BLOCK 3
STATE AND SOCIETY: CONTESTING IDEOLOGIES

UNIT 12 COMMUNALISM*

Structure

12.0 OBJECTIVES

After you have studied this unit you should be able to understand:

- Describe fundamentalism

- Explain communalism with the help of relevant examples

- Indentify the characteristics of communalism

- Clarify what is secularism and how it works in India.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we begin by clarifying the basic concepts of fundamentalism, communalism and secularism. We then explain each of these basic concepts and expand on them. We take up first the concept of fundamentalism and describe it. Next we turn to communalism and note down the reasons for communal riots and examine their economic and social dimensions. This is followed by an analysis of inter-community dynamics.

Finally we turn to secularism which is seen, in some ways, as a panacea to fundamentalism and communalism. We examine some different views on secularism, including Gandhiji's viewpoint.

12.2 BASIC CONCEPTS

Let us put forth the basic concepts of our unit first.

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*Adapted from ESO 15, Unit: 32.

12.2.1 Fundamentalism

Fundamentalism is the first of our three concepts and it stresses the infallibility of a scripture (e.g. the Bible, the Granths, the Gita or the Quran) in all matters of faith and doctrine. The believers accept it as a literal historical record. The result is that a militant stand is taken by the followers; often preceded or followed by a desire for a separate homeland. At times, this too is taken as a prophecy in the scriptures. Fundamentalism thus separates a certain community from the mainstream. However, society, by its various arms (the police, army and so on), attempts to suppress or eliminate the fundamentalists. This is especially so when they begin acting outside of the law. Communalism is associated with eruption of violence and riots, these conflagrations may not have any particular aim or goal (apart from communal ascendancy or supremacy). Fundamentalism, however, is an organized, all encompassing movement which aims at promotion of societal goals specifically in the light of religious enshrinements. Its operational strategy includes peaceful as well as war-like uses and movements.

12.2.2 Communalism

While discussing the nature of politics in the new states of Africa and Asia, Clifford Geertz, an American anthropologist (1963 : 105-157), wrote, "When we speak of communalism in India we refer to religious contrasts, when we speak of it in Malaya we are mainly concerned with racial ones, and in the Congo with tribal ones". Here the significant link is between communal and political loyalties. Thus when we talk of India we are talking mainly of religion based oppositions. Communalism has been described as a sectarian exploitation of social traditions as a medium of political mobilization. This is done to punish the interests of the entrenched groups. Thus communalism is an ideology used to fulfill socio-eco-politico hopes of a community or social group. It requires proposals and programmes to ensure its very existence. These become active in phases of social change. Communalism arose in India during its colonial phase. Communal politics bases it strategies on religion and tradition. The interpretation of history is for purposes of mobilisation. Communal organisations have little room for democracy. Secondly they may also involve racist contrasts and perpetrate the same. They consider egalitarianism as abnormal and support patriarchy as a familial and social norm. Communalism is therefore a

i)   belief system

ii) social phenomenon.

Communalism arises out of a belief system, and assumes great solidarity within a community which is not always true. We find that there are often intercommunity quarrels. Further, the protagonists of communalism hold a particular view of history and take care to point out that a community has been identified with common sufferings and goals as a whole, lack exclusiveness of the community is stressed vis a vis other communities, and it is therefore considered logical to fight for one's rights in a literal way.

Communalism in India has, as noted earlier, a colonial legacy wherein the rulers (Britishers) used religious contrasts, existing among the different communities to their advantage by giving them prominence.

After Independence, economic modernization of India expanded economic opportunities but not enough to curb unhealthy competitiveness. Job sharing among the different communities create smaller pool of opportunities in causing much heartburn. Independence from the colonial power unleashed a horrendous communal holocaust, caused by the partition of the country into two parts on the eve of Independence in 1947.

Characteristics of Communalism

- Communalism is an ideological concept. It is a complex phenomenon

- It has a broader base which encompasses social, economic and political aspects for its manifestation,

- It causes rivalry, violence and tension among masses,

- It is used by the higher-class people and elites as an instrument for division and exploitation of the communal identities of the poorer sections of their co-religionists

- Communalism .is simply engineered by opportunistic political and economic interest of contending groups and factions within a political party or by political parties.

- It strikes at the roots of democracy, secularism and national integration and its effects are disastrous.

- Incidents of "communal violence" cannot clearly be separated by incidents of terrorism. "Communal violence" tends to refer to mob killings, while terrorism describes concerted attacks by small groups of militants.

12.2.3 Secularism

The conceptual construct of secularism is adopted in India by way of a solution to the problems, posed by fundamentalism and communalism. Ideally speaking, it denotes a situation where there is a clear distinction of religion from such spheres of life as the political and economic. Each religion is to be respected and practised in private. In ideological terms it is not a system of beliefs and practices that is to be mixed with political ideology, with a view to wooing any particular community into the voting booth. By and large, secularism separates relation and polity. It endorses the view that there should be provided equal opportunities by the state to all the communities. Further, for secularists all religious beliefs are to be approached rationally and finally social life is to be approached in an equalitarian manner.

Further the term secularism refers to the ideas opposed to religious education. It has been linked to the process of secularization. This is the process by which various sectors of society are removed from the domination of religious symbols -and also the domination of religious institutions. Finally the idea of secularism has been transferred from 'the dialectic of modern science and protestantism' in the west to South Asian societies. This transference is full of problems and cannot be conceived in terms of a smooth process.

Box 12.1

India cannot cease to be one nation, because people belonging to the different religions live in it ... If the Hindus believe that India should be peopled only by Hindus, they are living in a dreamland. The Hindus, the Mohammedans, the Parsis and the Christians who have made India their country are fellow-countrymen, and they will have to live in it only for their own interests. In no part of the world are one nationality and one religion synonymous terms; nor has it ever been so in India. — M.K. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj (1908)

12.3 ASPECTS OF FUNDAMENTALISM

Fundamentalism as a concept was first used in 1910-1915 when anonymous authors published 12 volumes of literature and called them 'The Fundamentals'. In the early 1920s the print media used this word with reference to conservative protestant groups in North America. These groups were concerned about liberal interpretations of the Bible. Alarmed by this the conservatives insisted on some "fundamentals" of faith. These included belief in the virgin birth, divinity, the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ and the infallibility of the scripture. As mentioned above these and other fundamentals were published in 12 pamphlets called *The Fundamentals* between 1910-1915. *Thus* began the specialised usage of the concept of "fundamentalism". Thus a fundamental movement is one which takes infallibility of a scripture as a basic issue and as a guide to life. Some fundamentalists add that there is no need to even interpret the scripture as meaning in it is self-evident. *This often amounts to intolerance of any form of disagreement or dissent. Thus there is an apprehension that fundamentalists are narrow minded, and bigoted.*

T.N. Madan (1993) has pointed out that the word Fundamentalism has gained wide currency in the contemporary world. According to him it refers to a variety of norms, values, attitudes which either judge the fundamentalists or condemn them outright. This word is sometimes erroneously used in place of communalism. In fact the word fundamentalist has become a blanket term. That is to say that various fundamental movements across the world are actually not identical but differ in various ways. But they are linked by a 'family' resemblance. Fundamentalist movements are of a collective character. They are often led by charismatic leaders who are usually men.

The fundamentalists are a practical people and try to purge the way of life of all impurities (religiously speaking). Fundamental movements are not only about religious beliefs and practices, but lifestyles generally.

Thus fundamentalist movements are reactive and a response to what the persons involved—the leaders and participants, consider a crisis. The crisis calls for urgent remedies. The basic programme is presented as a return to the original tradition. That is to say to the contemporarily redefined fundamentals, which cover the present-day needs. This usually involves a selective retrieval of tradition. It may even be an invention of tradition.

In Iran Khomeini developed an Islamic state based on the guardianship of the jurists. Again Bhindranwale gave a selective emphasis to Guru Gobind Singh's

teaching rather than those of his immediate successors. Assertion of spiritual authority and criticising the culture are two aspects of fundamentalism. A third crucial element is that of the pursuit of political power.

The pursuit of political power is very important to fundamentalism, for without it we would be presented with a case for revivalism. This covers both cultural and political aspects of nationalism. This explains why fundamentalist movements often turn violent, and the ideology of secularism is rejected. They are totalitarian and do not tolerate dissent. However these movements also perform a particular role in modern society which cannot be ignored. Thus an objective intellectual analysis should consider fundamentalism as a distinctive category. It is not theocracy or backward communalism.

