of India with Hindus in majority and a large number of Muslims, Christians, and Sikhs as notable minorities. To meet the challenges of this diverse society, India framed its political system on the principles of secularism so that equality among the people might be maintained. Moreover, religion could be kept separated from politics. This philosophy was the sole reason that attracted most of the minorities to stay in India as they were ensured of enjoying equal rights of citizenship. So a large portion of the Muslim population decided to stay in India rather than go to Pakistan. Not only the Muslims but also majority of Christians and Sikhs also opted to stay here under the belief that they will have their respective religious as well as political freedom.

Secularism, an imported philosophy of the Colonial Masters, was adopted to be the law of the land without the analysis of Indian society. Either it can be digested by it or not. People belonging to this part of the world have strong affiliations with their religions. As it rules the social, economic and political life of the individuals in India, so this relation is inseparable. This Chapter will highlight the role of religion in Indian politics among the major religions of the land and how it on regular intervals has challenged the secular status of India in the form of insecurity amongst the minorities, people supporting the philosophy of Hindutva, continuous communal violence etc.

3.2 Religions in India

India has religiously a plural society. Some of them are indigenous to the land while some are of foreign origin. Four religions are of indigenous origins. Hinduism, the most ancient religion of the land having a history of five thousand years. In modern India, it is the major religion followed by almost eighty percent of the total population. After Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism have ancient links to the land. Both the religions flourished in the era of 500 BC. Today, they have nominal representation in the country almost to be one percent of the total population. Similarly, Sikhism, which has short history as compared to the above discussed religions, originated in the second half of Fifteenth century under the leadership of Guru Nanak. It is the fourth largest religion followed by about three percent of Indian population.[40]

Foreign religions are also four in number. They will be discussed according to the numbers of its followers. Therefore, Islam comes first to be discussed as it is the second largest religion being followed in the country. Islam flourished during the period of Mughals in the Sub-Continent. Now it is followed by thirteen percent of Indian total population. Christianity is the other major religion of foreign origin that blossomed during the hundred year's rule of the British. It grew due to a large number of conversions of lower caste Hindus who were leading a miserable life in their society. Today, it is the third most populous religion occupying three percent of India's total population. Zoroastrian and Jews are the other religions of foreign origin but their presence is nominal and is counted in thousands. Thus, the preceding discussion shows the brief survey of the religions of Indian society.[41]

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[40] Edward Washburn Hopkins. *The Religions of India*, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005, pp.1-4.
[41] Ibid

3.3 Relationship of Religion and Politics in India

Religion is the collection of rules that regulates life whereas politics is the collection of rules to regulate a sub-system of the system. Politics also means to serve and deal the people affairs. In the light of these definitions, it is hard to separate religion from the politics. As earlier stated that religion is the combination of rules to regulate life of the people and resolve their everyday issues under the light of their religious belief and social structure. In the case of India, it is impossible to keep both religion and politics apart as religion is so deeply rooted in their social as well as political fabric of life.[42]

There is no doubt that India has earned the name of being the world largest democracy having a secular polity. But the role of religion is prominent in its politics. History bears witness to how it has worked as the determining factor in elections results of the country. The most vibrant role came during 1990s when the anti-minority sentiments had been exploited that won mandate for the rightist political forces in the shape of BJP. This support to the right wing political parties determined the people's attachment with their religion.[43] A question, therefore, arises as to how this confessional politics finds room for itself in the secular and liberal polity. This will be analyzed after discussing the major religions of India and their role in politics.

3.4 Hinduism and Politics in India

Hinduism is the major religion of the country. Besides, it is the native religion of the land. Hinduism has an ancient history. Therefore, throughout its history, all the rulers have legitimized their rule through religion and this practice remained for thousands of years.[44]

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[42]P.M Kamath, Secular Democracy in India: The Domestic and Regional Challenges, in Current Domestic Policy Challenges and Prospects in South Asia, Islamabad: Institute of Regional Studies, 2005, pp. 38-40
[43]Edward Washburn Hopkins, The Religions of India. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press. 2005, p. 46.
[44]Nancy Auer Falk, Living Hinduism, Canada: Thomson Wadsworth Canada, 2006, p.273

Here we will analyze Hinduism's role in politics during the Colonial Era. The transition of power from the Mughals to the British was not only the transition of power but it was also the transition of people fate into the hands of their new masters. After being ruled for centuries by the invaders of foreign origin as well as the world also was going through transitional phase in the form of U.S Independence and French Revolution. The Hindus of Indian Sub-Continent have also realized that it is high time to change and decide the fate of their own as they were fed up of the fact to be treated like a second rate citizens on the land of their own by the foreign invaders.[45]

The seed of revolt was already sown in the shape of 1857 War of Independence. The Hindus, being local and the majority of the land, had decided that now it is their turn to regain the reign and rule of the land of their ancestors. Unification of the community was necessary for them to live their dream and nothing else than religion could make the unification strong among their community. The tool for unification was decided that it would be religion. This freedom movement should completely revolve around the politics of religion. Hindus had reached to the conclusion that they were easy targets for the foreign invaders because of the loose bonding within its religion and of strong caste division. The policy of hate for the other religions was decided to be adopted to unite the people against the oppressors. This philosophy is regarded as unity through hate among the Hindu community.[46]

Bengal is considered as the motherland for this politics where the anti-colonial religious movement took birth amongst the Hindu community. For the purpose of mobilization of the masses, the services of the local writers were hired who used the tool i.e. mixing the religion with politics. Religion at that time was regarded as the whole and sole authority to govern the lives of the masses of the region and mixing politics with their religion will make the

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[45] Ibid
[46] Erja Marjut Hanninan. The Contest of Indian Secularism, University of Helenski 2005, pp. 46–48.

bond more powerful and strong. These writers gave the title of Bahart Mata- Mother India- to the land. This created a lot of anger among the common Janta against the British as the Hindus used to consider that the Colonial Masters had been exploiting their mother land (India). The writers left no stone unturned to religiously motivate the people. Besides, the religious anthem i.e. Vande Matarm was codified which added fuel to the fire of hate against the British.[47]

The British prolonged their rule in India. They observed that India being a pluralist society lacked unity. This feature of Indian society was exploited to the maximum under the policy of Divide and Rule. The two major sections of Indian population, Hindus and Muslims, had a huge gap within that even fighting for the same cause never made them united. During the era of colonialism, Hindus had decided to take command of the land in their own hands and sought to be the sole administrative authority of the land. They parted their ways with the Muslims. Moreover, they boycotted the Muslims festivals like Eid and Muharram in which they had been active precipitants in the past. They not only alienated themselves from other communities but also started ethnic violence in the region. As a result they killed Muslims butchers as they regarded the cow the sacred animal in their religion. Such state of affairs gave breathing space to the British and strengthened their feet in the region.[48]

When ethnic violence was at its peak, M.K Gandhi emerged as the political leader of this misled and confused society. He had know-how of all the religions as he had observed closely the pluralistic society of South Africa during his stay there. He had also the understanding of how to overcome the religious gulf among the masses who share same nationality. The philosophy of non-violence was developed during his stay in South Africa. It was his policy of tolerance that melted down the glaciers of differences among the different

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[47]Nancy Auer Falk, Living Hinduism, Canada: Thomson Wadsworth Canada, 2006, p.270.

[48] Ibid. 273

communities of the land. Gandhi had the belief that religion could not be separated from politics. He mixed spirituality with politics to mobilize the masses. He earned support and respect from not only Hindu community but also was equally famous amongst the Muslims. His popularity was not limited to a particular location but it was existed in each and every corner of the region. He gained this popularity and following in that diverse society because of his non-violence philosophy. Besides, his respect for all religions was appealing to the people. This completely transformed relation between religions and politics in the region. Although he got mass popularity, yet it did not stop the region from partition. It was divided into India and Pakistan. Moreover, it was hard for the British to rule the region after heavy losses in World War II.[49]

India became a secular state on the principle of philosophy hired from the West. It was because the founders of the state considered it to be the best suited philosophy to diverse Indian society. But secularism has to face severe challenges as religion is so deeply rooted in Indian politics. History is witness to the ethnic violence in the shape of religious obscurantism of majority against the minorities. Moreover, the active presence of religious political parties and organizations in Indian political setup is a big question mark on the forehead of Indian Secularism.

i)   Politics of Hindutva

The common misperception about Hindutva is that it is often mixed with Hinduism. Both are completely opposite to one another as far as their natures are concerned. Hinduism is a religious philosophy whereas Hindutva is a political philosophy pursued by a particular section of the society to achieve their social and political objectives. This philosophy is originated and led by the upper caste of Hinduism i.e. Brahmins whose basic aim is to make

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[49] Ibid. 274-78

India the land of Hindus only. However, after partition their aim shifted to convert India into a Hindu Rashtra i.e. Hindu State.[50]

ii)   Origin of the Philosophy

Hindutva literally means Hinduness. It is the brainchild of Vinayak Damoda Savakar who was a die-hard follower of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who was the founder of Hindu Revivalism in Indian Sub-Continent. He revived Hinduism through various holy festivals during the British rule. The name of the philosophy is derived from the book that V.D Savakar had written during the days of his exile. The basic aim of this book was to religiously motivate the confused Hindu youth and inject in them the spirit of nationalism so that they might be the part of mainstream politics of Indian Subcontinent. The spirit of nationalism was implanted in them as they were taught the lesson that India was not only the land of their ancestors rather it had the status of the Holy Land for them because it is the birthplace of their religion. Besides, it also occupies the shrines and birth places of their gods and saints. These were the justifications given by them to their community and compelled them to join and unite under the philosophy of Hindutva to counter the oppressors and convert India into a Hindu Rashtra.[51]

The philosophy that actually originated during the times of the Colonial Era has now developed into a giant. It is hard to keep it separate because it is deeply rooted in Indian society and is flexing its muscles to challenge the secularist forces of the country. Hindutva has strong organizational structure. R.S.S acts as the basic source of the philosophy. The parliamentary powers are vested in the hands of Bajrang Dal and BJP while the religious and social services performed by V.H.P and I.D.R.F. Besides, the mobilization of the youth and

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[50] *What is the Nature of Hindutva Politics? (http://www.pluralistindia.com/book/illustrated-primier/chapter-10.pdf)* accessed on 20, June, 2010

[51] P.M Kamath, *Secular Democracy in India: The Domestic and Regional Challenges,* in *Current Domestic Policy Challenges and Prospects in South Asia,* Islamabad: Institute of Regional Studies, 2005, p. 48

the responsibilities of their recruitment are looked into by A.B.V.P. This is how the organizational and operational structure of Hindutva is completed.[52]

As this was the era of religious revivalism into politics, the followers of Hindutva used religion in their politics and the Muslim community of the country became the worst victims of their anger. The five hundred years old Mosque built by the Mughal Emperor Akbar during his reign in the name of Babri Mosque was made target. They declared it to be the birth place of Hindus god Ram i.e. Ram Janam Bhoomi. A stage was set for the drama of Hindu to suppress the Muslims under the leadership of BJP i.e. L.K. Advani sponsored by U.P state government.[53]

Thousands of Hindu fanatics marched towards the Mosque. This was a naked show in front of the whole world by the Central government of the secular state. When on Dec, 6th 1992, the Mosque was attacked and all the governmental authorities acted as silent spectators to this blatant aggression. This pushed the whole country into communal violence locked Hindus and Muslims into conflict. The later proved to be the worst victim of this all episode. This left a deep scar on the face of Indian secularism and developed fear amongst all the other minorities of the country as they feared their future to be uncertain at the hands of Hindu majority. The policy of Hindutva succeeded in achieving its goals as BJP became the majority party in 1996 elections of the Lok Sabha and enjoyed that status till 2004.[54]

To light up the fear among the minorities, they repeated the same aggressive anti-minority policy right after ten years in Gujarat. This whole riots were architected under the leadership of BJP Chief Minister NarenderSingh Modi. This anti-minority policy is remembered in the

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[52]Hindutva and the Politicization of Religious Identity in India, Issue 13, Feb 2009 (http://www.peacestudiesjournal.org.uk) accessed on 9, Dec 2011.

[53]Mani Shankar Aiyar, *India's Destiny: Secularism or Hindutva*, in *Current Domestic Policy Challenges and Prospects in South Asia*, Islamabad: Institute of Regional Studies, 2005, p.1

[54] Ibid 1-2.

name of the start of Hindu Jihad. This adventurism cost the lives of more than fourteen hundred Muslims brutally killed and hundred and fifty thousand had to migrate from their places. This time the government actively participated in this whole act of Hindu fanaticism. Although the Muslims were the worst victims of the politics of Hindutva yet the people of other minorities were also no exception to the wrath. Sikhs bore its brunt in 1980s when they were deprived of their legal demands. Similarly, the Christians had been victimized continuously in this part of Indian history. The Indian authority had to take violent steps to eliminate this worse aspect of Indian politics in order to become, in true spirit, the world's largest secular democracy.[55]

3.5 The Muslims and Politics of India

i) History of Muslims in India

India, the Holy land for the followers of Hinduism, has remained a vehicle of exploitation for foreign rulers. It was regarded as the land with minimum or no resistance at all. Although they had the largest army which were well equipped, yet they lacked the basic ingredient of war i.e. passion. This was the basic reason why they were easy target for the foreign invaders.[56]

The Muslims share an ancient relation with the region, but they sought to establish their rule in the region in 712 A.D with the conquest of Sindh by Muhammad Bin Qasim. This was recorded as the first Muslim intervention in the region which lasted till the collapse of Mughal Empire in 1857 at the hands of the British. The Muslims of different origins ruled the land i.e. the Arabs, the Afghans and the Turks, during all those years. However, the Mughal's Rule in the region is considered as the golden times of Muslim rule in the region for many

[55]P.M Kamath, *Secular Democracy in India: The Domestic and Regional Challenges*, in *Current Domestic Policy Challenges and Prospects in South Asia*, Islamabad: Institute of Regional Studies, 2005, p. 90.
[56]Brig. Javid Hassan, *India: A Study in Profile*. Rawalpindi: Service Book Club, 1990, pp.28-29.

reasons. They, unlike other Muslim invaders, did not come to the region for the time being rather they had intentions to establish their rule in the region.[57]

Historically, the Muslim rulers came to the region defeating the local Hindu rulers and went back without establishing their own rule in the region. They sometimes invaded exclusively for wealth. However, the Mughals came with the intentions of establishing their rule in the region. To prolong their stay in the region, they needed the support of the locals. They successfully engaged the elite of the local Hindu community i.e. Brahmins in the process of decision making of the region. By engaging the locals in the process of decision making, they succeeded in achieving their intended policy. The credit of the policy of engagement goes to the Mughal emperors Akbar. As a result, he found a place in the eyes of Hindus. He brought them in the process of the decision making. No other Muslim ruler had provided them with such opportunity. The basic reason of his inclination towards Hindu is considered to be Jodha, the wife of Akbar who belonged to the royal family of Rajput. It also earned him the title of the father of secularism. As a result, he was immensely criticized by the Muslim scholars and revolted against him as they were of the opinion that he was distorting Islam. Despite this criticism, he remained stick to his stance and brought changes in India based on secularism. As a strong believer of reason, he followed his whims irrespective of religious contradictions. This was evident in becoming vegetarian when convinced by the priest of the Jain.[58]

Those glorious days of the Muslims ended when the British took over the control and became the new Masters of the land. The Muslims resisted and started the war of independence of (1857). As a result, they were victimized by the British who considered them to be the main force behind the uprising. The Hindus in collaboration with the British

[57]Amartya, Sen, *Identity and Violence 'The Illusion of Destiny'*, New Delhi: Saurabh Printers 2006, p.161.
[58] Ibid. 162

left no chance to damage them. Consequently, the region was divided into two parts between the Hindus and the Muslims.[59]

ii) Anti-Muslims Communal Violence: Post-Independence

Religion is deeply rooted in the politics of India. It had remained the base of division. India received the brunt of religious fanaticism soon after Independence killing an infinite number of Muslims during the process of migration. The response from the Muslims also needs attention. However, the killings of innocent people were resented on both sides. Throughout its history, it has been struck by communal violence which determines the role of religion in Indian politics. The major victims of this violence had always been the Muslims.[60]

India declared itself as a secular state after independence. It was the philosophy of secularism that attracted a good number of minorities. They decided to stay in India rather than go to Pakistan which declared itself as an Islamic State. The minorities were promised to be given equal status and secure future under religion free polity. However, those promises never materialized. Throughout its history, India has been hit by religious fanaticism of the Hindus against the minorities.[61] In such state of affairs, the state acted as a spectator most of the times. This behavior of the state increased sense of insecurity among the minorities. The role of religion in Indian politics as far as Muslims are concerned, should be measured through the various anti-religious activities against them. The Muslims have no active political representation in mainstream politics to be discussed and the only place where they are in majority is the jails of India. In other walks of life i.e. political representation, civil services, and education either intentionally or unintentionally, they have been given less representation as compared to their population.