12.4 THE COMMUNAL DIVIDE

The misconceived ideology of communalism in India was, and still is, that the different communities in India cannot co-exist to their mutual benefit, that the minorities will become victims of Hindu subjugation and that neither the historically created situation nor culture will allow cooperation.

Communalism took deep roots in Indian polity during the later phase of the national movement and this was encouraged by the colonial rulers. This process was a continuation of the weakness and inadequacy of secularism as conceived and practised during the anti colonial struggle.

Implicit in all the theories has been the assumption that the growth of Hindu-Muslim tension was not the natural and inevitable outcome of changes taking place in the Indian society. Partition was the culmination of the conflict which could and should have been avoided. Further this line of reasoning states that nation building essentially means obliteration of communal moulds and creation of a common identity which decries the existence of differentiated groups based on religion, caste or language. Communal forces are therefore viewed as division and a sign of political underdevelopment. *C*ommunalism arises when one or two characteristics of an ethnic identity e.g. religious beliefs are taken and become emotionally surcharged. Communal movements are often brief and exist in a dyad, comprising an opposing force or ideology which has to be countered. Unlike fundamentalism, communalism can only exist dyadically.

Hindu-Muslim riots reflected the religious fears and socio-economic aspirations of the Hindus and Muslims. Sometimes these riots occur for very minor reasons such as quarrels between Muslim and Hindu shopkeepers (Ghosh, 1981: 93-94).

The important point is that these are not isolated acts but often deliberate mechanizations of various socio-religious organisations. Recurrent collisions were engineered on festivals by stopping them and various religious occasions by interfering in their process. This was done to inflame communal passions and bitterness. According to Ghosh (1981) the acme of communal rioting was reached in August 1946 in Calcutta when the Muslim League observed a 'Direct Action Day'. Bombay did the same in the following month. Thus Independence was erected on the corpses of many thousands of people. With Mahatma Gandhi's assassination the riots abated awhile, and this situation was basically sustained by Nehru. Again the passing away of Nehru in 1964 and the deteriorating socio-economic circumstances led to the resurrection of communal violence.

12.4.1 Recent Communal Riots

During the late 60s and 1970s there was large scale communal rioting in Ahmedabad, Baroda, Ranchi, Jamshedpur etc. Communal configurations in towns such as Ranchi cast a shadow over predictions and beliefs in the future of workers unity. Again in Bhiwandi where there was a carnage in 1969, it was a shock for the leftists. The grassroots movement among the handloom workers fostered by committed communists was unable to stem the on rush of communal violence.

In 1969 itself a communal riot occurred in Ahmedabad. The inflammatory factors were insults to holy scriptures and sacred cows. It was suspected however, that these riots were politically motivated.

These riots indicated clearly that there were various political factors behind the surface level factors of religion based tensions and confrontations. The first six years of the eighties once more created an upward incline in the) riot-graph. Patel (1990) feels that Communal violence is backed by religious arguments and backing. He feels that those resorting to it are neither true Hindus nor true Muslims. Religion does not preach enmity. However the causes which are often given for Communal violence are hurt religious sentiments. India has also witnessed the anti-sikh riots in Delhi in, 1984, Gujarat Riot 2002, Muzaffarnagar riot 2013, Delhi riot 2020. These are only a few to name.

12.4.2 Reasons for Communal Riots

In the context of our section on recent-communal riots we turn now to some further reasons for the same. As Ghosh (1981) points out, several arguments have been forwarded for the existence and continuation of communal riots. These are:

i)   riots are part of progress in an under developed country. The class struggle is converted into a communal struggle weakening the solidarity of the proletariat class. Further the middle and backward classes have acquired greater political and economic strength and influence and these often assert themselves. Economic conflicts lead to riots as in Bihar Sharif and Bhiwandi.

ii)   Electoral politics determine the objectives and direction of communal violence e.g. Delhi 1986.

These explanations cannot be binding—they cannot be held to be necessary and sufficient. Often economic reasons emerge after (not before) the rioting has begun. Again in a developing society economic factors where competition or one lagging behind the other can lead to a riot. The same applies to reductionist political causes. The idea of behind-the-scene political manipulation may not be valid.

What are the factors which can remedy the communal divide in India. Some suggestions have been given (Verma, 1990, 63-65). They include suggestions such as, religion should be separated from politics and communal bodies should be banned. Further the freedom of press should not extend to spreading communal ideas.

Communalism needs to be denounced by political leaders and all leading citizens. Measures should be taken for raising the economic lot of the minority community. Above all overall ethos should be created which leads to peace between communities and an end to communal violence. Community leaders should explain the situation to the community and defuse tensions. Let us now turn to secularism.

Thus communalism has an ugly aspect and goes against national integration. Religion should not become the whipping boy of political ambitions.

Check Your Progress 1

j) Give three reasons for communal rioting.

    a)   ....

    b)   ....

    c)   ....

2)   Fill in the blanks:

    Hindu .... riots have in recent times been confined to .... towns.

12.5 ASPECTS OF SECULARISM

While fundamentalism and communalism are widely held to be problematic and disintegrative, the ideology of secularism is held to be a palliative solution to the above. Although there is no single definition of secularism which could be applied world-wide, yet it was first applied to separate the Church from the King. This was the political dimension. In the social sphere, 'secular' meant separating the stranglehold of religion over the individual's life. In the Indian context it proclaims the existence of spiritual values which can be stressed in a variety of ways. 'Secularism and Secularization' deals with this. Thus the word secularism has a variety of connotations in India. As Madan (ed. 1991 : 394-412) notes these dimensions are:

i)   the separation of state from religion.

ii)   equal and impartial treatment of all communities by the state.

iii)   approaching religious beliefs in a spirit of objective rationality.

iv)   ensuring a just standard of living for all people irrespective of community.

12.5.1 Secular Views

Through the judicious use of the philosophy of secularism, fundamentalism and communalism can be curbed. On combating fundamentalism and communalism through secularism there are three views that can be presented. These are:

i)   An ideological campaign against communalism can be waged to *decommunalize* people at all levels. The logic of this approach is that communalism will die out only if the communal ideology is removed.

ii)   Grassroots politics is another approach mooted for the eradication of communalism along with a democratic rights approach. That is to say

there has to be an awakening at the grassroots level. Secondly a new type of activity is required which is politically oriented but not the grassroots type. The problem however is that unless this grassroots approach has an All-India spread and a unity within it we do not find it likely to do well,

iii) A major issue concerning fundamentalism, communalism and secularism is religion. How do we approach religion in a secular view ? Firstly we should not dismiss any religions or pronounce them to be false. Second we should try to locate the democratic and the secular in the social basis of religion. Thirdly the irrationalities of religion should be exposed and a rational approach taken.

As Madan (1983) explains India is defined as a secular republic in the Preamble to the Constitution. Secularism in India does not imply abolition of religion but the separation of state from religion. However the separation of politics from religion is not envisaged. The people are free to form religion based political parties. What then is secularism in a multi-religious society such as that which India represents?

That secularism can be defined in various ways has been pointed out earlier. However we can say now that secularism implies the separation of religion from state and its relegation to the sphere of personal belief and private commitment. It is important to point out at this stage that this description is not true of any society as this separation happens to be analytical rather than actual. As things stand there are some politics with an anti religious stance, others are natural towards religion. And finally there are those which follow a secularism which falls between these extremes.