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[59]Brig. Javid Hassan, *India: A Study in Profile*. Rawalpindi: Service Book Club, 1990. p.32.
[60] Salman Khurshid, *At Home in India A Restatement of Indian Muslims*, Delhi: Vikas Publishers, 1989, pp.1-11.

[61] Ibid. 100-114

iii) Ayodhya Crisis

The crisis of Ayodhya reflects the influence of religion in Indian polity. This whole crisis revolves around the Babri Mosque built by the Mughal Emperor Babar during the time of his reign in Uttar Pradesh (U.P). The site of the mosque has been in dispute since its construction. The Hindus claim it to be the birth place of their god Lord Ram. The first claim regarding the site was recorded in 1853 by the Hindu sect of Nimrohi's. Since then the site has been in dispute. After independence, the first attempt on the site was made in 1949 when idols were placed by the religious extremists of Hindu origin. This action deeply hurt the sentiments of the Muslim community. They felt betrayed because they were promised of religious security by the leaders of India. This was immediately resented by Nehru in these words that "a dangerous example has been set".[62]

The issue remained in cold storage for thirty years until 1984. It was again raised by the Hindu religious organization. They broke the locks of the Mosque. It was locked by the government because the matter was in the prejudice. This was followed by the court verdict of 1986 when it was ordered that the Mosque should be opened for the worshippers of all religions. The real issue started in 1990 when India had just overcome the Sikhs militancy in Punjab. The issue of Babri Mosque is considered as the event that gave birth to the politics of religion in India. This religious issue was politicized by almost all the right wing political parties and organizations of Hindus. The previous attempt of VHP to demolish the Mosque was successfully rebutted by the then Chief Minister of U.P Mulayam Singh Yadav.[63]

The full-fledged campaign under the leadership of L.K Advani of BJP was launched on 6th December 1992 as a result; the Mosque was attacked by the Hindu extremists. However, the state as well as the central authority did not take any step to counter the attack. Consequently,

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[62] Sabir Shah, *The Judgment and After*, The News: Sunday, Oct, 17, 2010
[63] Ibid

the whole country fell prey to the worst communal violence between the Hindus and the Muslims. Both the communities were religiously charged against each other while killing of hundreds of the Muslims and Hindus. This communal violence is considered to be the worst ever happened in Indian history after independence. Majority of the Muslims left the place before the incident whereas the other left on that day. Those who stayed there either lost their lives or suffered serious injuries. The sufferings of this communal violence were so severe that more than two thousand lost their lives and the injured were double in number to the causalities. The incident put a serious question on the secular status of the country. However, this event helped BJP to achieve the status of being the majority party in the parliament for the first time in Indian history in 1996 that lasted till 2004.[64] The final verdict over this disputed area came on 30th September 2010 in Allahabad High Court when the site was equally divided between all the three parties i.e. Muslims, Hindus and Nirmohi Akhara.[65] This move was highly criticized by the secularists of the state as well as internationally among the intelligentsia.

iv) Gujarat Riots

The other scar on Indian Secularism was put right after a decade of the Babri Mosque crisis in the shape of 2002 Gujarat Riots against the Muslims. It is considered as the laboratory to successfully test the philosophy of Hindutva. This was regarded as the start of Hindus Jihad against the Muslims. The policy of unity through hate was used as a tool to mobilize the majority against the minority. Most of the Hindu leaders tagged the incident to be architected to remove the fear of Muslims from the hearts of Hindus. They motivated the people through making speeches against the Muslims. Moreover, they justified their action against them while referring to the past when they had been made a second rate citizens in their own

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[64] Erja Marjut Hanninan. *The Contest of Indian Secularism*, University of Helenski, 2005, p.58.
[65] Sabir Shah, *The Judgment and After*, The News: Sunday, Oct, 17, 2010

land.[66] This holocaust was the logical end of the incident happened at Godhra Station on 27th Feb 2002 when fifty eight passengers were set ablaze in S-6 compartment of the train. Among those passengers, the members of Sangh Parivar who were coming back after attending the celebrations held in connection of Babri Mosque demolition had been killed. As a result, the Muslims of Gujarat were convicted for the incident and they had to pay the price for their uncommitted sin.[67]

BJP, along with its religious wings under the then Chief Minister Narendera Modi of Gujarat and State police, set stage for this horrific episode of communal violence. This religious obscurantism resulted in the killings of Muslims. More than one fifty thousand people were displaced from the area. The Muslims were left at the mercy of those religiously charged Hindu fanatics whose brutality could not be described in words. Secularism of India was seriously challenged by this act of the majority in the world of the day. The approach of Indian authorities along with that of the international community was questionable as they were completely mum over the issue.[68]

The culprits of the whole incident before the world, later on, proudly accepted their crime in camera in the famous Tehlka Magazine sting operation in October 2007. This latent acknowledgement leaves questions on the face of the world's largest democracy with secular constitution. They should have been behind the bars rather than enjoy the highest political office of the state. The Muslims, on the other hand, whose involvements are not yet proved by the courts, had suffered miseries of what they had not done. This rising role of religion in Indian politics is an alarming sign for Indian secularism.

[66]Neil Gray, "Hindutva, *Modi and The Tehelka Tapes, The Communal Threat to Indian Secularism,* Variant (32), Summer, 2008, p.24.

[67]Dr. Usha Takur. *The Gujarat Assembly Elections 2002- Results and Ramification,* in *Current Domestic Policy Challenges and Prospects in South Asia,* Islamabad: Institute of Regional Studies, 2005, pp.62-63.
[68] Ibid. 24-27.

3.6 Sikhs and Politics of India

i) Historical Background

Sikhism, the third most followed religion of India, does not have an ancient history like that of Hinduism and Islam. It as a religion originated in Fifteenth Century (1469) under the leadership of Guru Nanak in protest against the degradation of lower caste Hindus in their religion. Sikhism is actually the mixture of two popular religions of the land i.e. Hinduism and Islam.[69] But after the demise of its founding father, Guru Nanak, it failed to hold itself and divided into various sects. It was in the nineteenth century when the political activism of Sikh community was observed. They had strong political hold over the Punjab- the region of Indian Sub-Continent- under the strong leadership of Maharaja Ranjit Singh accompanied by the presence of various religious organizations. The Punjab had become the strong center of Sikh community but it saw its ebb with the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1839. No able leadership was present to fill the vacuum created after his death and finally submerged in the British Empire in 1849.[70]

In the second half of the nineteenth century, two major sects were significant i.e. Keshdhari and Sahajdhari. The former believed in the separate identity of the Sikh community whereas the later one considered Sikhism as the part of Hinduism and preferred to call themselves as Sikh Hindus. Keshdhari, the most important between the two, took the initiative to unify the Sikh population of India. They laid down the foundation of Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandhak Committee (SGPC). Under the umbrella of that organization, revolutionary steps were taken of the separate identity for their community. Soon after the partition, SGPC along with Akali Dhal transformed their duties from religious affairs to political affairs and successfully achieved the sympathies of their community. They opted to stay in India during

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[69] Amarjit Singh, *The Reorganization of States in India: A case study of Punjab*, 1995, p.26.
[70] Erja Marjut Hanninan. *The Contest of Indian Secularism*, University of Helenski, 2005, p.60.

partition as more than two million migrated to India after partition where they occupied the state of the Punjab.[71]

During the first decade, after partition the politics of Sikh community had one point agenda on their priority list i.e. declaring Punjab as a separate state. But this demand was continuously paralyzed because of the presence of Punjabi speaking Hindus in the province. That was the sole reason that Punjab did not became the part of territorial reorganization bill of 1963 in which local language is considered as the state language of respective States.[72] The first communal violence between Hindus and Sikhs after partition was registered in 1966 when Punjabi was declared as the state language of the Punjab. This was followed by the bloodshed in the whole state and finally resulted in the formation of two new states, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. As a result, Sikhs got majority with sixty one percent (61%) followed by Hindus thirty seven percent (37%) of total population of Punjab.[73]

ii) Sikh Militancy

The hegemony of Hindus upon Indian politics is regarded as the root cause of Sikh militancy of 1980s. Historically, Sikhs had enjoyed political and military independence. Even its origin was also revolutionary in response to inhuman caste system of Hinduism. History repeated itself as the Sikh community felt that they were being discriminated and purposely being marginalized in Indian politics. So they reacted violently. Two pronged reaction came in this regard. One school of thought supported the assertion of Sikh pride and identity whereas the other favored the policy of violent actions for their purpose. This school mostly consisted of the youngsters.[74]

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[71] Ibid. 63

[72] Amarjit Singh, *The Reorganization of States in India: A case study of Punjab*, Stukenberg, 1995, p.138.

[73] Erja Marjut Hanninan. *The Contest of Indian Secularism,* University of Helenski, 2005, p. 63.

[74] Stuart, Mews (Ed), *Religion in Politics: A World Guide*, Chicago: St. James Press, 2007, p.104.

This violent militancy has links with the various historical movements held in the past for Sikh identity. The 1980s bears evidence to the worst image of this violence of both Sikhs and Hindus. Sikh militancy reached to its peak in the decade where killings of Hindu civilians and police officers started on daily basis. The situation further worsened when an Indian Airline plane was hijacked by Sikh militants in Pakistan. Resultantly, the Prime Minister, Indra Gandhi dissolved the Provincial Assembly and the Central government took the command on 6th October 1983 in Punjab.

Jernail Singh Bhindrawala, a prominent figure of the Sikh militancy, along with his supporters' entered in the most sacred shrine of Sikhs, The Golden Temple, in Amritsar and took shelter there. However, the government which had made-up its mind to go to any extreme launched the "Operation Blue Star" on 5th June, 1984.[75] It was one of the worst military operations in India in which death toll exceeded the figure of two thousand. Jernail Singh Bhindrawala also died in the operation but the majority of the causalities registered were that of the innocent worshippers. The response of the Sikhs came in the shape of assassination of Indra Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguard which worsened the situation even further. Consequently, the worst communal violence throughout the country against the Sikhs broke out. The Hindu targeted and killed a number of men, women and children of the Sikh community.

Rajiv Gandhi, who succeeded his mother, tried his level best to normalize the situation but this whole decade was the period of worst communal violence India had ever faced. The demand of Khalistan, a separate state for the Sikhs, was also the main issue of this particular decade.[76] All this Sikh politics can be concluded in these words that Sikhs united themselves

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[75] Ibid
[76] Ibid. 101-104

geographically, religiously, and culturally and started their movement on the ground of religious identity and ended it on political identity.[77]

3.7 Conclusion

The founding father of India M.K Gandhi was strong believer in the philosophy of confessional politics. According to him, religion cannot be separated from politics. He was aware of the fact that India is a multi-religious society and religion involvement in politics could be harmful. But his opinion was that harmony can be achieved through religious cooperation among the diverse society. However, religion did not make rapid interference in the mainstream politics. Hinduism, being the major religion of the land, failed to find its place in politics as it is strongly divided into a strong caste system that divided the population into various groups and weakened the bond among the community. Out of all these differences, the politics of religion is making its way in Indian society.

The dominant role of religion in Indian politics is putting a deep scar on the secular status of Indian political system. However, it is trying hard to minimize the role of religion in Indian politics but it is not an easy task because people have strong affiliation with their religions. Their social, economic as well as political life is totally revolved around the religion they follow. It is the aggressive approach of the major religion of India i.e. Hinduism against all the minorities throughout Indian history. However, the state adopted secularism and promised to ensure equal rights to all the communities but they had been victimized by the majority i.e. Hindus. However, confessional politics revived among the masses that put aside the secular politics. This is evident in the shape of BJP which became a strong competitor of the INC. This transition is challenging the secularist status of the country in the form of communalism,

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[77]Erja Marjut Hanninan. *The Contest of Indian Secularism*, University of Helenski 2005, pp. 64-65.

various separatist movements, the popularity of Hindutva amongst the masses, and the insecurity prevailed among the minorities.

Chapter 4

Secularism in India

4.1 Introduction

The Chapter, Secularism in India, is comprised of three major sections. Part one of the sections discusses the historical evolution of Secularism in India and covers the ancient time till the early stages of Independence. The major purpose of this part is to highlight the presence of secularism in India way back since its development in the West and to prove wrong the false conception that British are the pioneers of secularism in India. Besides, the contribution of particular philosophies, people and states to develop secularism in India will be discussed. It will also discuss the approaches adopted for secularism by the eminent leaders of India i.e. Gandhi and Nehru approach towards secularism. Moreover, Part two discusses the various distinctive features of Indian Secularism and determines its unique identification. Besides, it also discusses the difference between the Western and Indian Secularism. In the same way, the other portion of this part deals with different dimensions of Indian Secularism. Moreover, part three highlights the stance of three major religions i.e. Hinduism, Islam and Christianity regarding secularism and states reasons why they support or reject secularism. It also highlights the perspectives of liberals, fundamentalists and reformists of all the three major religions.

4.2 Genesis of Secularism in India

4.2.1 Secularism in Ancient India

Secularism in India is often conceived as an imported policy inherited from the Colonial Masters. However, secularism can be traced back to the time immemorial even before its

birth in the West. So the claim that the British introduced secularism in India is altogether farce. However, they played their role in its refinement during their rule. As Hinduism being strongly divided into caste system as well as has the concept of multiple gods and goddess to be worshipped, therefore, by nature, it is inclined towards secularism. It is based on the principle of dividing society into caste system in which most of the privileges are enjoyed by the upper caste i.e. Brahmin. In reaction to the dominance of Brahmins, a group of people united under the philosophy of "Charvaka".[78]

Charvaka Philosophy which developed in 500 B.C believes that the world is the only truth and completely rejects the role of God or gods. Besides, it considers the following of any religion to be an illogical practice. It also rejects the concept of accountability to any divine authority as irrational. It believes in living life to the fullest and strongly criticizes the role of the clerics and the priests.[79] This school of thought did not have prominence in India like that of Buddhism and Jainism because Brahmins enjoy strong hold over the society and people's inclination towards their religion.[80] The emergence of this atheist group during ancient times in India is regarded as the first link of the land with secularism.

Besides, the other link between India and secularism was found in the times of Ashoka when he conquered India and he converted to Buddhism. He followed the Philosophy of religious co-existence and respect for all religions. As a ruler of a multi-religious society, his policy of respect for all religions had helped him in achieving the peace during his reign in the region. The Indian society had the history of wars and conflicts amongst the different religions it had.

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[78]Dominec Marbaniang, *Secularism in India, A Historical Outline*, 2009, pp.1-3.

[79]Charvaka or Lokayata Philosophy. Retrieved on 24, January 2011 from http://www.indianetzone.com/13/charvaka_or_lokayata_philosophy.html

[80]Ibid. 1-3.

These inter-religio conflicts were appropriately dealt by Ashoka through his policy of tolerance.[81]

The role of religion was not minimized during his era and had enjoyed its active role in the state affairs. Buddhism was given the special status among all the other religions. It had been given the status as if it were the official religion of the State. Moreover, a lot of money had been spent on its preaching both within and outside India. Although Ashoka had a bent towards Buddhism but the steps i.e. religious tolerance, freedom of religion, liberties etc. were regarded as the secular measures at that time. At that time the politics was completely in the grip of religion. As a result, such kind of revolutionary steps earned him a place in the list of contributors towards Indian Secularism.[82]

4.2.2 Era of Akbar the Great (1556-1605)

Akbar, after having been enthroned, had complete knowledge of the diversity of India. It was not easy for him to administer such a vast land having multi religious, lingual and cultural society without the support of the locals. Contrary to his elders, he adopted different approach to rule India, he adopted strict religious policy and did not engage Hindus in the administration.[83] However, Akbar's policy was based on the principle of reason. He strictly criticized the blind following of the religion. Amartya Sen quotes Akbar who once said:

> "The pursuit of reason and rejection of traditionalism are so brilliantly patent as to be above the need of argument. If traditionalisms were proper, the Prophets would merely have followed their own elders (and not come with new message)."[84]

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[81] Ibid
[82] Romila Thapar, (Ashoka), *Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia*, Microsoft Corporation, 2001
[83] Dominec Marbaniang, *Secularism in India, A Historical Outline*, 2009, p.2.
[84] Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence (The Illusion of Destiny)*, New Delhi: Saurabh Printers, 2006, p.161.

This posture adopted by him regarding religion was heavily questioned by the then Muslim intelligentsia and paved the way for uprising against him. They held that he was diluting Islam with non-Islamic principles. Besides the criticism, he remained stick to his stance and brought changes in India based on secularism. As a strong believer of reason, if convinced regarding any matter through logic and reasons, he used to follow that irrespective of its religious contradictions. This was evident when he became into vegetarian after having been convinced by the Jain priest.[85]

Here the question arises what were the reasons that compelled Akbar towards secular approach? His inclination towards Hinduism and all other religions was mainly on account of his marriages to the non-Muslim girls. But the major reason of his inclination was that the Muslims had always been considered as oppressors by the locals of India. Moreover, in the presence of expanding Muslim Empire, it was impossible to rule such a vastly occupied land without the support of the locals. He, therefore, adopted the secular approach to unify the diverse nature of India and through respect of their religions, their sympathy could be achieved.

On account of his support to secularism, he was glorified as a deity and is still remembered in India. Some of his steps, which are tantamount to secularism, include abolishing the forceful conversion of faiths, the elimination of "Jizya", a religious tax imposed by the Muslims on the non-Muslims in return of their security in the land ruled by the Muslims, freedom to the non-Muslims to develop their places of worships, equal citizenship awarded to all irrespective of their religious affiliation, ban on the marriages of the minors, encouragement of the remarriages of widows which was highly prohibited in Hinduism and the widow used to be burnt with the dead body of her husband under the custom of "Sati", the inclusion of non-Muslims in the Muslim Army and their appointment at higher posts especially the

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[85] Ibid. 162

Rajputs who were placed on the high posts in his own Cabinet. This was the reason that he was called as the father of Indian Nationalism.[86] So this all clarifies the presence of secularism in India much before it had been developed in the West.

4.2.3 Secularism in the Colonial Period

Although secularism had its roots in India since Ancient times, yet in transforming India into a secular society, the role of the British cannot be overlooked. The time the colonial powers were busy in pursuing their policy of expansionism in the region, secularism had reached to its peak in the West. Secularism was considered as a compulsory vehicle for development of peace, education and economic stability in the region. However, religious institutions were regarded as the only hurdle in the progress of the country. Deeply influenced by the philosophy of secularism they also wanted to implement it in their new colony.[87]

i)   The British contribution towards Secularism

a)   Unification of India under Secularism

Soon after colonizing the region, the British had observed the diversity of the land. This diverse nature of the society was exploited by the British to the maximum. They quickly understood the element of disunity among the locals. Hence, it fell easily into the hands of Britain. To counter this diversity, the new masters of the region were fully aware of the fact that for a stable government in the region the only way was of taking on board all the communities. This was only possible under the umbrella of secularism. They proved correct when they successfully established a strong central government in India. It was considered to be their greatest achievement. It was also helpful to India as they introduced in its new

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[86]Dominec Marbaniang, *Secularism in India, A Historical Outline*, 2009, p.3.
[87] Ibid. 4

system of democracy, English language, system of post offices, railway systems and systematic and organized functions of the offices etc.[88]

b) Secular Reforms in Indian Law

Both the states had differences in their customs, traditions, rules and regulations almost in every walk of life. The Colonist took a lot of safety measures while introducing secular laws in India. It was not an easy task, because people of that region had emotional attachment with their religion and it was deeply involved in their every aspect of life. The British had to counter a lot of inhuman customs and traditions especially against the women in Hindu religion i.e. Sati, killing of new born if it was a female, marriages of the minor girls, polygamy, strong actions against the conversions from one religion to the other etc.

They took start by introducing the Freedom Act of Religion (). According to the act, freedom of religion was ensured to all and no one was to deprived of his property on account of conversion to another religion.[89] This is considered to be their first step towards secularizing of Indian law. They were moving slowly as they were fully aware of the fact that a sudden change would not be digested by the locals because of their strong religious affiliation. The other step in this regard was that of protection of local religions, customs and traditions from manhandling. These were some of the initial steps towards the secularization of Indian Laws.[90]

c) Induction of Secularism on Societal Level

Throughout its history, India was governed by the religious customs and traditions. After taking control of the region, the British wanted to change this religious hegemony and made

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[88]V. D, Mahajan. (2004). *Modern Indian History*. New Delhi: S.Chan & Co. Ltd. 643.

[89] Dominec Marbaniang, *Secularism in India, A Historical Outline*, 2009, pp.4-5.

[90]V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, New Delhi: S.Chan & Co. Ltd., 2004, pp.270.

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changes in the inhuman customs and traditions of local religions. Some of the changes they sought to bring on societal level included caste system of Hinduism in which the lower castes were downtrodden. They introduce the concept of equality while introducing uniform law for the whole region irrespective of creed, caste or religion to counter or eliminate the concept of untouchable. Moreover, they also put ban on the inhuman practice of *Sati,* equality was ensured to the female who were the most deprived creatures of the society keeping in view their basic rights. For awareness of their basic rights and maintain their identity in the region, educational reforms were brought to make them able to counter the challenges of the modern world.[91]

d) Educational Reforms and its Impact on Secularizing Indian people

As India was caste ridden society, therefore, their system of education was only confined to the particular caste i.e. Brahmins. Besides, the medium of instruction was Sanskrit and the privileged class had only command over it. Resultantly, this discrimination rendered Indian society with illiteracy. The British, after strengthening their feet in India and with the establishment of their organized and stable government, sought to address the issue of education as it was badly needed to be reformed. As a result, they forwarded various educational reforms which included provision of academic and religious experts, imparting modern education and ideas by the academics, and the spread of the teachings of Christianity through the clerics and the priests.[92] These suggestions were rejected on the grounds as it was the initial days of their rule and people had hostile intentions towards them.

After strengthening their feet in the region, an education system based on the English medium was introduced. The master mind behind this idea was Lord Macaulay. The basic purpose was to create a community which will be an Indian by origin but their mind will be

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[91] J.N. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India,* London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd, 1924, p.15.
[92] Dominec Marbaniang, *Secularism in India, A Historical Outline,* 2009, p.8.

of Englishmen. This idea was highly criticized by both Hindus and the Muslims. They opposed it on religious grounds as both considered it a plan to hijack their religious identity and spread the message of Christianity. Reservations of both the communities were addressed. They were ensured that no religious teachings of Christianity and brain washing of the students would be done. In this way, the hurdle in implementing the English as a medium of instruction in schools at initial stages was successfully removed. Later on, it was made official language. This development helped in grooming the minds of the youth of India. They were introduced to new ideas like democracy, secularism, human rights, human equality, rule of law etc. These ideas were alien to the people of India. These reforms developed a breed of class who virtually played an important role in liberating India from the clutches of the British. They made education open to all the people of the society.[93]

e) Secular Religious Reforms of the British

After the establishment of their government in the whole region, the British considered it as the right time to spread the message of Christianity. They were fully aware of the fact that by doing so at the early stage of their rule, people might revolt and destabilize their government which was not fully established as yet. As a result, at the initial stages a lot of funds were released to the religious institutions of the local to develop their worship places. This was how ground was made for introducing Christianity in the region.[94]

The duty for spreading the message of Christianity was given to the Missions of Britain. These Missions were spread throughout the region. Beside the message of their religion, they also educated the local Indians to the new developed political phenomena in the west i.e. secularism, democracy, individual liberty, supremacy and equality of law for all, human

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[93] Ibid. 9
[94] Vishal Mangalwadi, *India: The Grand Experiment*, Surrey: Pipa Rann Books, 1997, p.95.

rights etc. By introducing to them such phenomena, they were also taught how to demand their own rights of which they were deprived for centuries. All the leaders of Freedom Movement had the background of foreign education. M.K Gandhi, M.A. Jinnah, J.L. Nehru, Sir Sayyed Ahmad Khan, Raja Ram Mohan Roy etc. had background of foreign education. They were highly impressed of secularism. M.K Gandhi, M.A. Jinnah and Nehru favored secularism in politics, Sayyed Ahmad Khan used it in his educational reforms, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Dr B.R Ambedkar used it in societal reforms of their nations.[95] The contribution of the British towards the development of secularism can be concluded in the words of Aleymma Zachariah:

> *"activeness of manner, disciplined and order in organization, scientific outlook in life, simplicity of Christian faith in religions, spirit of nationalism and faith in democracy in politics, equality of women in society, secularity of syllabi and opportunity for all in education, use of printing press for communication and the military might and modern equipment's of war in warfare's".[96]*

4.2.4 Secularism in India after Independence

i) Evolution of Secularism after independence

Soon after achieving an independent status on 15th August 1947, the Constituent Assembly had been given the task to form constitution for the newly born State. A committee for framing the constitution was formed headed by Dr Ambedkar and representatives from all the communities of India. It was a daunting task to frame constitution for the state having a lot of diversity. Unification of all the communities as well as accommodation of Hindu majority was a gigantic task. However, the final draft of the constitution was framed on 26 November 1949. On 26th January 1950, the constitution of India got approval based on the pattern of

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[95] Dominec Marbaniang, *Secularism in India, A Historical Outline*, 2009, pp.16-20.

[96] Aleymma Zachariah, *Modern Religious and Secular Movements in India*, Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 2002, pp.20-21.

parliamentary democracy of Britain and Judicial supremacy of the United States. It is consisted of 8 Schedules and 395 Articles.[97]

At initial stages, the word of secularism was not present in the constitution. It was made part of the constitution later in 1976 as a result of 42nd amendment. When the word, secularism, became part of the preamble of Indian constitution, India became a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic.[98] Each leader of India had adopted secularism appropriated to their perspective. Here we will discuss the approaches of two eminent leaders of India i.e. Gandhi and Nehru.

ii) Gandhi and Indian Secularism

The Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi- The Mahatma had keen interest in the study of all religions. He did a deep study of almost all the religions of the world and adopted their positive characteristics that helped him become a leader. He strongly supported the concept of tolerance and the philosophy of non-violence. About religion, Gandhi held that religions are different routes to reach God. Therefore, everyone adopts route of his own choice to reach the final destination. So he was of the view that their routes can be different but their destination is the same.[99] He also pleaded reforms in Hinduism especially regarding the concept of untouchability. He had sympathy for them and was of the opinion that such thing will not be helpful to Indian Nationalism. Moreover, they will not feel to be the part of the society and will fail to progress on equal footing with the society.[100]

The other approach of Gandhi towards secularism revolves around the philosophy of non-violence, which he adopted after studying the teachings of Buddhism and Jainism. He was the

[97]V.D. Mahajan, *Modern Indian History*, New Delhi: S.Chan & Co. Ltd., 2004, pp.360.

[98]Dominec Marbaniang, *Secularism in India, A Historical Outline*, 2009, p.26.

[99]*Gandhi*, (http://www.mapsof india.com/personalities/Gandhi/nonviolence/html) accessed on 24, January, 2011

[100]Ibid

main architect of non-violence movement against the British to quit India. He strongly opposed the division of the region on the basis of religious grounds. Moreover, he did his efforts to stop the division of India till the end. He supported the Muslim League in the Khilafat Movement which was against the abolition of Khilafat in Turkey by the West. The purpose of his support was to develop harmonious relations with the Muslims and win the sympathies of Indian Muslims.[101]

Gandhi's approach towards secularism was different from that of the West. He was of the opinion that religion and state are inseparable. Rather religion can play role in secularizing the society if used positively. According to him, by showing respect to each other's religions, it would help bind India. His respect to all religions was reflected in his efforts against the British. He supported the Muslims and other religious communities on various occasions like Unification with the Muslim League in Khilafat Movement (1920-22), Sikhs Gurdwara Reforms of 1920-25, separate electorates for the untouchables in Indian Independence Act of 1935.[102]

Some of the famous comments of Gandhi that show his inclination towards secularism are referred to by R.K Prabhu in his book:

> *"I swear by my religion. I will die for it. But it is my personal affair. The State has nothing to do with it. The State will look after your secular welfare, but not your or my religion. That is everybody's personal affair."*[103]

> *"I do not except India of my dreams to develop one religion that is wholly Hindu or wholly Christian or Wholly Musslman, but I want it to by wholly tolerant, with its religions work side by side with one another".*[104]

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[101] Dominec Marbaniang, Secularism in India, A Historical Outline,2009, p.20

[102] James Warner (Ed.). *Fundamentalism, Revivalists and Violence in South Asia*, New Delhi: Manohar Publishing 1988. pp. 75-87.

[103] R.K. Prabhu, *M.K Gandhi, India of my Dreams*, Ahmadabad: Navjivan Publishing, 1947, p.278.

iii) Nehru and Secularism

Nehru, like Gandhi, had the opinion that that no other alternative except secularism could unify and peacefully operate the machinery of India. Moreover, he held that any discrimination against any sect, religion or community would promote alienation among that community and that portion of population would feel insecure under the common goal we want to achieve i.e., "Indian Nationalism" and would make hurdle in promoting unity.[105] He was strictly against the caste system of Hinduism and was of the view that this caste system would block the way of secularism to develop. Moreover, he was strongly against interference in one's religion as he regarded it to be one's personal matter. Besides, he strongly condemned the customs and traditions of any religion that affect the social and political equality in the country.[106]

The founding fathers of India, although supported secularist political system for the state, and their approaches towards secularism were different. In a way of explanation, Gandhi was against the complete separation of religion and politics whereas Nehru had western approach i.e. atheistic approach. He was favoring the concept of complete separation of religion from all avenues that lead towards human life. It was due to their vision and farsightedness that they adopted the best philosophy i.e. secularism, for their country compatible with the diverse society of India. Thus diversity implied secularism for uniting people. As a result, India till today remains to be a functional democracy.[107]

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[104] Ibid.

[105] P.C. Joshi, *Gandhi Nehru: tradition and Indian Secularism*,
(http://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article432.html) accessed on 4, June, 2011.

[106] Ibid
[107] James Warner (Ed.). *Fundamentalism, Revivalists and Violence in South Asia*, New Delhi: Manohar Publishing 1988, pp.75-87.

4.3 Features and Dimensions of Indian Secularism

Indian secularism is based on the fundamental principle of secularism i.e. divorce between religion and politics. But it does not mean that it completely signifies the western concepts of secularism. However, Indian secularism has its own identity in the presence of a number of distinctive features and dimensions.