How does the secular policy of India reflect in the pre and post-independent politics of India ? In the closing decades of the 19th century the "liberal-plural" theory was advanced by the moderate nationalists. *This approach believed that religion should not be mixed with politics. Its proper sphere was that of private belief.* This would preserve both religious sentiments and those towards the nation would remain intact. This theory demanded sophisticated understanding but the wider society could not grasp it. *This was replaced due to its obvious shortcomings by the "orthodox plural" theory of secular nationalism. This was forwarded by Gandhi. He picked up religion as basic to political action and national identity.*

12.5.2 Gandhiji's Views

The 'nation-to-be', argued Gandhi, should draw from Hindu, Muslim, and all other communities. The idea was to draw popular symbols into the political mainstream creating a national identity. This ideology which was successful in political mobilization has certain problems so far as the post-independent 1947 era was concerned.

i) Gandhi's idea that religious cleavages which could be handled by using religious loyalties and thus lead to nationhood proved wrong. The idea of orthodox pluralism heightened rather than reduced the rift between different religious communities.

ii)   The ideologies drew the rich and powerful into the national struggle and ensured that they dominated post-independece India.

iii) Another theory (the radical socialist) which gained some ground had the dream of a secular polity which reflected the dream of the poor masses, both in rural and urban areas. Religious loyalties were relegated away from national identity. National identity it was felt could only be based upon politics, which linked socio-economic facts with the reality of nationhood. Religion was to be a private thing and not to trade upon the domain of politics. This stance resembles the liberal plural theory of religion. However the radical socialists addressed themselves to the poor and attempted to bring about social redistribution of wealth.

This theory of radical socialist secular nationalism took the stage during the second quarter of the 20th century, but could not last much longer. Despite its poverty orientation and orientation toward equal redistribution of wealth, this theory failed in the light of Gandhian ideas.

Gandhi's orthodox plural theory of secular nationalism was popular due to various reasons:

I)   The strong religious feeling among different classes and communities. This Gandhi mobilized for creating a popular base to nationalism.

II)   Again while desiring to uplift the downtrodden, it did not deprive the rich, industrial, commercial classes of the control over social and economic power.

Box 12.2

Nehru wrote in 1961 that being Secular did not mean being opposed to religion. This he stated was not correct. What was true was the existence of a state which held all faiths in equal esteem and provided for them equal opportunities. He also added that this was not fully reflected in mass living and thinking (Gopal, 1980 p. 330).

This theory killed two birds with one stone: it mobilized mass support for nationhood; it also left alone the theory issue of capital and property. The rich felt that the theory did not nail them. At the same time Gandhi never stated that he wanted to sacrifice the interests of the poor to the greed of the rich. Thus we can say that in India the orthodox plural theory of secular nationalism on the one hand and communal tension on the other can provide us some insights into national integration. Thus theories of secular nationalism which are religion or community based cannot be healthy for the polity. However, the theories of secularism which distinguish between religion and politics are best for the field of politics. Such secular politics can use either the rich or the poor as a base for their activities.

Thus we see that education of the masses is the way to secularism. Being educated they would eschew all fundamental and communal paths and seek to achieve a truly democratic republic.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Mention two connotations of the word 'secular' in the Indian context.

    a) ....

    b) ....

2)   What were Gandhiji's views on secularism? Use 7-10 lines for your answer.

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12.6   LET US SUM UP

In this unit we began by explaining the basic concepts of fundamentalism, communalism and secularism. We then turned to an examination of communalism and secularism. The reason for communal riots and some of the inter-community dynamics were then laid bare. Finally we turned to secularism, examined its various Views, and also presented Gandhiji's views on secularism. It was felt that secularism, in its true sense could counter fundamentalists and communalistic tendencies.

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12.8 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1) a) Economic reasons

   b) Political reasons

   c) Sociological reasons.

2) *Muslim, Medium ,Sized.*

Check Your Progress 2

1) a)   separation of state from religion.

   b)   equal and impartial treatment of all communities by the state.

2)   Gandhiji felt that the nation-to-be should take ideas from all communities, not only from Hindus and Muslims. This idea was to draw symbols of religion into the political mainstream. This ideology however failed in post independent India and increased the rift between communities. Also the rich and powerful came into the national struggle and dominated post Independent-India.

GLOSSARY

Communalism: This is a situation wherein religion and religious communities view each other with hostility and antagonism. They may often come out in open conflict such as in communal riots.

Fundamentalism: This word stresses the infallibility of a scripture in matters of faithand doctrine. Certain groups take this to espouse a militant stance and claim sovereignhood of a territory based on the same principles.

Secularism : This is the principle which believes that all matters of religious faithbe separated from other fields of interaction economic, political, administrative and so on. In doing this it hopes to create a harmonious and integrated nation state.

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UNIT 13 SECULARISM*

Structure

13.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you would be able to:

- understand the meaning and concept of secularism
- discuss the social context and historical background of secularism
- explain nature and scope of secularism
- understand the problem of secularism

13.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit focuses on secularism to understand what secularism means and how it is relevant to our day-to-day life. Society consists of multiple structures where caste, class, gender, ethnicity and religion are some important elements. Without maintaining a social harmony of all these elements, society would not function. As mentioned above there are also different castes, ethnic groups, gender and religion within the social structure of a society where all of these sub-categories function through a common understanding of non-interference. This is the broader concept of secularism where one particular religious group does not interfere with other religious groups.

To understand the concept of secularism and its relevance in the present society we are dealing here with various conceptual issues and examples. This section

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begins with the philosophical point of view on secularism and analyses the contemporary situation with an explicit elaboration. On the face of it, several religious doctrines and non-religious philosophical interpretations highlight the moral philosophy of secularism. The following sections will help you to understand the broader concept of secularism and its relevance in society.

13.2   SECULARISM: MEANING AND DEFINITION

The term secularism is derived from the Latin word 'secular', which means the 'present age or generation'. Secularism is associated with the broader understanding of social progress and rational behavior. Thus, the progress of human society brought up the concept of secularism as a form of social practice in the modern rational society. This is meant to reduce the authority of religion in the sphere of moral consensus. Secularism as a concept came into existence in Europe first to describe transfer of territories from the Church domination to rational authority which is the 'state'. The legal rational authority or the state considered as non-religious or neutral authority can administer all the religious and non-religious communities in an unbiased way.

The historical phenomena of secularism can be traced back to 17th century Europe where antagonism developed between the Roman Catholic Church and the State to attain supremacy. Before this, there was a thirty year long war between 1618 and 1648. This long period of thirty years of war resulted in eight million casualties. In this war, various Protestant groups under the leadership of Martin Luther King and the Catholic State were involved in debate, exploitation and dehumanism. The war began when the newly elected Holy Roman Emperor, Ferdinand II tried to impose religious uniformity on his dominion, which was an act of forcing the Roman Catholicism on its people. On the other hand, the northern Protestant states were angered by the violation of their rights, that had been granted to them in the Peace of Augburg. Also, such an act by Ferdinand II banned them from forming the Protestant Union. Ferdinand II was a devout Roman Catholic and relatively intolerant as compared to his predecessor Rudolf II. He was known for his pro-catholic policies.

This war is known as the '30 Years War' or the 'Sectarian War' which ended with the treaty of Westphelia. This treaty is an agreement by the conflicting parties with their satisfaction of interests which is called Modus Vivendi. Gradually, this Modus Vivendi grew into a principle of political order (See the writings of Hobbes, Locke etc) and got disseminated among the political classes. At this juncture, secularism came to be the principle which separated the State and the Church.

A sociological understanding of secularism deserves a more general and wider understanding. In secularism, religion loses its traditional authority of control over economy, polity, justice, health, family and so on. In 1851, secularism led to a rational movement under an ideological formation of progress as a positive attitude. Peter Berger holds that secularism means progress in which a section of society and culture move away from religious domination of institutions.

Generally, secularism means a system of political and social philosophy that rejects all forms of religious faith and worship. The origin of secularism in Europe was through the 'doctrine that morality should be based on the well-being of man in the present life, without regard to religious belief'. Indian state defines

in its policy that India maintains *Dharma nirpekshta* which means religious neutrality. For Mahatma Gandhi and Maulana Azad secularism meant *sarvadharma sadbhavna* 'goodwill towards all religions'.

Secularism advocates separating religion from politics. Thus the meaning of secularism always indicates separation of religion from other institutions. In the larger understanding it has a wider meaning of democratization of the structure where caste, class, gender, region and ethnicity reduce its sectarian value on the ground of public domain.

13.3 INDIAN CONSTITUTION AND SECULARISM

After independence, the Indian constitution became the sole authority to maintain the secular structure of Indian society. It established a democratic form of governance under the secular framework of the written Constitution. The preamble of the Indian Constitution is guided by certain principles which emphasize equal citizenship, equality, liberty, fraternity and secular principles.