4.3.1 Distinctive Features of Indian Secularism

Indian Secularism possesses universality with regard to its denial of granting any official status to the religion. Besides, it also negates the role of religion in the politics. However, its social makeup is different from the west; it is, that therefore the framers of Indian secularism brought different modifications in its form in order to make it acceptable to the India society. Following are the significant features of Indian secularism which give it novelty as compared to its western model of secularism:

i.   The western secularism preaches the separation of religion and politics altogether. Moreover, it also discourages the role of ecclesiae in politics. However, Indian secularism does not possess such kind of characteristics as religion is highly adored in Indian society. As a result, compete abolition of religion in Indian politics is far from realization. However, to tackle this matter Indian secularism assigned the matters of religion to the religious authorities of their respective religions whereas matters related to the public are looked into by the government.[108]

ii.   The second prominent feature of Indian Secularism grants equal status to all in the eyes of the state. As India possesses multiplicity of religions, its Nationalism needs to bring unity

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[108]Mani Shankar Aiyar, *India Destiny: Secularism or Hindutva?*, Islamabad: Pan Graphics (Pvt) Ltd, 2003, p.4.

among them which is realizable only if all the religions are treated on the principle of equality underestimating their minority-majority difference. Consequently, the state has no official religion. Moreover, it discourages the notion that no one should be favored or harmed on the basis of his/her religion.[109]

iii. The most significant feature of Indian secularism which not any other secular state has, is of uniform criminal law and most of the civil law. However, personal law is codified keeping in view one's religion. This novelty of the Indian Secularism invited a lot of criticism worldwide. Moreover, it is also in contrast to the fundamental characteristic of secularism. However, Indian Secularists defended it while referring to the pluralistic constitution of Indian society. This is why matters related with personal law are tackled according to one's religion. The chief criticism on this feature of Indian secularism comes from Hindus who do not want equal rights to be enjoyed by minorities.[110]

iv. Besides enjoying religious liberty, the ecclesiae are free to found their institutions in order to preach their message. Thus, this characteristic of Indian secularism promotes feelings of religious security among the people and counters the attempt to develop an irreligious society.[111]

v. Last but not the least the notion of multi-secularism is one of the appealing characteristic which makes possible religious freedom to everyone without any discrimination. This is how each religion and its beliefs are preserved. Each has its own way of secularism. As a result, each contributed to develop the idea of multi secularism and came up with variety of definitions of secularism.[112]

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[109] Ibid
[110] Ibid
[111]Rajeev Bharqava, *Political Secularism*, (www.queensu.ca/edg/Bhargava_Political_Secularism.pdf), accessed on 14 May 2011.

[112] Ibid

4.3.2 Dimensions of Indian Secularism

Besides different features, Indian Secularism also has the following distinctive dimensions:

i) Multi-Nationalism

Contrary to the fact that India is multicultural, religious and lingual society but keeping in view its nationalism, it cannot be said that it is a multi-national country. Indian nationalism has been strengthened by the secular feature of the country. It ensures equality irrespective of one's religion, caste, creed or color. Secularism works as a catalyst in promoting factor of unity in the diverse Indian society and promotes peace, stability and economic growth of the country. It manages to maintain peace and harmony in this multinational state.[113]

ii) Diversity as a Binding Force

India used their diversity positively making it as a binding force among its nationals.[114] This was done by the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence and tolerance that united the people of completely different background under the flag of Indian nationalism. So this is how, its diversity was made an integral part of the bond that strongly bind them together in one whole.

iii)   Secularism versus Communalism

The history of India has always been the story of perpetual wars between the two groups i.e. secularists or progressive, on the one hand, and fundamentalists and traditionalists, on the other. This tussle, off and on, questioned the secularist status of India.[115]

4.4 Approaches of Different Religions of India towards Secularism

The Hindus, the Muslims and the Christians are the major religious communities of India and their approaches towards secularism will be discussed in the paragraphs that follow:

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[113]Mani Shankar Aiyar, *India Destiny: Secularism or Hindutva?*, Islamabad: Pan Graphics (Pvt) Ltd, 2003, p.5.
[114] Ibid
[115] Ibid

4.4.1 Hindus Approach

Hindus, being a majority in India are comprised of 80% of its total population. Their approach towards secularism can be divided into the following two major categories.

1. Liberalist Approach

2. Fundamentalist Approach

1. Liberalist Approach

The liberals believe in secularism to be the best suited philosophy for India to operate their political and social machinery. As they regard Hinduism to be by itself a secular religion in which people are not bound to pray one God only but rather it has pluralist approach as they have a number of gods and goddess. This approach is further divided into the following two categories.

a) Atheistic Approach

b) Pluralistic Approach

a) The Atheistic Approach:

They are of the opinion that secularism should be adopted on the grounds of the Western Model which means the complete separation between religion and politics. The eminent followers of this kind of secularism were Nehru, Subash Chandra Bose, and Dr B.R Ambedkar. Nehru was strictly against the involvement of a religion in politics. He had faced various hurdles from the Fundamentalists' School of Thought of Hindu Majority who wanted to develop India into a theocratic state than a secular one.[116]

They had their own justifications because the division of the region was carried out on the basis of religion. As a result Pakistan was created a Muslim state. It was, therefore, the Hindus also had the right to establish India on religious grounds. The result of the first

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[116]Dominec Marbaniang, *Perspectives on Indian Secularism*, 2009. p.2

elections held in India, people gave the verdict in favor of secularists against the fundamentalists'. After becoming the Prime Minister, Nehru himself confessed that it had been a very daunting task to declare India a secular state in such a religiously dominant society.[117]

This policy of Nehru had served a lot in holding such a diverse society intact. India was divided into two parts by their Colonial masters on the basis of religion. Same was the demand of Hindus who sought to have a theocratic state like that of Pakistan. Nehru took a decisive stand to declare India to be a secular state where everyone would be treated equally irrespective of his/her religious affiliation.[118]

b) The Pluralistic Approach:

Hinduism is religiously a pluralistic in makeup as it preaches more than one God to be worshipped. Although both, Atheists and Pluralists, support secularism but their methodology is completely different. The Atheists approach emphasizes the complete separation of religion and politics whereas Pluralists are of the belief that the separation of religion and politics is impossible. The separation of religion and politics is not the way to achieve secularism but to respect and to extend equality to all the religions. This leads to peaceful coexistence among the religions of the state. Thus, secularism could be achieved without making any separation. Some of the eminent followers of this school of thought in India are M.K Gandhi and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.[119]

Gandhi, being the follower of pluralistic approach, believed in the equality of all religions. But his opposition to the conversion of the Dalits to other religions was strongly condemned by Dr B.R Ambedkar, the leader of Dalits. According to him, it was an anti-secular approach

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[117]Ibid. 3
[118]Ibid. 4
[119]Ibid. 3

of Gandhi. However, he responded and said that he was not opposed to conversion on the ground of his disrespect for other religions but he opposed it on account of political considerations. According to Gandhi, such mass conversion would not be beneficial to Hindus.[120]

2) Fundamentalists' Approach

This school of thought completely rejects secularism as they regard it to be a western concept which does not suit India socially and politically. Under the umbrella of Hindutva, they have their own definition of state and nationalism. They believe in the establishment of Hindu Rashtra (Hindu State) where Hindus alone will be having the privileges of first rate citizenship and they will be regarded as the true nationals of India.[121] They consider other communities to be second rate citizens with no right. If they want to enjoy their rights, they have to convert to Hindu religion. Moreover, they called it Hindustan, the land of Hindus and all others residing in it should either convert to Hindu religion or otherwise they should be expelled from Hindustan.[122]

This fundamental group is united under Sangh Parivar which is the combination of BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party), VHP (Vishwa Hindu Parishad), The Bajrang Dal, Akhil Bharatiya Vidhyarti Parishad.[123] They want the active role of religion in Indian politics. This religion based politics has put at stake India throughout its history starting with the killings of migrants from both India sides soon after Independence, followed by the assassination of Gandhi. He was killed because he had soft corner for Pakistan on the issue of the distribution of assets between India and Pakistan after Independence. Moreover, the killing of Indra

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[120]Ibid
[121]Ibid
[122]Ibid
[123]Aleymma Zachariah, Modern *Religious and Secular Movements in India*, Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 2002, pp.169-176.

Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguard, the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi by a Tamil lady had been the victims of religious politics.[124]

Besides, the revival of Hinduism especially after 1990 was the starting point that resulted into the escalation of Ayodhya Crisis, Hindu-Muslim riots, burning of Churches and Gujarat Riots. BJP after becoming the 2nd largest party of the state put Indian secularism at stake on account of her vibrant role in the incidents referred to in the preceding lines.[125]

4.4.2 The Muslims and Secularism

According to the Muslims, separation of religion and politics is not possible as Islam gives a complete system that intertwined both religious and political aspects of life. However, in India, the Muslims supported secularism but they were considered to have been against the secularism. Besides, the Muslim religious parties in India, before partition, adopted liberal approach and supported the philosophy of secularism and opposed the creation of the Muslim state during partition. The stance of some notable religious political parties is discussed below:

a)   Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind

Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind, founded by Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani in 1920, supported the establishment of one state based on the principle of secularism. They supported secularism on the ground that the Muslims believe in the freedom of religion and should not support the idea of separate nation.[126]

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[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.
[126]Dominec Marbaniang, *Perspectives on Indian Secularism*, 2009, p.15.

b) Jamaat-i-Islami

Jamaat-i-Islami, founded by Syed Maududi, was also against the partition of Sub-Continent on the basis of religion. Moreover, they also supported the western concept of secularism. They were of the opinion that secularism should be considered as noninterference in religious matters. They did not label it to be the tool in order to develop an irreligious society. The reason for this bent towards secularism was to counter communalism and protection of the Muslims in India.[127]

4.4.2.1 The Role of Educational Institutions

The role of educational institutions run by Muslims in promoting secularism in India cannot be ignored. Some of the institutions which actively performed their respective role in the promotion of secularism need a special mention.

a) Aligarh Muslim University

It played a great role in imparting modern knowledge to the Muslim community. It was founded by Sir Sayyed Ahmad Khan with the purpose to provide the Muslims with an opportunity of actively participating in the society. As prior to this endeavor, the Muslims had completely boycotted English medium of education which they considered un-Islamic and harmful to their coming generation under the fear that they might not lose their attachment with Islam. Such misconception was replaced and stressed the need to acquire modern English knowledge. It was the only way to progress in the Colonial Era. He also made the Muslims to realize that their glorious time had become the story of the past and they had to work hard to regain the past. He also presented the positive image of the Muslims before the British government which had hostile attitude towards them. The role of Aligarh Muslim University, in this regard, is praiseworthy. Its role in secularizing the Indian

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[127] Ibid. 15-17

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Muslims was in the field of education. It educated them about the modern concepts of the world i.e. democracy, freedom of speech, liberty etc.

b) Deoband Institute

The role of Deoband can be measured from the steps that it took for the unification of India and opposed partition. The important amongst these measures was the Fatwa of Maulana Muhammad Qasim i.e. the Muslims should join the Congress and unite against the oppressors (British). As a result, the Congress and the Muslim League joined hands in Khilafat Movement (1920-22). In present times, it also supports secularism if it ensures religious freedom to all.[128]

In short, the Muslims history is witness to the active role of the Muslims in favor of secularism in India. However, they are always looked with suspicion with regard to their spirit of nationalism and are the worst victims of communalism to date in Indian history. Although there are some fundamentalist Muslims especially in the region of Kashmir who sought separation from India as they are not treated like Indian citizens. The fundamentalist parties of the Muslims in Indian part of Kashmir which are engaged in separation movement are the youth wing of Jamaat-i-Islami (Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba), Hizb-e-Islami and Hizbul Mujahedeen.[129]

4.4.3 Christians and Secularism

The majority among this school of thought favors secularism in India as they consider Christians to be the architects of secularism in India and has helped such a diverse nation to stand united till today.[130] They support secularism from the spectacle of atheist approach.

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[128] Asghar Ali Engineer, *Muslims and India*, New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2006, pp.35-36.
[129] Erja Marjut Hanninan. *The Contest of Indian Secularism*, University of Helenski, 2005, p.88.
[130] Dominec Marbaniang, *Secularism in India, A Historical Outline*, 2009, p.16.

Besides, they are completely against any role of religion in politics. They favor Nehru's form of secularism than that of Gandhi's one.[131]

The Christians supported secularism in India as they feared Hindus' domination and their status would then be of a second rate citizen. Pakistan was the logical result of such thoughts held among the Muslims i.e. the dominant Hindu majority will get all the perks and privileges. The majority of the Christians chose to stay in India as they were ensured of their religious freedom.[132]

But later in the history, they also became the victims of communal violence when their Churches were set on fire by the Hindu fanatics in 1990s-the era of Hindu revivalism. Besides, Gandhi who promoted the message of religious equality and freedom also opposed the conversion of Dalits to Christianity which was strongly condemned by Dr. B.R Ambedkar, the leader of Dalits and regarded his act as an anti-secular. Gandhi replied to this objection and remarked that his opposition was not religious in nature but was based on political grounds as such conversions were not in favor of Hindu majority. This fabricated and weak argument was rejected by the leaders of Dalits.[133]

4.5 Conclusion

Secularism is very much an Indian philosophy. It had its roots in India much before it actually emerged in the West. It started with the emergence of 'Charvaka'. They completely rejected the concept of divine beliefs. The major cause of the emergence of this philosophy was the presence of strong caste system in Hindu religion. The upper classes were the whole and sole authorities. Their attitude towards the working class i.e. lower castes was inhuman. As a result, they raised and rejected all religious beliefs altogether. They have no faith in any

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[131] Harvey Cox, *The Secular City*, New York: Macmillan Pub, Co Inc. 1973, p.77.

[132]Dominec Marbaniang, *Perspectives on Indian Secularism*, 2009. p.17.

[133] Ibid. 18

religion. They believe in the worldly life only and in the philosophy that one should enjoy this life to the fullest without observing the dogmas of religions.

As India was conquered by various foreign invaders who belonged to diverse religions, it was, therefore, that brought with themselves their culture and religion. As a result Indian society developed into a plural one, which is evident in the presence of a number of religions. Thus, this diversity helped India easily transform into a secular society. But the credit in secularizing Indian society goes to the era of British rule. Despite their contributions to Indian society, India developed its own form of secularism which was not an imitation of the western type of secularism. It has some unique features that differentiate it from the western form of secularism. It had to adjust this form of secularism according to its culture and society. It is the secularism that has earned India a respectable place in the comity of nations. Although secularism has provided a lot of opportunities to India but at the same time posed has challenges of various natures on account of the rising role of religion in politics.

Chapter 5

Challenges and Opportunities to/of Indian Secularism

5.1 Introduction

Secularism being an integral part of Indian Constitution has provided a lot of opportunities to the Indian people domestically as well as internationally in this era of globalization. Resultantly, India has gained the status of prestige unmatchable by any other country of the developing world on account of this important characteristic of its constitution. India is a pluralist society religiously, culturally and linguistically, it has, therefore, adopted secularism as a toll to keep intact this multi-featured society so that people might exercise their religious, cultural and social life with freedom. Economic stability which India nowadays enjoys is the other feature which was made possible only because of secularism. It cannot be achieved until or unless society is dealt on equal footings. As a result, India has earned to herself the status among the world stable economies.

However, in the presence of this fundamental principle of her constitution i.e. secularism, India has to face numerous challenges throughout its history. In comparison to its neighboring countries, the security situation of India is far better. However, the issue of communalism has fostered fear among the minorities. The other alarming challenge to Indian secularism is the emergence of and increasing popularity of the right wing political parties in the mainstream politics of the state. The BJP- the second popular party of the country- is one of the examples which emerged and achieved popularity among the masses under the philosophy of Hindutva. This chapter will highlight the challenges confronted to Indian

secularism. Besides, it will also discuss the opportunities provided to India by its version of secularism.