"We the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN, SOCIALIST, SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC and to secure to all its citizens:

- JUSTICE, social, economical and political;

- LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief and faith and worship;

- EQUALITY of status and opportunity; and to promote among them all;

- FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation;

These above lines clearly indicate the commitment of the Constitution of India to maintain the secular structure not only in the religious sphere but also in the larger perspective of secular values of brotherhood and equality before the law. Article 15 of the Indian Constitution provides equal rights to all the citizens of the country. Article 15(3) of the Indian Constitution guarantees equal opportunities and accessibilities by guaranteeing all citizens right to public place without restriction on the basis of caste, color, religion, gender etc. Article 16 gives equal rights in the field of public employment (Basu 1982).

There is equal law for all the citizens within the country irrespective of religion, caste, community and gender. According to Article 14, all citizens of the state are equal before the law. According to Article 15, the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on the ground of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth. No citizen will be discriminated on the ground of accessing public place, public restaurants, hotels, place of public entertainment etc, use of public wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of public resort which are public funded and are dedicated to public use (Basu 1982).

Thus, Indian constitution is the primary safeguard of secularism which guarantees equal laws for all the citizens and protects their fundamental rights. Individual rights, liberty, equality and fraternity are the fundamental principles of secularism. And as a citizen of the state all have equal rights, opportunities as well as obligations towards protecting their constitutional rights and duties.

13.4 INDIAN SOCIETY AND SECULARISM

Indian society constitutes a multi-cultured society where a diverse set of social groups with respect to their caste, class, religion, ethnicity and gender come together as equal citizens before the law. It is called unity within diversity. All the religious and ethnic communities perform their rituals and social practices without interference of any other religious or ethnic group. Social integration through the social interaction and common brotherhood and respect of each other's religious belief and practices is the key element in Indian secular structure.

Indian religious pluralism has a unique social structure. Pluralism upholds its universal brotherhood, love and peace with the feeling of togetherness. In the modern times, pluralism is part of the larger doctrine of modern rational behavior with the establishment of a body of principles based on scientific understanding. Similarly, the modern nation state attempts to establish a rational scientific society where religious atrocities, racial violence and gender segregation become a significant area of concern. The global economic activities also create a global society called 'global village'. The economic activities and trade relations grow where people from different nations, different religions, different races and genders engage in a system of global cultural exchange. Through these activities society transforms from a closed system to an open system with tolerance of diverse religious activities.

Establishment of secularism in India after its independence can be traced back to the post colonial debates on nation building. It was a very tense situation for the Indian leaders to bring all religious groups on a single platform and declare India as a secular nation state after the mass violence during partition. Hindu-Muslim conflicts and sectarian idea of religious fundamentalism led to strong protests of violence in every corner of the country. It led to the formation of a Muslim state in the Muslim majority area called Pakistan, whereas on the other hand, Hindu majority areas formed a secular state named as India. India adopted the modern identity of secularism as its fundamental principle to bring all religious groups on a single platform to form a modern nation state. This led to great harmony and religious tolerance within the Hindu majority provinces and established mutual co-operation among all religious communities, like Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis, Jews and people without religion too (Bhargava 2005).

13.4.1 'Historical Context of Indian Secularism

Historical understanding of secularism in India goes back to the period of Indian renaissance. It means the period of reform movement against the social evils and stigma in the religious belief. Some social reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Dayanand Saraswati etc. joined their hands against the social evils and narrow mindedness in the Hindu religion. Their rational views and modern thinking had deep impact in the society.

The colonial administration brought about a great change in the whole society of India. The feudal domination of caste structure, religious hatred, women's subjugation etc. were questioned under the British administration. During the last phase of colonial administration, Indian society modernized through the expansion of trade, industries, urban life and modern education (non-religious

education) which played a very significant role in promoting rationality in the society and development of secularism. The colonial administration also expanded its trade activities across the regional and religious boundaries that created an environment for secular understanding. The newspapers, magazines, debates and civil society demanded equality, dignity, individual rights, and liberty for all sections of the society.

After independence, the academic institutions, civil society, NGOs and many private agencies put in their efforts to establish secularism in India. Society transformed from their traditional closed system to an open system where anybody can participate in their public domain (Gupta: 2000). Labour market changed from the traditional bonded labour to free informal labour where rural agrarian workforce moved towards urban areas (Breman: 1996). Labour mobility in the informal sector impacted the larger domain of socio-cultural life through interaction of diverse cultures,, castes and religions.

13.4.2 Conflict Within Secularism

The conflict within the system is a continuous process to achieve perfection in the system. Present situation in the Indian secular structure is more complex in a sense of growing religious fundamentalism and challenges before secularism. Contemporary India experiences different challenges through the ruling class hegemony and reinterpretation of religious fundamentalism by the political elite, where the Indian middle class plays a significant role for its political benefit (Sharma 2016).

Religion plays a significant role in Indian politics for its political hegemony and symbolic capital, for instance, right wing politics in the northern part of India, particularly in the case of Babri Masjid demolition in 1992 by the RSS (Rastriya Sayamsevak Sangh) led Hindu fundamentalist group which was the political hegemony of BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party). Similarly, in other parts of India, contemporary politics reinvents religion as a powerful weapon of modern politics to retain power. This kind of politics leads to many violent consequences like riots, atrocities, mass killing etc. (Sharma 2016).

On the other hand, secular political parties also get trapped in such religious fundamentalism for their political gain. Thus, without a strong secular political party, the secular democratic structure of Indian society faces many challenges to retain its secular structure. Sen (2005) critiques the heterogeneity of identity in the Indian politics. He also emphasizes favoritism of Indian political leaders and activist intellectual groups towards particular religions which lose the true sense of secularism. Sen is very critical towards the Indian intellectual discourse on secularism which highlights modernity as the best way to achieve secularism. This idea reinforces that through modernity traditional religious fundamentalism will fade away. Nandy (1998) however, claims that secularism is neither an inevitable nor inherent part of modernity.

Another set of scholars highlight that religious nationalism in contemporary modern politics loses its secular ground through posing threat to the minority groups (Iqtidar & Sarkar: 2013). Sharma (2016) holds that sectarian politics by the right wing political forces sabotages the Indian secular democratic space. Thus, religion becomes a political weapon of electoral politics where the modern state loses its secular structure through replacement of religious fundamentalism.

The larger interpretation of secularism in terms of internal differentiation of caste, class, gender and religious atrocities, that is internal domination and social hierarchy play a significant role to set up a secular structure among the various communities. In this case crisis arise when the ruling group or political elite misadventure and fail to deliver justice and secular identities (Gudavarthy & Mannathikkaren: 2014).

Nanda (2007) argues that 'religionisation' of the public sphere failed to provide a secular platform even in the most advanced and oldest democratic country like US and developing and largest democratic country like India. Both the countries are very different in terms of their socio-cultural life and practices. Individual liberty and civil egalitarianism is deeply rooted in the religious beliefs and cultural life of US civilization. The civilization itself is an enlightened group recognized for its advancement across the world. Even US which is an advanced country without feudalism in its history, faces crises to deliver secularism in the area of racism. There is black and white discrimination in the society although law is against it.

India, the world's largest democratic country has its own baggage of caste, social hierarchy and colonial feudalism. The master-servant relations in traditional caste based social structure still exist in different parts of the country. In this context both the countries face a challenge in practical life inspite of the commitment of the Constitution to safeguard the principle of secularism. The Republican Party in the US gives priority to Christians, on the other hand in India, the Bhartiya Janata Party gives priority to the Hindus.

Check Your Progress I

1) Explain the meaning and definition of secularism.

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2) Discuss the historical context of Indian secularism.

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13.5 INDIAN RELIGIONS AND SECULARISM

It has already been mentioned that India is a multi-religious country where various kinds of religious groups coexist. Hindu religion is one of the most populous

religious groups with 81 percent of the population belongs to it. Muslims are the second largest religious group with 13 percent of the population. Following this Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists have a large population spread all over India.

Different religions have their own religious doctrine, belief system and ritual practices. All these religions have their own philosophy for secularism and brotherhood. These secular philosophies play a significant role to maintain a united order within the diversity of religion and social practices.

13.5.1 Hindu Religion and Secularism

Hinduism is a religion which claims to be a way of life which believes in Hindu sacred thought and spiritual principles. This religion has moral philosophy to maintain the common brotherhood and peace in the society. In Hinduism like other religions the secular principle of humanism and common brotherhood is reflected in universal rational understanding about peace, tolerance and secular values. But, there are certain principles which advise to maintain respectful and dignified attitude towards other religions. The sacred text of Hindu religion 'The Bhagavat Gita' emphasizes universal brotherhood which believes that all human beings and creatures are created by God and all are equal in the eyes of God.

Modernization of several Hindu religious practices was led by some prominent leaders like Raja Rammohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi during the 19th and 20th centuries. The Philosophical thoughts of these leaders became more significant in the later period because of their modern rational understanding and scientific interpretation. Rammohan Roy is known for Hindu Renaissance, where he talks about social harmony and humanism. Swami Vivekananda believed that Hinduism is a broad concept which includes all the religions within its fold. Mahatma Gandhi's ideas of tolerance towards other religions, his emphasis on reading other religious texts to know and respect other faiths and beliefs was the best method to enhance secularism.

13.5.2 Christianity and Secularism

As has already been discussed, each religion has its own secular principle in its religious doctrine. Christian social order and teachings of Jesus are based on universal brotherhood. The fundamental principle of Jesus about human society is based on maintaining peace, brotherhood and happiness. The Bible is the sacred book of Christians. It provides the basic principle of Christian belief, norms and behavior, the principle of universal brotherhood, love and peace. All are equal before God because all are sons of God.

13.5.3 Islam and Secularism

Like other religions Islam is also based on certain doctrines. Muslim believes that Quran is the true word of Allah. They believe that Quran is the medium of messenger of Muhammed Prophet which is based on truth and knowledge about human society. Islam means acceptance of the will of the God. Islam believes in praying to God in any difficult situation. To establish peace praying to God is a simple way without any conflict with others. Islam also talks about not bothering about what others are doing, praying to God as much as possible without interfering with other religions. The Islamic ideas of peace and prayer to God without interfering with other religions is a secular form of Islamic doctrine.

Islam also emphasizes free human choice. It gives importance to rationality and scientific understanding. Islamic theology (Kalam) and philosophy (Falsafa) are two traditions of learning developed by Muslim thinkers who were engaged on the one hand with the rational clarification and defense of the principles of the Islamic religion (Mutakallimun) and on the other, in the pursuit of the ancient science (Falasifafah). Many, Islamic writers and philosophers are continously trying to rationalize Islamic thought. This rationality and scientific understanding is the basic symbol of secularism.

13.5.4 Sikh Religion and Secularism

Like other religions Sikh religion also plays a significant role establishing love, peace and social harmony among people. Sikhs follow the teachings Guru Nanak who was the founder of Sikhism. Guru Nanak says 'I *am neither Hindu nor Muslim, I am a follower of God*'. which actually spoke about his belief in one God. Guru Nanak gave the message for universal brotherhood and peace in his talk where he said there is no difference man and man and man and woman, all are equal. In this way Guru Nanak and Sikhism reflect a secular identity and universal brotherhood.

The origin of Sikhism is secular in nature because of its denial of narrow ideological spiritual activities. The religion emerges from out of criticism for the ritual activities in various religions. It mobilized support among working class people because of its simplicity and secular nature. It believes that God is omnipotent and there is only one God. Thus Sikhism also believes that God is universal and people from all religions are equal.

13.5.5 Buddhist Religion and Secularism

Buddhist philosophy is a great contribution to the modern democracy and secularism. The idea of universal happiness through self-sacrifices (and undesirable life) is a path-breaking thought in the modern religious doctrines. Thus, Buddhism is considered as one of the youngest and modern religious ideologies. Buddha's idea about cause of human suffering gives us a broader understanding of secularism in very deep way, which is for grounded in undesirable attitude to gain something. It means one should not have desire to harm other religions. Thus, it is the noble philosophical thought of Buddhism to respect other religions and maintain brotherhood.

13.6 CHALLENGES FOR SECULARISM

The above discussion of secularism draws various interpretations and scholarly writings on secularism. There are several theoretical as well as empirical studies on secularism which gives us explicit understanding about challenges and barriers to establish secularism. Politicisation of religion for the political and economic gain is the biggest threat to secular ideology which reinvents the religious fundamentalism and sectarian activities. The Hindu and Muslims often engage in violent activities with their sectarian ideas in the name of Dharma. The key point of rightness of action (both violence and non-violence) towards other religions becomes entirely a functional requirement for political gain.

The major challenge before Indian secularism is that politics and religion come face to face in the major domain of our political system which leads to communal

politics. Thus, without independence of politics from religion, secular ideology cannot sustain itself. Increasing communalism and communal violence accompanied by obstructionism on secular activities and revivalism of traditional religious norms, tend to reinforce each other through state policies and politics of vote-bank.

India is a multi-cultural and multi-linguistic plural society where cultural as well as religious diversity is very high. There occasional conflicts between majorities and minorities where secularism plays a very significant role in constructive way. Civil society, NGOs and public institutions put their effort through different prospective like human right violation, minority rights etc. But, different streams of opposition thoughts become obstacle for it.

Since past few decades communal violence became the most destructive force for secularism where many prominent leaders of the country sacrificed their lives. As has already been discussed, during partition many people lost their lives and properties. The riot againts Sikh community in 1984 is another inhuman act which took thousands of lives after the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the former prime minister of India. Godhra Hindu and Muslim riot took place in 2002 where several people lost their lives and property in Gujarat. Kandhamal riots in Odisha led to similar sequence of violence and killing in 2008.

Such religious fundamentalism and communal violences are the growing causes of concern for the Indian secular democratic state where different religious people enjoy their rights and freedom of life without any restriction on the ground of religion, caste, class, gender and race as laid down in the constitution of India. The core of de-secularising activities in Indian society is its culture and religious activities.

India's secularism with the religious symbol reflects its rich tradition of Hindu cult and religious activities. It follows the idea of 'Sarba Dharma Sambhava' through adopting Buddhist Dharma Chakra as its symbolic representation. Constitutionally India is a secular state which gives equal rights and opportunities to all its citizens. But, politically and socially it faces various challenges in terms of uniting all the religious groups and caste-class communities which often leads to politically motivated riots and communal violence.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the space given below to answer the question

ii)   Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit

1)   Discuss the Indian religions and secularism.

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2) Explain the challenges for secularism.

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13.7 LET US SUM UP

Since independence, India adopted a liberal view where all the religious communities get freedom to follow their own religious faith and practice. The ruling section played a major role to negotiates communal tensions and establish peace through their liberal prospective. Civil societies and administrative organizations played a very significant role to maintain communal harmony. Indian secular politics gave supplementary support to restructure a secular society.

13.8 REFERENCES

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Bhargava, Rajeev (ed). (1998). "*Secularism and its Critics*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

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13.9 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1)   The term secularism is derived from the Latin word 'secular', which means the 'present age or generation'. Secularism came into exist in Europe first and described transfer of territories from the Church domination to rational authority which is the 'state'. Sociological understanding of secularism draws frm more general and wider understanding. In secularism, religion loses its traditional authority of control over economy, polity, justice, health, family and so on. Peter Berger holds that secularism means progress in which a section of society and culture remove from religious domination of institution and culture. Indian state defines in its policy that India maintains *Dharma nirpekshta* which means religious neutrality. Mahatma Gandhi and Maulana Azad advocated *sarvadharma sadbhave* 'goodwill towards all religions'. Secularism advocates separating religion from politics. Thus the meaning of secularism always propogates separating religion from other institutions.

2) Historical understanding of secularism in India goes back to the period of Indian renaissance. Some reformative leaders like Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Dayanand Sarwati etc. joined their hands against the social evil and narrowness in the Hindu religion. During the last phase of colonial administration, Indian society modernized through the expansion of bourgeoisie property, trade, industries, urban life and modern education (non-religious education) which played a very significant role to rationalize the society and development of secularism. The news paper, magazines, debates and civil society demanded for equality, dignity, individual rights, and liberty became part of public discourse at different levels. After the independence, the academic institutions, civil society, NGOs and many private agencies put their efforts to establish secularism in India. Society transformed from traditional close system to open system where anybody can participate in public domain. Labour market changed from the traditional bonded labour to free informal labour where rural agrarian workforce moves towards urban areas.