5.2 Challenges to Indian Secularism

Although India is declared as a secular state, yet there is gap between theory and practice as this fundamental principle of Indian constitution has to face a number of challenges. Communalism is one of the issues that has challenged its secular status on regular intervals. The other striking challenge secularism has to tackle is that of Hindu revivalism in Indian polity. This revivalism has given birth to the sense of insecurity amongst the minorities. This sense of insecurity is resulting in the shape of separatist movements of various kinds amongst the minorities that have threatened the integrity of the state. Moreover, the presence of religious political parties and a bulk of religious organizations in the politics of the state are putting serious questions on its secular status.[134]

5.2.1 Communalism

i) Communal Violence in the Punjab

The Punjab is ethnically a plural society mostly occupied by Sikhs and Punjabi speaking Hindus. After independence, Sikhs were the largest ethnic group of India who were deprived of their rights i.e. of having their own state (province) like other ethnic communities in India. This community not only shares religious unity but also linguistic commonalty. It generated serious problem in making the Punjab a Sikh majority state. Here the question arises what were the serious hurdles in the way of the establishment of a Sikh State. This state of affairs put the cherished philosophy of India i.e. secularism into question. However, it was in the second half of 1960s that the boundaries of the Punjab were redrawn. Thus the Punjab was made a Sikh dominant state after the separation of two states i.e. Haryana and Himanchal

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[134] Asghar Ali Engineer, *Muslims and India*, New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2006, pp.137-140

Pradesh. Resultantly, Sikhs stood in majority with 61% and Hindus with 37% of the total population of the Punjab. This move was regarded as a landmark bid to overcome the ethnic violence in Indian politics but it failed to bear any fruit.[135]

The majority of Sikh community was against this division. They regarded it unjust on economic and social grounds. They held that they were given deliberately under developed and the poorest region of the parent province i.e. the Punjab. However, the economic issue was tackled wisely by the state government under the shadow of Green Revolution.[136] Thus, the efforts of the government in collaboration with the people transformed the fate of this poorest region of the country making it an economic hub. The real issue was of social in security. Resultantly, people thought of losing their cultural and traditional values. The community had fears that this state of feelings might not turn the youth towards militancy. However, this assumption proved correct in the emergence of Jernail Singh Bhindrawala, the most audacious leader of Sikh militancy.[137]

The political scenario in the Punjab was also passing through transitional phase. The emergence of Akali Dal as a strong competitor to the Congress was felt hard by the ruling party i.e. the Congress while challenging its long hold over the years. The inclination of central government towards Hindus and anti-Sikh actions were the main reason of the popularity of Akali Dal. This biasness of the central government was responded with agitations. However, the government termed the agitation as civil disobedience. As a result, emergency was imposed when Indra Gandhi suspended Akali Dal government in the Punjab. To strengthen its position there, the Congress supported Jernail Singh Bhindrawala to counter its rivals. The act of imposing emergency was not hailed by the people and communal

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[135]Erja Marjut Hanninan. *The Contest of Indian Secularism*, University of Helenski, 2002, pp. 61-63.
[136] Green Revolution is the introduction of new seed verities in Indian Agriculture to Reduce hunger.
[137]Charles Hauss, *Comparative Politics, Domestic Responses to Global Challenges*, Canada: Thomson Wadsworth Canada, 2008, p.359.

violence throughout the country broke out. All those acts of the Congress resulted in the loss of its popularity in the Punjab as well as nationwide.[138]

J.S Bhindrawala turned against his master i.e. the Congress. It further worsened the whole scenario. In 1984, he, along with his supporters, took shelter in the Golden Temple, the most sacred temple of Sikhs, in Amritsar. The government launched crackdown against him. The Akali Dal leaders also joined him in the temple considering it to be a safe-haven. Under the "Operation Blue Star", the Temple was raided that resulted in the death of J.S Bhindrawala along with his supporters. However, the majority of the causalities were reported that of the innocent worshippers. On the other hand, the leaders of Akali Dal were arrested alive. Sikhs responded to this massacre and Indra Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguard in October the same year. As a result, the worst ever anti-Sikhs violence broke out throughout the country.

Indra Gandhi has been blamed for this sad episode of Indian history. Her approach towards this whole crisis was criticized. In the past, Nehru had resolved the Sikhs uprising by taking into confidence the true leaders of their community whereas Indra Gandhi deputed the politicians whom she could easily influence according to her whims.[139] Rajiv Gandhi, who succeeded his mother, followed the footsteps of his grandfather, Nehru, in his early days in order to paralyze that ethnic violence. With the arrival of elections, he changed his policy and sided with the Hindu community of the country specifically for votes. Besides, the Congress had already lost its popularity. Moreover, he did not want to weaken it further by supporting the Sikh minority at the cost of Hindu majority. His election campaign revolved around the assassination of his mother in order to win the sympathies of the masses. But like his mother, he also lost his life in the election campaign of 1991 at the hands of a Tamil suicide bomber

[138] Ibid
[139] Amarjit Singh, *The Reorganization of States in India: A Case Study of Punjab.* 1995, p.138.

whose community felt betrayed by his policy shift towards Tamils. However, Sikh militancy declined with each passing year and its leaders were targeted and killed invariably.[140]

ii) Kashmir and Communalism

Kashmir has remained a disputed area since Independence. It received and is receiving the brunt of communalism since then. Before Independence of India, Kashmir was an independent princely administered state and never directly ruled by the British Empire under the Interpretation Act 1889. In the process of the partition of India, it has to decide its future. Like the of whole India, it also has the feature of plurality i.e. the home of multi-religions. In such a diverse society, the Muslims used to enjoy the status of majority. But her rulers decided the other way round and acceded in favor of India. This resulted in war between India and Pakistan and made the region a bone of contention on permanent basis between the two newly born states. The major portion of the land came under the control of India while one third of it had the sway of Pakistan. The division of the region remained disputed since then as both the states (India and Pakistan) level claims against its ownership. However, after 1971 war, both the states agreed to the de-facto division of the land i.e. that each should keep the land which is in its control.[141]

The issue was reborn in 1980s it was the era in which India was not only facing communal violence among the Muslims but also among Sikh community. The liberation movement of 1980s generated mixed opinions among the masses. This time, the majority of the community was against joining of either state rather they sought to be independent. A fraction of people supported the stance of both the states. Pakistan fully supported this uprising and left no stone unturned to make it vibrant. As a result, it had to bear all the blames of India which blended

[140]Charles Hauss, *Comparative Politics, Domestic Responses to Global Challenges*, Canada: Thomson Wadsworth Canada, 2008, p.361.
[141] Erja Marjut Hanninan, *The Contest of Indian Secularism*, University of Helenski, 2002, pp. 111-113.

Pakistan as the training camp for Kashmiri freedom fighters and gave this state sponsored terrorism the name of "Cross Border Terrorism". However, Pakistan regarded the support being provided to Kashmiri freedom fighters as assistance to freedom struggle. This whole turmoil provided great opportunity to religious parties to emerge. The tool, these parties used to attract people towards themselves, was of the region as well as religion.[142]

In 1987, the situation worsened extremely and resulted in the imposition of emergency in the region. However, the central government immediately came to terms with Farooq Abdullah and his government was reinstated. These inconsistencies of the central government gave birth to questions in the minds of the people about the democratic setup of India. The rigging of 1987 elections worked as a catalyst to increase this disbelief. This was responded especially by the youth of middle class in the shape of ethnic mobilization. The magnitude of this uprising was so magnanimous that it was regarded by some of the authors as a "Youth Quake" in Kashmir.

The ethnic violence that started in 1989 exists even today with the worst death tolls in the region. The official death tolls observed by the government of India in Kashmir to date are thirty five thousand whereas the figures given by the government of Pakistan are double to that of India. This issue not only struck India but also has far-reaching impacts over the whole region making it volatile. The L.O.C, the de-facto border between India and Pakistan, is watched by either side with heavy military deployments. It is considered to be the major reason of hostility between the two nations as none of them wants to surrender their stated position.[143]However, both the states maligned each other with derogatory labels. This blame

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[142]Charles Hauss, *Comparative Politics, Domestic Responses to Global Challenges*, Canada: Thomson Wadsworth Canada, 2008, p.361.
[143] Balraj Puri, *Kashmir towards Insurgency*. New Delhi: Orient Longman Ltd, 1995, pp. 46-48.

game brought nothing except humiliation worldwide. The amateur attitude of both the states provides room to militancy and strength to its roots in the region in the name of jihad.[144]

5.2.2 Politics of Hindutva

Hindutva, a political philosophy of fundamentalists of the Hindu community, is quite often believed as the state of mind of Hinduism. However, this belief is utterly faulty as both are entirely different from one another. Hinduism is a religion that comprehensively covers and addresses the social, religious as well as political affairs of its followers. However, Hindutva is a political philosophy initiated and followed by a particular fragment of the Hindu community. It was established during the era of colonialism when the upper caste of the Hindus i.e. Brahmins made the people conscious of that they had been aborigines of the land. Moreover, they made their notion presentable and acceptable before the masses under the slogan i.e. to develop India into Hindu Rashtra (Hindu State).[145]

V.D Savakar was the founding father of the philosophy of Hindutva. He was deeply inspired by the works of B.G Tilak who, for the first time, exclaimed that Hindus should be united to revive their lost status in the region. The tool he adopted to achieve this goal was to hold the various festivals of Hinduism. He had realized that only one thing i.e. religion could unite this dispersed society. This laid down the foundation of Hindutva philosophy. The word, Hindutva, literally means "Hinduness". It was the name of a booklet authored by V.D Savakar during the days of his exile in the British. The fundamental objective of the book was to amalgamate the disorganized and unaware community of Hindus especially the youth under the philosophy of the Hindu nationalism so that they might be an important factor in the regional politics.

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[144]Ibid. 361-364.
[145]*What is the Nature of Hindutva Politics?*(http://www.pluralistindia.com/book/illustrated-primier/chapter-10.pdf), accessed on 20, June, 2010.

Despite its majority in the region, the Hindu community failed to unify in one whole like the other religious communities of the world. It was so on account of its division into a number of castes. The leaders of the philosophy brought them together and indoctrinated in them the idea of nationalism and importance of the state in their lives. These fundamentalist leaders titled India in the name of Bahart Mata (Mother India). The other instrument they used to unify their community was to develop the concept of hate among them not only against the oppressors i.e. the British but also against all other religious communities of the region.[146]

Hindutva that was actually originated against the British still made its own presence felt on regular intervals even after independence due to its strong roots among the masses. This was how it had put serious challenges to Indian secularism. Hindutva has its own organizational structure like any other organization. They virtually struggled for forty years in becoming the ruling majority of the state. BJP became the majority party in 1996 elections in the Lok Sabha. Besides, 1990s was also believed to be the era of religion overrode politics worldwide. BJP utilized this global change in its own favor. It mobilized the Hindu community of the country under the policy of unity through hate. This policy was applied to the Muslims' community of the State.[147]

Five hundred years old site of the Babri Mosque, controversial since its formation, was targeted under the policy given in the foregoing paragraph. The BJP leaders injected the policy in the minds of religiously charged Hindus and declared the site to be the birth place of their God Ram. A large number of rallies marched towards the site of the Babri Mosque under the assumption that it was their religious duty to conquer the birth place of their God. Those rallies were led by the BJP leader L.K Advani. On 6th, December 1992, the Mosque

[146]P.M Kamath, *Secular Democracy in India: The Domestic and Regional Challenges*, in *Current Domestic Policy Challenges and Prospects in South Asia*, Islamabad: Institute of Regional Studies, 2005, p. 48
[147]Hindutva and the Politicization of Religious Identity in India, Issue 13, Feb 2009 (http://www.peacestudiesjournal.org.uk) accessed on 9, Dec 2011.

was attacked by the Hindu fanatics and was damaged. This whole sad incident took place under the cover of central government and showed cold shoulder in the whole episode. As a result, the worst Hindu-Muslims communal violence started in the country. It is considered to be the worst incident in any secular state of the world.[148] Besides, it proved to be a successful launching pad for the BJP as people lost their faith in the role of secularist political forces which not only had been criticized locally but also faced international criticism. Resultantly, the rightist political forces under the philosophy of Hindutva captured the majority in 1996 elections. It made life hard for the secular forces to revive as they also mandated for the next term till 2004.[149]

To revitalize the fear among the minorities, Hindutva replicated its violent image exactly after a decade in 1992 incident. Gujarat, which is considered to be the laboratory for Hindu Jihad, was the place for Hindutva demonstration. The Gujarat Riots of 2002 started when Hindus, after returning from the celebrations held in connection with the Babri mosque demolition, were burnt alive in the train. The Muslims were blamed for the incident. Thus, Muslims once again had to bear the violence of the Hindu fanatics. The incident was regarded as matchless in the history of violence in India as the state machinery was in the hands of BJP. Narender Singh Modi, then Chief Minister of Gujarat, gave free hand to those fanatics and assisted in their violent actions. This resulted in the worst anti-minority activity in which more than fourteen hundred Muslims were brutally killed. It was also named as the first holocaust of 21st century. However, Hindu named it the start of Hindu Jihad exclusively adopted to wash out the fear of Muslims from the hearts of their community. The policy of Hindutva was not only against the Muslim community of the country but also targeted almost all the minorities of the country. Sikhs had experienced it in 1980s and Christians in 1990s.

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[148]Mani Shankar Aiyar, *India's Destiny: Secularism or Hindutva*, in *Current Domestic Policy Challenges and Prospects in South Asia*, Islamabad: Institute of Regional Studies, 2005, p.1

[149] Ibid. 1-2

The reason behind this anti-minority policy of Hindutva is held that minorities are the only hurdle in the way to achieve its dream i.e. to develop India into Hindu State (Hindu Rashtra). However, the secularists and critiques of India Secularism consider Hindutva to be the hurdle in the way of Indian secularism.[150]

5.2.3 Politics of Religious Parties and Organizations

The most dangerous threat to Indian secularism is regarded to be the presence and active participation of the rightwing political parties in its mainstream politics in the shape of BJP, Akali Dal, J.I (Hind), and J.K.L.F. This does not end here as there is also a long list of religious organizations that make their presence felt by actively participating in the mainstream politics of the country. While briefly highlighting their role in Indian polity, one can easily conclude how it created threats in the path of secularism.[151]

On the basis of its origin and proficiency, R.S.S is dealt first in the list of discussion. It was founded by Dr K.B Hedegwar, who was inspired from B.G Tilak, as a Hindu scouting organization. He took it as a vehicle to fulfill his mission of life i.e. to train deeply downtrodden and confused youth of Hindu community and convert them into a united, active, and aggressive individuals. He adopted this aggressive approach because Hindus, throughout their history, had been ruled by the outsiders who were less in number as compared to them. He gathered youngsters of his community in the prime of their age and they were trained physically and emotionally motivated by the religious songs. Besides, uniformity in their uniform was maintained in order to implant unity among them.[152]

[150]P.M Kamath, *Secular Democracy in India: The Domestic and Regional Challenges*, in *Current Domestic Policy Challenges and Prospects in South Asia*, Islamabad: Institute of Regional Studies, 2005, p. 90.
[151]Irfan, Engineer. *Hindutva and Indian Democracy, in Current Domestic Policy Challenges and Prospects in South Asia*, Islamabad: Institute of Regional Studies, 2005, pp. 44-47.

[152]Ibid, 35-36.