Check Your Progress 1I

1) India is a multi-religious country where various kind of religious groups co-exist. Hindu religion occupies one of the most populous religious group with 81 percent of its population. Muslims occupy the second largest religious group with 13 percent of the population. Following to this Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists constitute significant in terms of Indian population. It is secularism which binds all these religions together.

   Every religion has its own religious doctrine, belief system and ritual practices. All these religions have their own philosophy for secularism and brotherhood. These secular philosophies play a significant role to maintain a united order within the diversity of religion and social practices.

2) There are several theoretical as well as empirical studies on secularism which gives us explicit understanding about challenges and barriers to establish the secularism. Among these barriers religion is the most contested category in the present society. Politicisation of religion for the political and economic gain is the biggest treat of secular structure which reinvents the religious fundamentalism and sectarian activities. The major challenge faced by Indian secularism is that politics and religion come face to face in a major domain of our political system which leads to communal politics.

FURTHER READINGS

Basu, Durga Das. (1982). *Introduction to the Constitution of India*. Prentice Hall of India.

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UNIT 14 NATIONALISM*

Structure

14.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you shoul be able to :-

- Develop an understanding of nation and nationality

- Explain the foundations of nationalism in Indian sub-continent

- Describe the secular facets in Indian nationalism and the contradictions in it

- Elucidate the dynamics of co-existence with diverse complementarities in Indian nationalism

14.1 INTRODUCTION

In India the concepts of nation and nationalism have been parts of a larger social and political debate. This unit introduces you to the concepts of nation, nationalism and ethnicity at the very outset and describes the diverse principles of identifying nation and the course of transition of nationalism as political reality. It elaborates the foundation of nationalism in the Indian sub-continent and explains Gandhi's concepts of nationalism as a universal struggle for justice, Tagore's perception of nationalism as an evil and also elaborates nationalism as a product of inherited indigenous commonness of Indians and provides critique of the perception of the commonness. It also presents a debate on nationalism as a project for normalization of difference and the facets of state centered and state renouncing nationalism, secular facets of Indian nationalism and the contradictions and realities of co-existence with diverse complementarities in Indian nationalism

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*Contributed by Prof. Debal SinghaRoy

14.2 UNDERSTANDING NATION AND NATIONALISM

14.2.1 Ethnicity and Nation

The boundaries of ethnicity often overlap with ethnicity and nation. Very often ethnicity interfaces the notion of nation when the term ethnicity is explained following the Greek word as 'ethnos' which refers to people living and acting together in a manner that might be applied to a people or a nation. However nation is more than ethnicity. When a nation is to be understood through ethnic group, it is to be understood as a politically mobilized self conscious ethnic group linked to specific territory. It is mobilized with the goal of forming a political unit to exercise autonomy or preserving a political unit in which this ethnic group is the predominant or extensive political force (Stone, J. and Piya, B. 2007:1457,Jenkins, 2007: 1475). It in fact indicates the potential of ethnic group to be a nation.

While for Smith (1986) a collective name, a common myth of descent, a shared history, a distinctive shared culture, an association with a specific territory and a sense of solidarity are essential features of ethnicity, to Oommen (1997) ethnicity shares all these features except territory. 'When an ethnic group identifies itself with a territory because of ancestral/imagined or immigrated association and adopts the same as their homeland and transforms their 'outness' into the 'ins' they became a nation (Oommen 1997:36; 1990:163-82).

The relationship between ethnicity and nation could not only be over lapping, but also be sequential. To Oommen, (1997) when an ethnic group acquires legitimate moral claim over a territory it becomes a nation and when a nation secures political jurisdiction in its homeland, it becomes a state'. Thus nation comes before the state formulation. There is also the opposite process of transformation of a nation into ethnicity caused by conquest, colonization, immigration and dislocation of ethnic group from one original country, region or nation i.e. homeland. To him ethnification of a nation takes place when it does not have the resources for state formation i.e. a homeland having political authority over it. (Oommen 1997:36).

The word "nation" owes its origin to the Latin verb *nasci*, understood as 'to be born' and it means 'a group of people born in the same place'. While in the European universities of the late middle ages, "nations" were the students who came from the same region or country, to the French radical writers of the eighteenth century nations are the people of a given country. In prevailing usage in "English and other languages however, a "nation" is understood either as synonymous with a state or its inhabitants, or else it denotes a human group bound together by common solidarity" (Rastow, D.). Nation is however more than a common solidarity; it is solidarity for emotion, action, love and sacrifice for the country and its inhabitants, it is solidarity for being and becoming a collective identity; it is also simultaneously used as an urge for solidarity against the others. Hence different principles are invoked to delineate the identity of a nation.

14.2.2   Diverse Principles of Identifying Nation

To J S Mill 1861(1958 rpt) nation is a portion of mankind who are united among themselves by common sympathies to co-operate with each other more willingly than with other people, and cherish the desire to be under the same government by themselves (Mill1861/1958:16 cf.Rastow). To Ernest Renan (1882/ 1992) a nation is a great solidarity constituted by the feeling of sacrifices made and those that one is still disposed to make..." This moral conscience and spiritual principles are not constructed mechanically (Renan, (1882/ 1992)

One of the most powerful articulations of the ideal of nation has come from Anderson (1983) when he describes nation to be 'an imagined community' It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members … yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. It is imagined as limited because even the largest nation has limits, boundaries beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with humankind. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willing to die for such limited imagining (Benedict, A 1983:57).

To E.H. Carr (1939) nation is *founded on the possession of commonness, close contacts and feeling, and* as a human group who are specifically in the possession of

a)   The idea of a common government whether as a reality in the present or past or as an aspiration of the future

b)   Certain characteristics (like language) clearly distinguishing the nation from other nation and non-national groups

c)   Certain degree of common feeling or will associated with the picture of the nation in the minds of the individual members.

d)   A certain size and closeness of contact among members

e)   A defined common territory (E.H. Carr 1939: 7)

Nationalism in its present form though has originated in the Western world in the 17th century has also moved to other parts of the globe subsequently. While such movement has been observed by a section of western experts as an import and imposition of higher Western culture on the rest of the world leading to the formation of nation state and attainment of liberation, it has also been seen as an evil on the earth and also as a universal struggle for justice by many Indian thinkers and scholars.

Nationalism as Imposition of Higher Culture: To Gellner (1983) the process of achieving the ideal of nationalism entails"general imposition of a high culture on society where previously low cultures (and)… the establishment of an anonymous, impersonal society, with manually substitutable atomized individual, held together above all by a shared culture of this kind, in place of a previous complex structure of local groups, sustained by folk cultures reproduced locally and idiosyncratically by the micro-groups themselves"(1983: 57).

Eric Hobsbawm (1990) asserts that nationalism is related to territorial state, 'constructed essentially from above, and 'national consciousness' develops

unevenly among social groups and regions of a country. To him, national movements have passed through three phases. The first phase was purely cultural, literary and folkloric, and had no particular political or even national implications. In the second phase a body of pioneers and militants of 'the national idea' and political campaigning for this idea emerged. The third phase began when nationalist programmes acquire mass support. To him the transition from phase second to third is evidently a crucial moment in the chronology of national movements. Sometimes ….it occurs before the creation of a national state; probably very much more often it occurs afterwards, as a consequence of that creation. However, Hobsbawm was very critical on the issue of formation of nationalism in the Third World countries. To him in the Third World, nationalism does not take shape even after the formation of nation state (Hobsbawm: 1990).

14.2.3 Course of Transition of Nationalism

Over the years nationalism has taken a diverse course both in terms of content and its operations. The Western scholars have made distinctions between progressive and reactionary, benign and malign, Western and Eastern, civic and cultural, liberal and illiberal etc (Spencer, P. and Wollman, H. 1998:255-57). In general emphasis has been on the civic elements of nationalism i.e. on "historic territory, legal-political community, legal-political equality of members, and common civic culture and ideology based on standard Western model of the nation. However 'all nationalisms are found to be double faced, looked both forward and backward, both healthy and morbid. Both progress and regress are inscribed in its genetic code from the start' (Nairn1977:347-8, Ignatieff, op. cit. , cf Smith, 1995:99). Spencer and Wollman (1998) argue that there would always be 'the existence of the outsider, the 'Other' in nationalism for creating and recreating the conditions in which supposedly 'good' forms of nationalism may turn 'bad' (Spencer and Wollman 1998:256). The feeing of we and otherness has also taken the form of binaries. At many places in the contemporary world these binaries have appeared to be real ; and there has emerged the tendency of privileging the cultural nationalism as a political ideology, over the civic form of nationalism.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below to answer the question

  ii) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit

1) What do you understand by nationalism?