These trained youngsters then used to perform their skills publically in various festivals of their community. Consequently, within no time, the organizations took its roots in the whole country, as each member had to pull at least five members with himself. Moreover, among the Hindus, affiliation with the organization was regarded as the matter of pride for the family. This organization also worked as a tool of socialization among the members. Founded as a scouting organization, one could hardly believe that it would become a mother institution for all religious organizations of the country.[153]

After independence, RSS transformed into a vibrant organization having its membership spread all over the India. The assassination of M.K Gandhi paralyzed the activities of the organization (RSS) on the ground that the assassin, Nathuram Godse, belonged to it. However, the period was lasted not more than a year and a half. During that period, it continued its social work among Hindu community and supported those Hindus who suffered from the riots inflicted after Independence. By gaining the sympathies of the masses, its status was restored quickly. However, after independence, they have to remodel their role in the secular India as her secular status was the main bottle neck in the way of its growth. They coined the philosophy of Hindutva to legitimize their presence amongst the masses. Under this philosophy, their basic aim was to convert India into Hindu Rashtra (Hindu State). Although, they did not participate directly in the politics but it acted as an incubator for the leadership of the right wing. Among them, L.K Advani and A.B Vajpayee are the prominent personalities.[154]

Beside, RSS, VHP also came to the limelight as a result of meeting held at Mumbai (formerly Bombay), in 1964 under the leadership of RSS. Despite the fact that it is the brainchild of RSS, it enjoys the status of an autonomous organization in theory but in practice it

[153] J.A. Curran Jr, *Militant Hinduism in Indian Politics: A Study of RSS,* New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1951, pp. 44-46.
[154]Nancy Auer Falk, *Living Hinduism*, Canada: Thomson Wadsworth, 2006, pp. 282-283.

completely operates under the umbrella of RSS. The duties assigned to VHP were to promote the teachings of Hinduism and unify the community by observing the holy festivals. The recent addition to the list of Hindu religious organizations is that of BJP which was founded in 1984. Moreover, it is considered as the rebirth of Jansangh, the political wing of Hindutva, which adopted a new label in the name of BJP. The year 1996 is a memorable year for those organizations as BJP emerged as the majority party in the secular politics of India and re-elected in 1999 for the second term and enjoyed power till 2004.[155]

Here the question arises why their presence is considered as a challenge to Indian secularism. In a way of explanation, there is nothing wrong in the presence of these political groups as secularism ensures social, political and religious freedom. However, the problem emerges when religion is politicized. This politicization of religion is contravene to secularism altogether. Their presence, therefore, in Indian polity is threat to secularism as they promote their own agenda i.e. religious obscurantism against the minorities. This approach makes them controversial because secularism never legitimizes the promotion of one's' religion at the cost of others' religion. These anti-minorities activities paved the way for the emergence of militancy. The Sikhs militancy in the Punjab and the Muslims separatist movement in Kashmir are some of the worst examples.[156]

5.2.4 Regional Challenges to Indian Secularism

India, geographically as well as population wise, is the largest country of South Asia. It shares its borders with almost all the countries of the region. But the uniqueness of its geography lies in the fact that none of its neighbors shares borders with each other. India is the land of multi religions. On account of its diversity in religions, it, maintains friendly

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[155]Charles Hauss, *Comparative Politics, Domestic Responses to Global Challenges*, Canada: Thomson Wadsworth Canada, 2008, p. 351.
[156]P.M Kamath, *Secular Democracy in India: The Domestic and Regional Challenges, in Current Domestic Policy Challenges and Prospects in South Asia*, Islamabad: Institute of Regional Studies, 2005, p. 35.

relations with all these countries. Moreover, it is advantageous to develop a religious harmony in the country. These religious spillovers create the bond of interdependence among these nations. As the people of this part of the world have strong affiliation with their religions, it is considered the only tool to rule and command their social as well as political life.

This religious homogeneity of India makes the relations so fragile that any mishap in India possesses implications for its neighbors and vice versa because religion plays a magnetic role among its followers irrespective of the boundaries of their states. However, secularism points to a religion free society. It nurtures well in such a society. This scenario poses threat to Indian secularism as it possesses the largest share of the religious community of its neighbor. Besides, all its neighbors have their respective state religions. The secularism not only needs national environment but also regional atmosphere to grow up. Non-secular regional atmosphere, therefore, inflicts a serious challenge to the Indian secularism.[157]

Another serious regional threat to the Indian secularism is of increased extremism in the region. Extremism has ancient link with the region as was found in the era of cold war when both the titans i.e. the USA and the USSR were engaged with one another on various grounds. Heavy losses were levied at South Asia during the USA and the USSR proxy war in Afghanistan in 1979. The USA regarded it an opportunity to take revenge of what it had lost in Vietnam at the hands of the USSR. The region was indoctrinated against the communist philosophy of the USSR. Moreover, it was taught to be assumed the philosophy as a system that preaches the message of a godless society. The Muslims from all over the world were

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[157]Ibid. 38

gathered against communism in Afghanistan to safeguard their religion from the oppressor. This strategy of the USA was met with success and resulted in the disintegration of USSR.[158]

The problems for India emerged after the end of cold war when Pakistan was the frontline state of the war and was considered as the most allied of all the allies. The USA, after achieving its goal, left the region without determining the future role of those holy warriors. Moreover, Pakistan did not deal appropriately with the remains of the war. Thus, Jihadis were left on their own as they had no other skills except for what they had been trained. However, Kashmir, a disputed area between India and Pakistan, was a hot bed for such warriors. Resultantly, it received the bulk of them. Pakistan also provided them with safe passage to perform their activities in that region. Their activities resulted in the anti-minorities operations of Indian Army which caused disturbance in the region.[159]

This state of affairs not only posed threats to the Indian secularism but also increased hostility between the two largest states of the region. This hostility is, therefore, the major regional threat to Indian secularism. Moreover, Bangladesh is also moving towards confessional politics as J.I shares a strong coalition partnership with the government. The communal violence in Sri Lanka in the past was also linked with Indian interference. India suffered from losses when Rajiv Gandhi was blown up by a Tamil Lady Suicide Bomber during his election campaign in 1991. His policy shift towards Sri Lanka is determined to be the main reason of his killing as it was resented among the Tamil community of the land.[160]

5.3 Opportunities of Indian Secularism

Like all other secular states, India is not an exception and has to cover a lot of distance to minimize the gap between theory and practice in her secular status. India- the most populous

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[158] Ibid, p.39
[159]Charles Hauss, *Comparative Politics, Domestic Responses to Global Challenges*, Canada: Thomson Wadsworth Canada, 2008, p.361.
[160] Ibid. 360-362

state- has a pluralist society which possesses the potential of being secular could not be overlooked. The secularism has provided India with an opportunity to develop her into a stable democracy and enjoy the status of a functional democracy. Besides, she has also achieved remarkable milestones in economic field and maintained stable economic growth rate for years. Moreover, it is also the largest market for international investors and have a large community of over thirteen crore community of the middle class. Except the occurrence of some tragic incidents, India has utilized her diversity as a strengthening factor among her communities. The credit for all those achievements goes to her strong belief in secularism.

5.3.1 Democracy in India

The secularism has made it possible for India to remain a functional democracy since independence. There is no alternative to democracy there. She stands in sharp contrast to the regional states most of which have suffered from continuous military intervention and remained under the grip of dictatorship. On the other hand, Indian polity has no such tradition. Military generals could have differences with the political leadership but they could never resort to any adventurism. They have been confined to barracks through constitutional limitations. It is, therefore, safe like the USA or U.K to experience any military intervention.[161]

Despite the fact that India has remained one party dominant polity, this feature was evaporated after the emergence of BJP. The only setback that democracy had ever received was when Indra Gandhi imposed emergency in the Punjab from 1975-77. Moreover, in the past, ethnic violence, off and on, struck India. The Sikh militancy in the Punjab, the issues of tribal people both in eastern and western parts, Assames and Gorkhas of Western Bengal, and

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[161]Robert. W Stern. *Democracy and Dictatorship In South Asia.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 76.

last but not the least, the separatist movement of Kashmir had been the worst examples of ethnic violence. All those sorry episodes were tackled and being tackled sagaciously by the democratic leadership of the country. The country had to bear the issue of communalism but it did not affect any demand for alternative to democracy and people had shown full faith in it. [162]

Here the question arises how India has successfully launched their democratic setup in the presence of such challenging circumstances. Democracy needs two variables in order to flourish i.e. legitimacy and the effectiveness of the government. The Indian democracy fulfills both the variables. One can, therefore, conclude that its future is safe and promising. The Indian secularism adapted itself to the liberalist policy of the government. There is polarization in the society but the legitimacy of the government overcomes it efficiently and ensures safe future for the democracy in the country. Economic stability, although, has not addressed the major issues of the Janta so far but even then the people have faith in it as it is at least on the right track. [163]

Democracy in India still has to cover a lot of distance to reach to its ideal form. It is an evolutionary phenomenon. It, therefore, needs time to develop. Despite being in infancy, it is regarded as the world's largest democracy in this age of globalization. However, people should take care while comparing it with the Western democracies such as the USA and U.K because these countries took centuries to have their ideal democratic setup. In short, India is a newly born state with multi-featured society which poses a multitude of challenges to its democratic setup but even then it has successfully maintained its position. [164]

[162]Ibid. 76-77
[163]Charles Hauss, *Comparative Politics, Domestic Responses to Global Challenges*. Canada: Thomson Wadsworth Canada, 2008, p. 361.
[164] Ibid

5.3.2 Economic Stability

Prior to 1980s, Indian economy used to be nationalized one. The basic purpose of a state economy is to reduce poverty and increase the growth rate of the country. This nationalized policy was regarded as the policy to pamper the majority (Hindus) and mostly the upper castes. This discrimination was felt by Rajiv Gandhi who had the experience of developed societies during his stay abroad. He, along with his new team, took a complete U-turn in the economic policy of the country and changed the policy of his predecessors being followed. Deeply influenced by the policy of liberalization, he made India an open market through the process of privatization that proved to be the turning point in the present economic status of the country. Although it did not achieve its desired results in the beginning, yet it got the popularity of the masses.[165]

The policy of liberalization ensured the masses a secure future. It opened its account when the Punjab government supported the Green Revolution that changed the fate of the people. Technological development of India is also unmatchable especially in the field of information technology i.e. software technology. Moreover, it has also achieved the place amongst the world seven nuclear states and has an advanced defence system. Although, economically, India did not achieve its milestones yet there are some positive signs of its improvements as it has occupied a large chunk of the middle class that is on increase with each passing year. The stable growth rate (6-7 %) of the country, since last two decades, has satisfied the Janta (people) as it has been put on the right track. On micro level, it has launched programs like IRDP which introduced the rural people to the modern technological trainings in the field of agriculture.[166]

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[165]Ibid. 361-362
[166]*The Indian Economy Review 2010*, (http://www.iipmthinktank.com) accessed on 24, January 2011.

In the modern world, on account of its liberal economy, India has attracted a huge bulk of foreign investors who find their capital secured here. The credit for all this economic stability and boom goes to the visionary leadership of Rajiv Gandhi and his new team who gave a completely new outlook to the Indian economy. He threw away the close economic system and adopted the open economic setup in line with the principles and demands of the globalized and modern world. As a result, India is ranked amongst the world growing and stable economies as it has maintained its growth rate of 7% for more than a decade.[167]

There are two men behind this economic boom of Indian economy i.e. Manmohan Singh and P. Chidambaram. It was on account of his contributions that the INC offered premiership to Manmohan Singh when it assumed power in the Lok Sabha. The liberalization of Indian economy performed wonders in the shape of foreign investment of $4 billion in the 1990s it provided solid foundation to the economy of the state. The most benefitted industry from this entire economic boom was of the industry of Information Technology. It set milestones in the software sector of IT industry. As a result, it is ranked as one of the best in the IT industry of the world. The city of Bangalore is converted into the world largest IT city that generated jobs for two hundred thousand IT professionals.[168]

5.3.3 International Prestige

As it is the home to one third of the world population, the 21st century is regarded as the century of Asia. The major actors, that would outshine the century, would have been none other than India and China. The population of both the countries, if calculated together, is more than 2.5 billion. This makes them the center of gravity for the foreign investors. With the end of cold war, world moved towards globalization. Keeping in view the demand of the

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[167]Charles Hauss, *Comparative Politics, Domestic Responses to Global Challenges*. Canada: Thomson Wadsworth Canada, 2008, p.362.
[168] Ibid

world, the leaders of India planned their strategy as to how they would make their presence felt at domestic as well as global level. As India moved one step ahead of her aim -to become a regional power, now she is thinking to take a leading role at the global level.[169] It was Rajiv Gandhi who, along with his new team comprising of experienced politicians and technocrats like P.M Chidambaram and Manmohan Singh, adopted a completely new approach to the economic philosophy of his predecessors and made India an open economy. Prior to that, India used to be a closed economy with nationalized industries that failed to address the main issues of economy. India, after adopting an open economy and with the adoption of privatization, received a multitude of foreign investors who wanted to capture her market of huge consumers. As a result, India maintained her growth rate for more than a decade. The global importance of India was felt for two reasons. One was its strong democratic setup which earned her the title of the world largest democracy and the second one was its economic stability.[170]

India's aim, to be an active international actor, has its roots since Independence. The first Prime Minister, Nehru prophesied that India, geographically and population wise being a large country with diverse nature and ancient history, had the full potential to become a prominent international actor. Immediately after Independence, the leaders of the country adopted both realists and idealists approach presenting India before the world as a soft power. It was evident during the era of cold war when the world was split into two blocks i.e. communism and capitalism. India, rather than joining any block, chose to be impartial in this clash of ideas. However, it became a leading figure in the NAM which exhibited her desire to be the world leader of the future and she did not want to spoil her relations with any of the world powerful states. It was the 1998 nuclear tests of India that attracted international

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[169]Ummu Salma Bava, *India Role in Emerging World Order*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006, p.1.

[170]*The Indian Economy Review 2010*, Quarterly Issue, Volume: (3), Issue 31, March 2010, (www.iipmthinktank.com), accessed on 24, January 2011.

attention towards her. Moreover, the sound foreign relations, strong political and democratic culture, and peaceful internal law and order situation earned her the label of being a responsible nuclear power.[171]

Moreover, on economic front, the country still has to cover a lot of distance to be included in the ranks of developed countries as, at international level, India still is kept in the league of under-developed countries. However, its current track of economy is heading toward right direction while looking at its strong legal structure, democratic culture, booming information technology sector, banking system, highly skilled manpower, and peaceful atmosphere for foreign investors. This all would make her to be a world icon in future. But India has to deal with few regional powers (China and Japan) that have the capacity to become strong contenders to challenge its status in the region.[172]

5.4 Conclusion

Secularism -a fundamental principle of Indian constitution- has to face various threats on regular intervals. Secularism is the philosophy that separates religion and politics and makes the religion as one's personal matter. The application of this theory of secularism has to go through thorny path in order to reach its final destination. The problems created in its path are related to the people attachment with their respective religions as they command their social, political and economic aspects of life. To separate religion from the politics is a daunting task India has to deal with after adopting a secular status. The continued anti-secular activities i.e. communalism, extremism of the majority, separatist movements, insecurity among minority

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[171]Jacques E. C. Hymans, India between Transition: India between "Soft State" and "Soft Power" 2010 (http://casi.ssc.upenn.edu/iit/hymans), accessed on 24, January 2011.
[172]Ummu Salma Bava, *India Role in Emerging World Order*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 2-3.

and the presence of religious political parties and organizations, have posed internal as well as external challenges to Indian secularism.

Besides these serious challenges, secularism has provided India with a lot of opportunities. It has paved the way for the progress of the state in this globalized world. It has provided an opportunity to India to remain a functional democracy throughout her history and never allowed any undemocratic adventurism and has earned her the title of the world largest democracy. As it is said that economic prosperity leads towards democracy and vice versa, this proved to be correct in the case of India. Because of her stable democracy, her economy flourished to such an extent that for more than a decade she maintained her growth rate. It is on account of this secular nature that she has turned her diversity into unity. All these contributed towards her current international prestige among the major actors of international politics.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

6.1 Findings

After an in-depth analysis of the triadic relationship of religion, secularism and politics in India, it is concluded that the stated three are not only inter-linked but are also of immense significance to Indian politics as well as to the common good of Indian public. The common conception about religion in India is such that religious politics is dangerous. It is so because they had the worst experience of the religion-based politics. As an empirical example as showed that M K Gandhi fell prey to this religious fanaticism when he was assassinated by a Hindu religious fanatic on account of showing sympathy with Pakistan or more specifically with the Muslims. As a matter of fact, he had declared hunger strike over the unjust distribution of assets between India and Pakistan right after Independence. Similarly, the killing of Indra Gandhi at the hands of her Sikh bodyguard, and the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi by a Tamil suicide bomber are the examples of religious extremism and victimization. It is, therefore, concluded that as far as India is concerned, the politics of religion kills. Despite this worst face of religion, it even then remains to be the integral part of the public life in India. Hinduism, the local religion of the land, preaches the message of equal respect for all the religions. The reason behind this teaching is held that India historically used to be the land of multi-religions. Moreover, Hinduism in itself has pluralistic nature which is evident from the fact that its followers worship more than 33,000,000 gods and goddesses. This multi-religious feature of the Indian society was further enhanced with the introduction of Islam in the region. It attracted a large number of the deprived class of the Hindu society who used to feel alienation in the society. However, Islam discarded their depravity and granted them equal status. This was how Islam strengthened its roots in the

sub- continent. A new turret was added to this religiously enriched society of India in the shape of Christianity after the arrival of the British in the region.

The importance of religion in Indian society is so deeply rooted that it could not be replaced by any imported philosophy like that of secularism which preaches the separation of religion and politics. However, the founding fathers of India used to differ in their approach towards religion role in politics. Gandhi was against the complete divorce of religion and politics as he used to believe in the philosophy that religion could not be separated from politics and those who sought the separation did not know what religion was. However, on the other hand, Nehru was in favor of the western secularism to be adopted in its letter and spirit. He used to represent the Atheist School of Thought as he believed that Indian secularism had no danger from any quarter of minorities but it harbored fears from the majority Hindu extremists. Moreover, any space left for the role of religion in politics would be exploited altogether by them. Both Gandhi and Nehru were proved correct of what they had prophesized by the analysis of Indian society as religion had always played a dominant role in its politics throughout its history in the shape of communalism and it is hard to be alienated from the politics. Hindu extremism against the minorities of the country has left deep scars on the face of Indian secularism. The horrible show of this religious extremism in Indian history, on grand scale, was seen in the era of 1990s under the full support of both the secularist and the right wing political parties. Their worship places were targeted and anti-minority campaigns were launched. In such state of affairs, the Muslims received the brunt of their religious obscurantism and extremism. The Babri Mosque was demolished as a result of one such religious madness. This exposed the worst picture of Indian politics before the world. It was considered as the revival of confessional politics (politics of religion) in the politics of India. This was how BJP became the majority party of India for two consecutive terms (1996-2004).

All the minorities of the country feel insecure in the presence of the hegemony of the majority i.e. Hindus. Moreover, they have the feelings that they could be overrun for the sins they committed or vice versa. This role of religion could easily be measured in the presence of religious political parties and organizations and their active participation in the politics of India. This rebirth of religion in Indian politics was imminent when people mandated the religious political parties against the leftist one. Moreover, the issue of communalism also reflects the role of religion in its politics. It has faced the communal violence intermittently since its birth. This prevalence of communal violence gave birth to the sense of insecurity among the minorities who have been targeted just on the grounds of their religious affiliation. This resulted into the various separatist movements initiated purely on religious basis among the Sikhs in the Punjab and the Muslims in Kashmir who demanded separation in the presence of such state sponsored violence. This religious upsurge in India was also linked with the reemergence of the role of religion in the politics of the world.

As far as the philosophy of secularism in Indian politics is concerned, it had to go through metamorphoses with regard to its meaning. Although it is an imported philosophy but it was not adopted on the principles of its version in the West which stresses the complete separation of church and politics. India adopted it as a political philosophy rather than a philosophical one. Its purpose was not to establish an irreligious society rather to make political arrangements for the religious communities of the land. It was, therefore, after partition that a large number of Muslims as well as Christians and Sikhs chose to live in India as equal rights under the philosophy of secularism were ensured. That was the major reason that the framers of the Indian constitution kept the plurality of Indian society in view while framing its constitution. Hence, with the adoption of secular status, no religion was declared as official religion of the state and everyone was given freedom to follow the religion of his/her choice.

Although politically India is a secular state, yet religion has always remained a dominant factor in her politics. Here, the clash is not between the secularists and religious authorities but between the secularists and the communalists. The communal forces use religion as a tool to gain political power. Theoretically, Indian secularism grants equal status and respect to all religions and rejects interference of religion in politics. Constitutionally, the religious rights of the people are safeguarded and no discrimination should be done on the basis of one's religion, culture, or gender accordingly. Similarly, the constitution of India grants the right to each individual to follow the religion of his/her choice. Theoretically, all those privileges given present a bright and positive image of the Indian secularism but there exists a gap between theory and practice. This gap is evident from the incidents that occur from time to time in Indian history and which has eroded its basic aim i.e. negation of religion's role in politics and religious extremism. Religion has played a decisive role in decision making in the politics of the state. To support the argument, Indra Gandhi's support to Zail Singh for the post of President could be referred to. The basic aim behind this move was to weaken or paralyze the Sikh separatist movement. Moreover, making him the president, the Sikh community would not feel alienated in the society. So the move was deliberate in order to win the sympathies of this particular religious community rather than Zail Singh had deserved that slot. Similarly, BJP government imitated her when it installed Abdul Kalam as the President. The only aim behind this act was to win the support of Muslims as they were strongly opposed to it because of the Gujarat incident that was initiated and operated under the high command of BJP.

The other anti-secular feature of Indian political system revolves around the disunity between the majority and minority. It is one of the worst aspects of her political system. However, this division between them is based not on political grounds like that of any other democratic countries of the world, but is based purely on religious footings. This unique

feature of Indian secularism is beautifully concluded by Aloo. J Dastur, a member of minority commission, while delivering speech on integration, in these words: "our political class pursues policies and programs that keep us partitioned into several minorities."[173] Religion sentiments are exploited exclusively for gaining political power. As by using this trump card i.e. religion, one can easily win the sympathies of the adherents of that particular religion. All these suggest that Indian secularism has to counter internal as well as external challenges.

Domestically, Indian secularism has been challenged on various fronts. The first among the list of challenges is the political mobilization which is purely done on religion basis. Religion is held in high esteem during the elections campaigns and all ideas of the electorates flow from it as it is deeply rooted in the lives of the masses. As a result, people are emotionally driven and the vote bank of the religious community is manipulated by the promises made. The worst picture of this type of politics is found in the era of 1990s when all the political parties, either belonging to the right or the left wing, adopted that singular agenda in order to have the vote bank of Hindu majority. BJP was the active participant in the Ayodhya Crisis. Moreover, the Congress, a secularist political party, had also put its share in the issue while supporting Vishwa Hindu Parishad, a religious political organization, in the past but the Congress failed to exploit the issue in its own favor as BJP in league with its allies clinched majority in the elections of 1996 and became a majority political party of Indian political system. It gave tough time to the INC to regain its status as the majority party of the country. The BJP again, in 2000, got the popular support of Indian Janta for the second term in office that lasted till 2004. The emergence of the confessional politics in the mainstream politics of India were alarming signs not only for the Indian National Congress but also for the secular status of the country. This political change in India was the result of the change in global politics as religion made a comeback in politics of the world. However, this regeneration was

[173]P.M Kamath, *Secular Democracy in India: The Domestic and Regional Challenges. Current Domestic Policy Challenges and Prospects in South Asia,* Islamabad: Institute of Regional Studies, 2005, p.33.

political in nature. Besides the global change, the policy shift of Congress from the cherished philosophy i.e. secularism was also held to be the reason that compelled Indian people to look for its alternative i.e. confessional politics. India has to adopt secularism in its true essence if it wants to maintain its image globally as well as domestically.

The main feature of any secular society is the equality of the people. As far as the Indian secularism is concerned, it has been challenged constitutionally as it has awarded special privileges to the citizens of Kashmir. The religion should not be the standard for giving benefits to any religious community. Such special arrangements would generate feelings of degradation in that vary community. This makeup would contribute towards the disintegration of the country as the individuals of that community are not kept on equal footings with the others in the society, and the separation would generate negative feelings in them. Besides, as India is pluralistic in nature in terms of languages, religions, castes, and culture, it would give birth to the sentiments of separation among other communities. The worst example of this was seen in 1980s when the Sikh dominant region of the Punjab had made the demand for their separate homeland (Khalistan) as they felt deprived in the Hindu dominant society of India. However, this demand was eradicated in time but in Kashmir this demand is as vibrant as it was at the time of Independence.

The other anti-secular feature of Indian constitution which provides safeguard to the establishment of religious educational institutions is also a matter of deep concern. However, secularism ensures religious equality but not at the cost of defacing the actual face of the society. The freedom to develop religious institutions and to establish separate civil courts for different religious communities of the country are the weak points of Indian constitution that are quite often criticized by the critics of Indian secularism.

Besides its dark aspects, Indian secularism also provides a lot of opportunities to the pluralist society of India. In a way of explanation, it helped establish a strong democratic culture in the state. India remains to be the functional democracy since its birth. However, it experienced emergency for short period when Indra Gandhi imposed it in the Punjab. To avoid its repetition, the 44th amendment to the constitution was made. The central thought of this amendment was to block the way of emergency imposed on ethnic or religious grounds. Although democracy has not yet delivered as was promised to, yet the Indian people do not demand for any alternative to the system. This continuity of democracy has earned India regional popularity as well as international fame as India is regarded to be the world's largest democracy.

Economy of India another sector that flourished under the umbrella of secularism. Historically, Indian economy used to be a closed one as all the industries remained in the hands of the state. Among the various sectors, agriculture was the major source of economy. With the emergence of globalization, India could not keep itself separated from the world. Rajiv Gandhi, with his team, took a complete new approach and made India an open economy. As a result, privatization on large-scale was adopted in the state. This policy shift did perform wonders as India today world it is ranked among the largest and stable economies of the world and has maintained its growth rate of 6-7% since last two decades.

Secularism has left positive impacts on the plural society of the country as it has used its diversity to strengthen its unity. It provides everyone with equal opportunity to excel according to his/her ability irrespective of his/her religious, lingual or cultural background. The feature of equality is evident from the fact that the most powerful political office i.e. Premiership is currently held by a Sikh. Moreover, the richest person of India, Azim Premji belongs to Muslim community and the most glaring example could be seen in the popular entertainment industry of the country led by the stardom of the Muslim actors. They are loved

and praised by all the communities of the country. The other popular figure in the shape of Abdul Kalam, the architect of Indian Nuclear Program, also belongs to the Muslim community.

All these made the way possible for India to earn the status of prestige at International level. However, it has to cover a lot of distance to be ranked among the developed countries of the world. But the direction in which India is heading signifies its bright future. It has excelled in the field of software technology as well as in the field of missile technology and has successfully launched missiles of all ranges. Moreover, it is also the home of huge consumer market that attracts foreign investors and has a large number of skilled manpower.

6.2 Recommendations

To create harmonious and viable link among religion, secularism and politics, the suggestions given below are inevitable to be followed in their letter and spirit:

Developing Religious Equality

India is religiously a plural society. It should develop harmonious relation among all the religions of its society. This harmony could not be achieved unless and until the element of religious equality is implemented in the state. It declared itself to be a secular state. The basic purpose behind this declaration was to create a religion free society. But there are some unique dimensions of the Indian secularism i.e. to develop the element of tolerance and religious equality in the society. However, there is a gap between theory and practice in religious freedom and equal treatment to all religions. In practice, fundamental rights of the people are frequently violated by the religion of the majority on the basis of their adherence to their respective religion in a shape of communal violence against the minorities. To

smoothly operate the machinery of the state, India has to ensure religious equality in practice in the society.

Inter-Faith Dialogue

Inter-faith dialogue, on regular intervals, is essential as religious harmony cannot be achieved or developed until the matters of differences among different religious community are brought to the table. Moreover, the majority people of India believe in the philosophy of tolerance and respect for all religions. However, it is the politicians who play with the emotions of the people and use them according to their own desires against each other. Majority of the people blindly follow their co-religionists without having the real knowledge of the matter. So dialogue among different communities would result in opening up the minds of the people about each other's religions and the issue of differences. These programs should be initiated at the grass root level and also needed to promote them at the national level as they would inculcate the element of nationalism and would discourage the element of religious affiliation. This would ultimately eradicate the gap in the society and would make it a peaceful and harmonious one.

Eradicating Minorities' Suppression

The increasing suppression of minorities is causing serious threat to the Indian secularism. It needs to be eliminated from the society. India has failed to stop the massacre of its minorities who have always fell prey to the religious obscurantisms of the Hindu majority. Moreover, their loyalties to the state are quite often suspected. That is why they have been subjected to violence. In secularism of the world, the concept of majority-minority is on political grounds rather than on religious ground. However, this concept is implied in India in terms of religion. It is misfortune of India that it could not separate religion and politics on account of its diversity. The major reason behind adopting secularist philosophy was to paralyze the role of

religion in politics but this has not been achieved as yet. The electioneering of all the major political parties of the country revolves around religion especially to manipulate minorities for votes. This majority minority controversy should be eliminated immediately as it challenges the basic concept of secularism.

Paralyzing the Role of Religious Political Parties & Organizations

The emerging role of religious political parties and organizations in Indian politics is also an alarming sign for Indian secularism to deal with. There is no such secular society in the world that permits religious political parties and organizations to operate independently and actively in the politics of the state. However, in India, they not only participate in the politics but also make their government at national level. The reason for their presence and popularity is held to be the people's devotion with their respective religions as they cannot alienate religion from their lives. Their presence is not an issue at all but the tactics they use to promote themselves are objectionable. They pursue one point agenda i.e. to suppress the minorities in order to gain the support of the majority i.e. Hindus. Secularism is not accustomed to such traditions as they are opposite to what it preaches.

Developing Friendly Relations with Neighbors

Lastly, India has the desire and capacity to become global power but this cannot be achieved unless and until it resolves its issues with its neighbors. Historically, India shares unfriendly relations with its neighbors especially with Pakistan as the former does not accept the later existence and the later is not ready to accept the hegemony of the former. For greater cause, India will have to resolve all those outstanding issues and develop harmonious relations with neighbors to strengthen its roots in the region. Internationally, the 21st century is considered as the century of Asia for various reasons. One among them is the magnitude of its population as it has 1/3rd of the total world population. India possesses a lion's share of the

total population of Asia. She can use it as a source to strengthen herself. She provides skilled manpower to the world and generates a good share of foreign exchange. The Indian desire to become a global power cannot be achieved until she develops friendly relations with her neighbors and also with regional powers i.e. China and Japan. By having their support and stability in the region, she would be in a better position to take on the world. However, any weakness on her part could be exploited and that position could be taken away by any other contestant of the region. Keeping in view her aims, India has to resolve those issues so that there might not be any hurdle in her way towards becoming a world leader.

APPENDICES

Table 1: Religious Composition of India

| Religious Composition	Population	Percentage
Hindus	827,578,868	80.5
Muslims	138,188,240	13.4
Christians	24,080,016	2.3
Sikhs	19,215,730	1.9
Buddhists	7,955,207	0.8
Jains	4,225,053	0.4
Other persuasions	6,639,626	0.6
Religions not stated	727,588	0.1
Total	1,028,610,328	100

Source: Census of India, 2001. Available: http://censusindia.gov.in/. [April 10, 2010].

Operationalization of Hindutva Philosophy
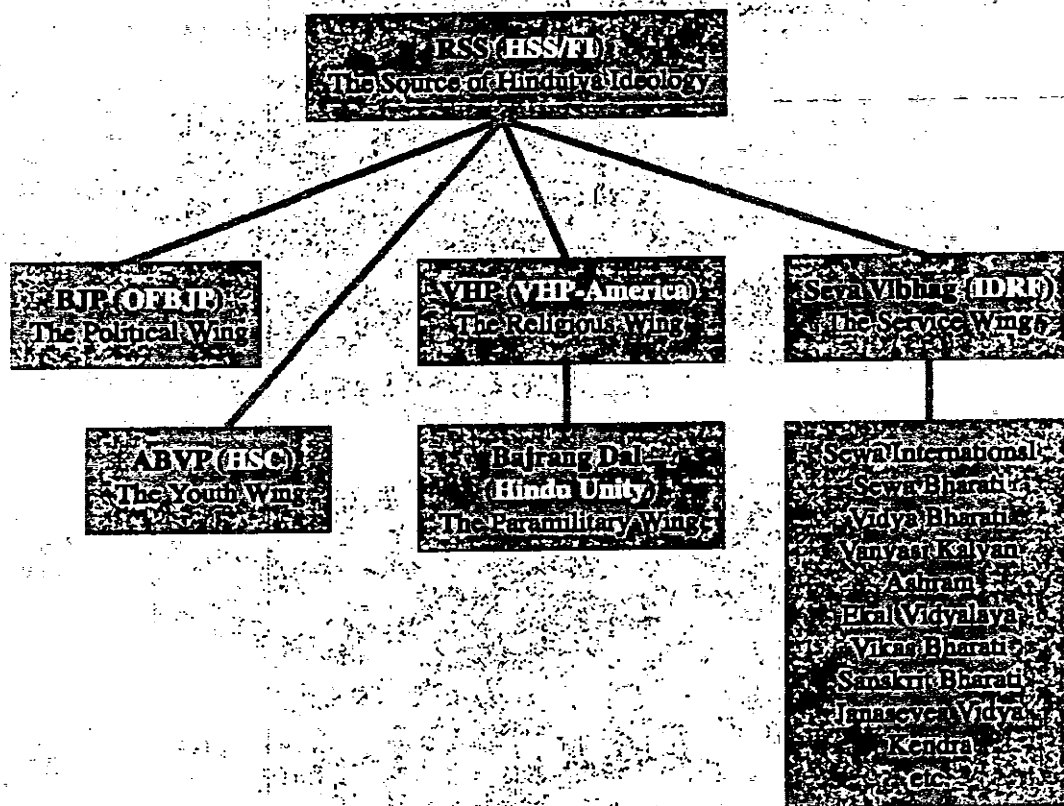
Source: Neil Gray, "Hindutva, *Modi and the Tehlka Tape: The Communal Threat to Indian Secularism,* Variant (32), Summer, 2008, p.24.