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2) What is ethnicity?

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14.3 FOUNDATION OF NATIONALISM IN THE INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT

It has been widely pointed out by a large section of Third World scholars that nationalism as has evolved within the framework of the modernization project of the West is having a Western bias which posits the Western form of nationalism as universal part of progression. Nationalism has gained ground in the Third World not because of acceptance of Western liberal tradition, but because of their fiercely anti-imperial stand (Aikant 2006: 170). Hence the Indian freedom poets and philosophers have given distinctive perspective to Indian nationalism.

14.3.1 Nationalism as Universal Struggle for Justice

Gandhi defined nationalism as a part of universal struggles of humanity for justice and equality. He was against armed nationalism and hatred against anybody in the name of nationalism. In his own words: "My love, therefore, of nationalism or my idea of nationalism is that my country may become free, that if need be the whole of the country may die, so that the human race may live. There is no room for race hatred there. Let that be our nationalism" (Gandhi, 1947: 171). He also wrote in Young India in 1925: "It is not nationalism that is evil, … the narrowness, selfishness, exclusiveness which is the bane of modern nations which is evil. Indian nationalism has struck a different path. It wants to organize itself or to find full self-expression for the benefit and service of humanity at large" (Gandhi 1925: 18).

14.3.2 Nationalism as an Evil

Tagore (1950) was disturbed by the increasing fragmentation of world and the growing lust for economic interest and political power in the name of nationalism. To him: A nation, in the sense of the political and economic union of a people, is organized for a mechanical purpose. It is an end in itself. It is for self-preservation. It is merely the other side of power, not of human ideals … The Nation, with all its paraphernalia of power and prosperity, its flags and pious hymns, its blasphemous prayers in the churches, and the literary mock thunders of its patriotic bragging, cannot hide the fact that the Nation is the greatest evil for the Nation… (Tagore, 1950:5-18).

He again says:

"Men, the fairest creations of God, came out of the National manufactory in huge numbers as war-making and money-making puppets; ludicrously vain of their pitiful perfection of mechanism ….It is the aspect of a whole people as an organized power. Nationalism is a great menace". (Tagore, 1950: 26, 66).

Like Gandhi, Tagore was also a patriot, and a humanist. He was worried about the tyranny of power and encaging of liberty for the shallow motive of power. He was for the liberation of humanity as reflected in Gandhi's perspective on nation.

14.3.3 Nationalism as a Project for Normalization of Difference

Highlighting the changing trajectory of nationalism, Partha Chatterjee analyses that though in 'the 1950s and 1960s, it was a feature of anti-colonial struggles in

the Third World, by the 1970s it had become a matter of ethnic politics of killing each other making 'nationalism as a dark, elemental, unpredictable force of primordial nature threatening the orderly clam of civilized life'.

To him while contesting the colonial power nationalism was essentially cultural "normalization" projects based on Universalist justificatory resources without making distinctions of language, religion, caste, or class a matter of indifference. The post colonial modern liberal-democratic state also showed indifference to these concrete differences for acquiring its legitimacy to rule. This produced innumerous fragmented resistances of the sub-altern group to the normalizing project to show the 'limit of the universality of the modern regime of power " (Chatterjee, 1994: 4-13).

14.3.4 Nationalism as Product of Inherited Indigenous Commonness of Indians

In India of late there has been strong claim especially by the Right wing political thinkers to redefine the background of Indian nationalism in terms of inherited common features. Savarkar(1923) locates the roots of Indian nationalism on the claim of inherited common race, land, history, language, culture and common 'others'. Savarkar elaborates that Hindusthan is founded on 'one nation and one race— of a common fatherland and therefore of a common blood' To him the Hindus are one because they own a common Sanskriti (civilization) of Hindu culture and Sanskrit has been the chosen means of expression and preservation of that culture and the history of this race'.: To him, the development of Western science, technology, industry and knowledge systems in India is to be used for achieving material prosperity, and for making bombs, weapons, in order to 'militarize Hindudom', and there is a need to 'Hinduize all politics' and 'militarize Hinduism', (Savarkar 1964:46,Keer 1966:142, cf. Raju 1993: 1936-37).

14.3.5 Critiquing the Commonness

India has been experiencing the proliferation of cultural nationalism. Now there has been an emphasis on homogeneity over heterogeneity and pluralism. It has been widely pointed out however by a section of the scholars that India is built on a plural cultural, religious and linguistic foundation; and Indian nationalism has always stood for a plural cultural framework for inter-connectedness among people as nationalized subjects, and for justice, fraternity, and equality for each other. 'Nation is understood in India in terms of civilizational unity, belief and cultural heritage of the people that is grown out of the freedom of acceptance and rejection. Thus even within the ritualistic and religious orthodoxy the heterodox systems have coexisted in India. It is a mistaken belief that unity of a nation is incumbent upon homogeneity (Aikant, 2006: 175). In fact there has been an uneasy tension between cultural nationalism and the Nehru's vision of secular nationalism.

Significantly India is also experiencing the contradiction between civil and cultural nationalisms in the genealogy of modern post colonial state formation. At times they are so entangled that it is impossible to neatly demarcate each other. Many of these contradictions are assumed to be resolved within the ideal of constitutional citizenship in the country that recognizes secular individual rights at one end and their primordial group rights on the other. Citizenship as practice, ideals and identity is still evolving in India having an interface with

nationality and ethnicity questions even though it has been institutionalized within the constitutional framework of the state.

14.3.6   State Centered and state Renouncing Nationalism

The plural foundation of Indian nationalism encounters a host of challenges as many of the old cultural, economic and political contradictions have remained to be resolved. Many of these contradictions have surfaced and resurfaced as sub nationality issues with autonomy claim. Nationalism is also formed to reinforce the authority of the state. Oommen (2002) has emphasised two contradictory trends. To him, Independent India has emphasised the 'state centered nationalism' that conflates state and the nation and recognizes the sovereign state as the crucial nation maker; and the 'state-renouncing nationalism' characterized by demands for cultural and fiscal autonomy within the federal polity, movements for separate province and identity-seeking ethnic movements. He also observed that while the 'nationals' are asserting their cultural identity and demanding better economic entitlements within their homeland vis-à-vis the ethnics', the tension between all-India single citizenship and multiple national identities is getting exacerbated" (Oommen 2002: 272).

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the space given below to answer the question

ii)   Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this unit

1)   Elaborate the foundations of nationalism in India subcontinent.

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14.4   SECULAR FACETS OF INDIAN ATIONALISM AND THE CONTRADICTIONS

The process of formation of national identity in India encounters forces of westernization, colonization, secularization on the one hand and the prevailing religious and cultural practices on the other. In the predominantly traditional/ primordial social and cultural foundation secularism expanded in India as result of the Western impact and not of colonial impact. The ideal of secular India was promoted by the western educated elite who derived inspiration from western thought, got stimulus from religious reform movements, and the anti-colonial struggle. The ideal of a unified national identity out of multi-religious and cultural diversities demanded a clarified relation between religion and nation state. The fundamental question was as to whether or not there would be demarcations between state and religion and whether Indian nationalism will be founded on majoritarian Hindu state or it would founded on religious pluralism, Mahatma Gandhi, the father of Indian nation wrote:

'Free India will be no Hindu raj, it will be Indian raj based not on the majority of any religious sect or community, but on the representatives of the whole people without distinction of religion…. They would be elected for their record of service and merits. Religion is a personal matter, which should have no place in politics. (M.K. Gandhi, 1947: 277-278) . He further writes: I do not expect India of my dreams to develop one religion that is to be wholly Hindu, or wholly Christian or wholly Mussalman, but I want it to be wholly tolerant, with its religions working side by side with one another (257)… The state has nothing to do with it (religion). The state should look after the secular welfare, but not your or my religion. That is every body's personal affair" (278). Gandhi advocated not religious division but co-existence of multi-religious and cultural entities in free India. His emphasis was on an India that would be free from divisions between masses and classes.