Pie-Chart 1: Religious Composition of India
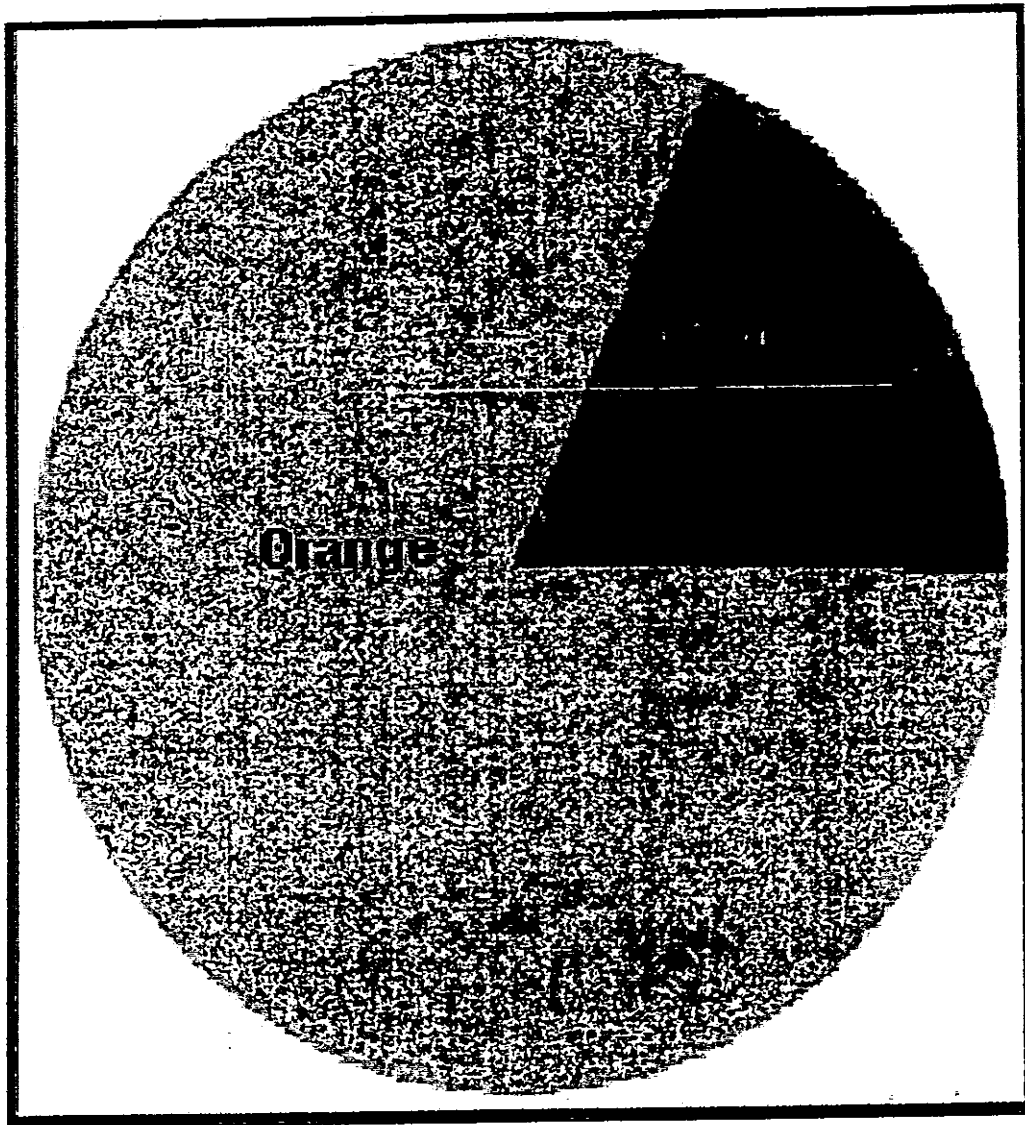
Key: Orange: Hinduism (80.5%), Green: Islam (13.4%), Purple: Christianity (2.3%),
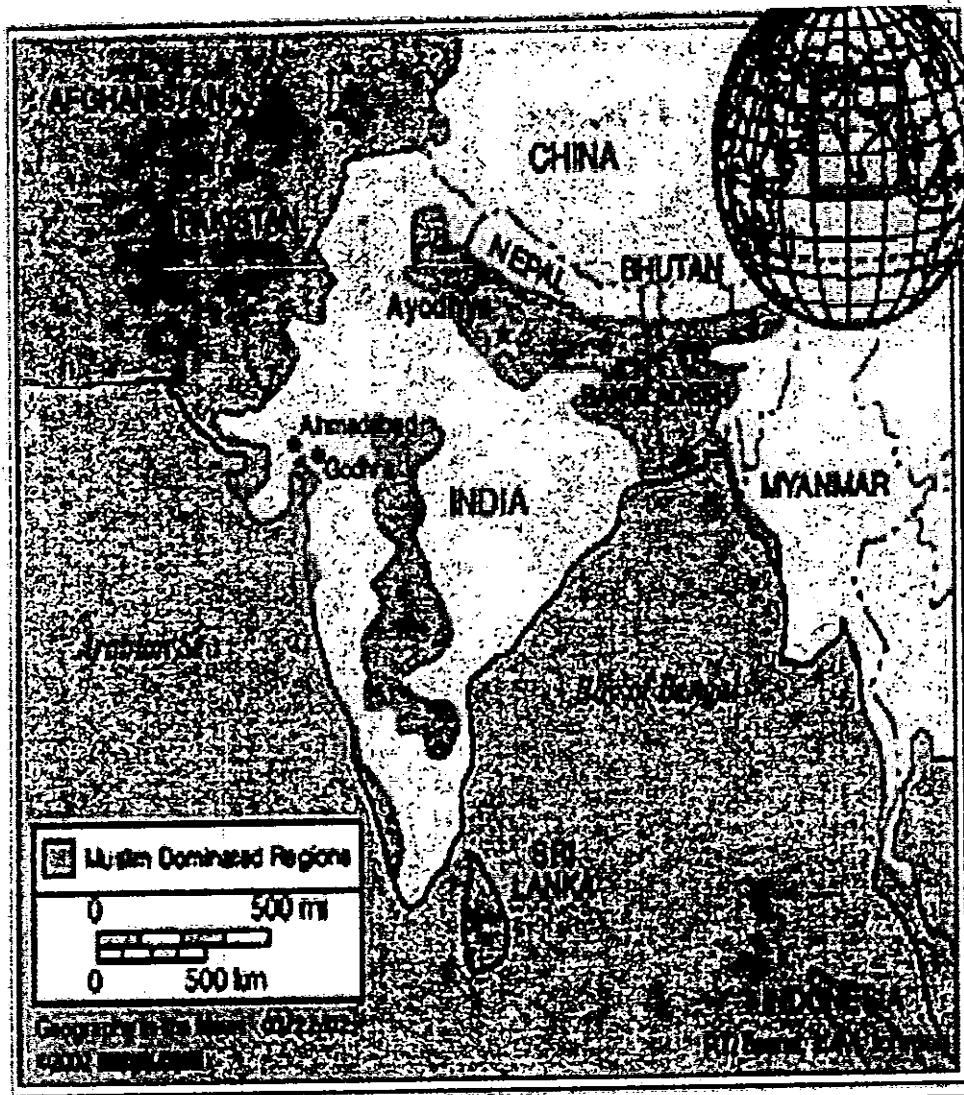Red: Sikhism (1.9%), Blue: Others (0.19%)
Source: Election Commission of India, 2009. Available: http://censusindia.gov.in.
[April 10, 2010].

Map 1: Religions in India
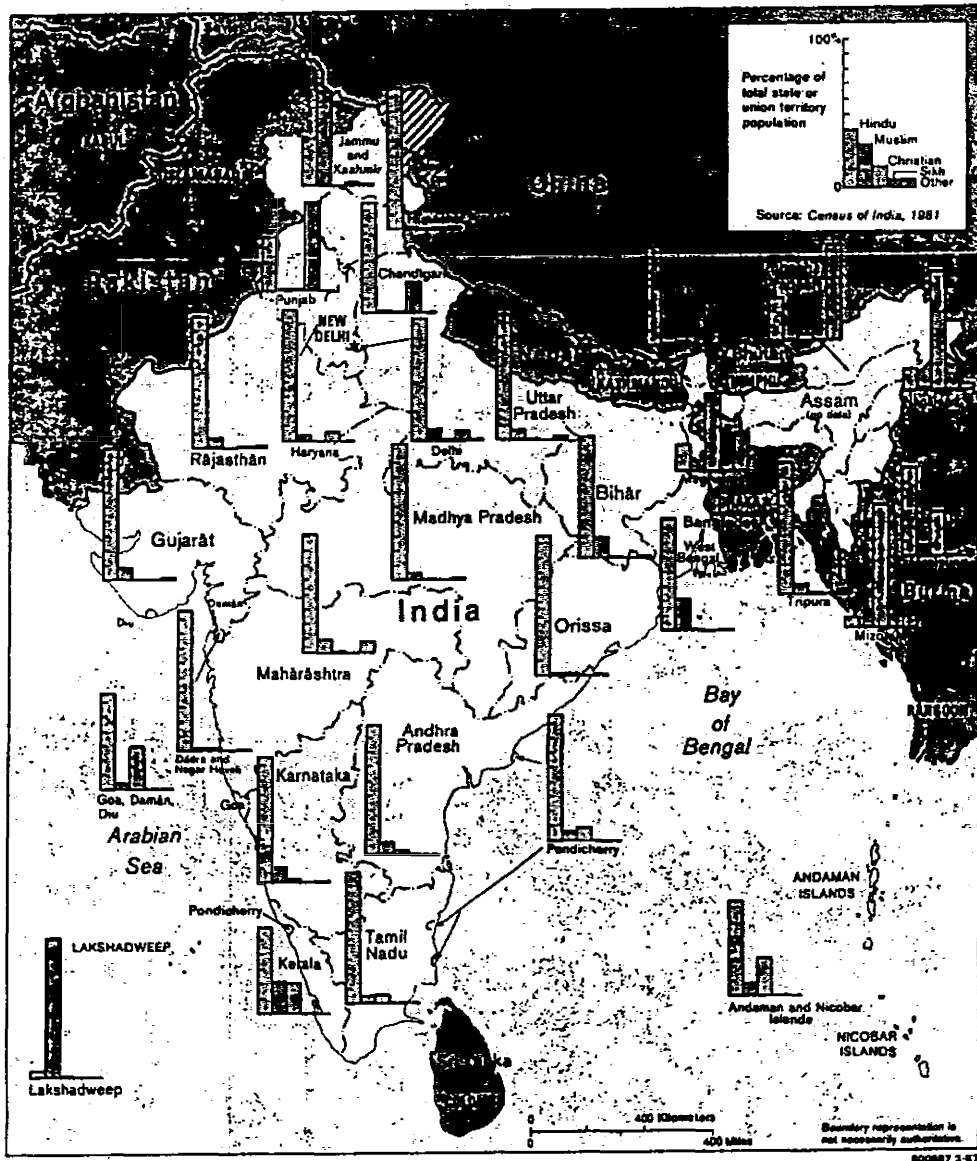
Map 2: Regional Distribution of India's Muslim Population

Map 3: BJP and Congress Constituencies in the 2009 State Elections
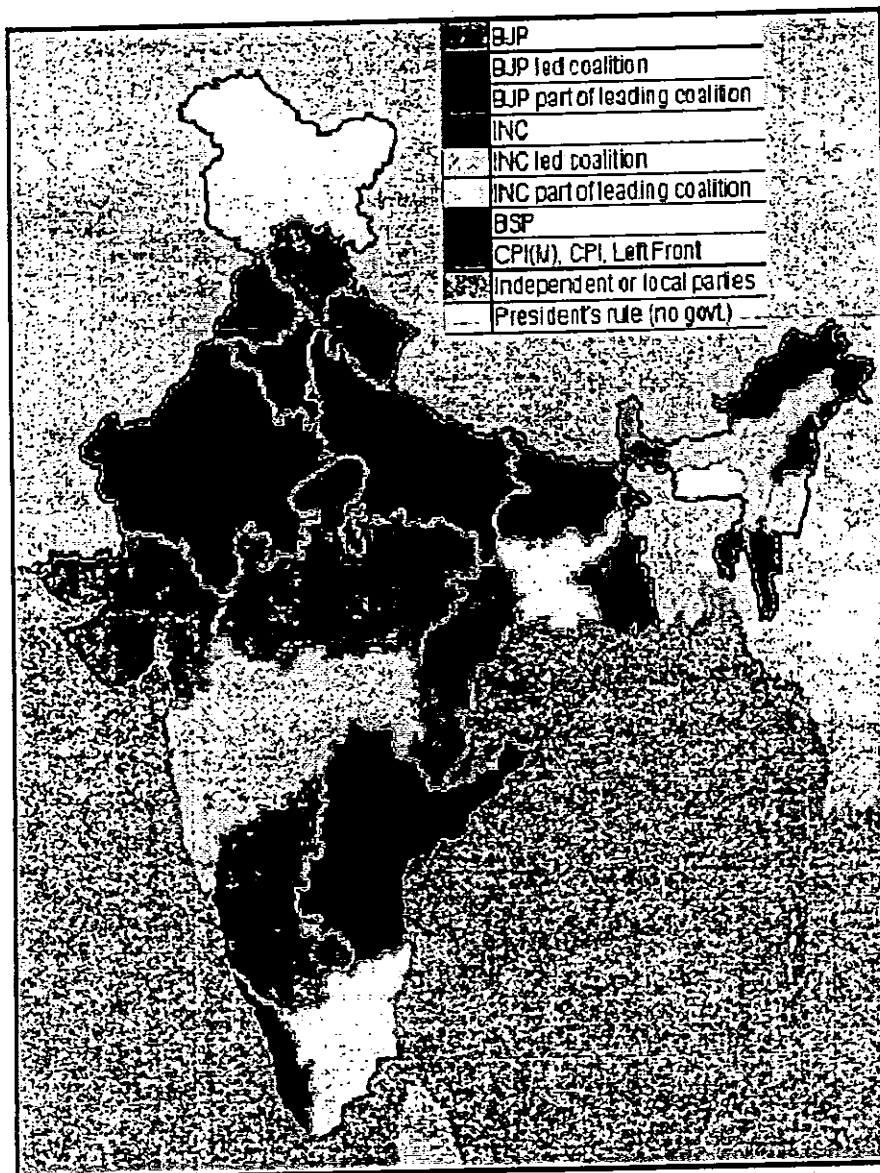
Source: Election Commission of India, 2009. Available:
http://eci.nic.in/eci_main/index.asp.
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