For Jawaharlal Nehru: In a country like India, which has many faiths and religions, no real nationalism can be built except on the basis of secularity…We have not only to live upto the ideals proclaimed in our Constitution, but make them a part of our thinking and living and thus build up a really integrated nation. That does not mean absence of religion, but putting religion on a different plane from that of normal political and social life. Any other approach in India would mean the breaking up of India (Nehru 1983: 330-331).

Nehru has emphasized that the strong spiritual and moral legacy of the saints and sages of India has always provided "a moral foundation and certain moral concepts which hold together our ideals and our life in general", (Nehru 1965: 530-536). A secular state according to Nehru "does not obviously mean a state where religion is discouraged. It means freedom of religion and conscience including freedom for those who have no religion, subject only to their not interfering with each other or with the basic conceptions of our state… The word secular, however, conveys something much more to me, although that might not be its dictionary meaning. It conveys the idea of social and political equality" (Nehru 1965: 327).

Though the spirit of secularism expanded in India under the influence of the west, the context of its emergence between the west, and India were clearly different. In the West under the impetus of Religious Reformation, Industrialization and the Democratic Revolution the state was separated from religion as there was direct clash between the state and the religion . However Indian secularism has grown not with direct clash with religion as in the West. It has rather grown 'as an integrative concept, transcending religions on the one hand and tapping the unifying forces promoted by the secularisation process within the religions of India themselves on the other. Indeed, Indian secularism acts as a bridge between religions in a multi-religious country via the secular concept of equality (Joshi, 2007:). Several cultural ingredients of secularism lie deep rooted in certain aspects of Indian historical tradition,

In the contest of resurgence of religious fundamentalism and sectarianism in contemporary India on the one hand and prevalence of the historical tradition of religious pluralism and tolerance on the other, Madan (1997) points out that secularization that propagates separation and sacred stands in odds with its religious tradition in India. The Western ideology and practice of secularism stand opposite to the beliefs and practices of communities and social groups in India. To him different religious movements of saint tradition have always

propagated tolerance and peaceful coexistence against the tendency of fundamentalism. Madan (2006) further advocated participatory pluralism that recognizes incompleteness of a social group in the absence of others.

In India strict compartmentalization between secular and primordial, individual and collective identities seldom take place due to several economic, socio-cultural, political and historical considerations. These have caused frequent encroachment on the secular and primordial identities which are reflected in the intersectionality between the identities of ethnicity, nationality and citizenship in India.

Neither the dream of the Father of the Nation for the eradication of difference between the masses and classes, nor the Nehru's idea of social and political equality is realized in the real sense of the term. In essence eradication of poverty, unemployment and livelihood insecurity has remained a distant dream; proper education and training and spirit of science and rationality are yet to reach the door steps of each house hold, feudal domination and practice of caste linguistic, regional, racial and gender oppressions and discrimination have remained the realities of life for the largest segments of the population. These are also accompanied by huge divides in society wherein a limited few has got enormous command over resources, power, income, information and social status, and the vast majority have emerged to be the marginalized in society. The process of nation building in many ways depicts a fractured image of India. Hence while the historical tradition presents pluralism and existence of primordial identities, in contemporary society social and economic deprivations and inequalities acquire interface with primordial collective identities. Importantly primordial identities have acquired political meaning both for people and the politicians with diverse interests and purpose though.

Thus the Western concept of cultural nationalism appears to be inadequate to explain nationalism in India in terms of binaries In India amount of mix between the cultural and civil nationalism has remained a reality. It is very often difficult to distinguish between the two as primordiality and ethnicity have remained deeply intertwined with varieties of civil practices. The micro or local level cultural/ ethnic differences get overshadowed during exigencies and mega events of the country. These were well depicted during the Independence Struggle against the British, Indo-Pak wars in 1947-48, 1965, 1971, 1999, Indo-China War 1962, Kargil war 2002 and so on. During the sports events like cricket, football, and hockey matches, Commonwealth, Olympic, Asiad, SAARC Games etc 'near' such unity is constructed. Such national identity has upward and downward swinging of consolidation and collective expression as these are either expressed during the political exigencies of outside aggression or consolidation of collective emotion through games and sports etc. In everyday discourse on nationalism the love for *desh* (native land) dissolve the binaries and accommodates all varieties of diversities together without having an identified 'other'. Such discourse also accommodates the assertion of individual and collective rights as part of democratic tradition. The broad framework of traditional love for *desh* has also Indianised historically all outsiders who came to India even as invaders. The spirit of nationalism, civic and cultural, that have penetrated India as parts of Western ideology, has remained multifaceted and is yet to be fixed in either of these forms as it is made to move like a pendulum from cultural character at one end to civic on the other frequently. This movement continues as the secular credential of the citizenship has remained fluid and ethnicity gets privilege over the rest though tacitly.

14.5 CO-EXISTENCE WITH DIVERSE COMPLEMENTARITIES

In the final analysis, the interface among ethnicity, nationality and citizenship in India need to be understood not in a homogenizing rigid unitary framework, but in terms of a flexible foundation of multi-culturalism and religious pluralism. Such flexibility has provided the space for the coexistence of these categories with diverse complementarities despite the realities of secretarial interventions.

It shows that though India is largely a traditional and spiritual country, its traditional spiritual ethos is seldom internalized to give it the expressions of cultural nationalism. As a homeland of four great religions-Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikkhim and innumerous native tribal religions, a good host of other major religions like Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and rich saint tradition, India is historically founded on spiritual and cultural accommodation than of an absolute homogenized identity. Hinduism that is followed by the vast majority in the country is predominantly used as a liberal way of life for the accommodation of multi-culturalism than to be an expression of dogmatized insulated communitarianism.

Though ethnicity is constantly making its imprint on citizenship and nationality, and it has remained a blockade for the emergence of secular citizenship and civic nationalism in the Western sense of the term, in reality it has remained difficult to isolate them culturally. In fact, western prescription of secularism in yet to get cultural rootedness in Indian society. As Joshi (2007) points out 'some of the basic failures of contemporary Indian secularism arise from the lack of rootedness in the Indian cultural traditions which, to a large extent, still mean the Indian religious traditions. To ignore that Indian religions and the Indian cultural traditions are closely intertwined is to ignore basic historical and sociological facts and processes'. Madan (1997) also points out that the Western ideology and practice of secularism stand apposite to the beliefs and practices of communities and social groups in India. It is again important to make it very clear that the traditional beliefs and cultural practices is not to be understood in terms of the practice of communalism and fundamentalism. Hence Madan (1997) points out the significance of the saint tradition in India that has always propagated tolerance and peaceful coexistence against the tendency of fundamentalism.

As against these backdrops, the idea of a nation in India based on one religion, one land, one geography and language only ignores the plural foundation of society that is essentially multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. Though during the independence struggle, the significance of such diversity was ignored while responding to the exigencies and nationalism became a normalization project both during the independence struggle and thereafter, it has not emphasized a common cultural framework. The normalization project of post independent India, has propagated equality, fraternity and justice, and has asserted secularism, socialism and democratic republic, through constitutional and progressive legislative measures are yet to hold good for all sections of people by overshadowing the significance of primordial and multi-ethnic realities underpinning at the grassroot. The sectarian primordial orientations and ethnic affiliations are widely available for political manipulation mostly because of capacity, choice and upward mobility deprivation of common people. In India along with the protests and revolts of peasants, farmers, forest dwellers, displaced

persons etc collective assertions are also articulated and staged based on ethnic/ primordial identities. Ethnic and other localized upraises however are seen not only with suspicion, and many a time these are designated as 'others' by the state and the opponents. There is indeed a need to eradicate ethnicization of poverty, deprivation and non-integration by attacking the cause of poverty in effective terms, and not its syndrome. It is not to suggest the annihilation of ethnicity, but to preserve it as a part of rich Indian tradition by providing each ethnic group equal opportunities for development so that patriotic spirit of each social group is nurtured and preserved.

Popularly India is more of a country of patriots than a nationalist state. As Nandy (2006) elaborates while nationalism is still evolving, for a large section it has remained to be folkloric, cultural and patriotic phenomena, by remaining non-specific, non-ideological 'presuming the existence of communities based on religions, castes, sects, linguistic affiliations and ethnicity other than the country. Such phenomena expect the state to serve the needs of a society and a culture, not the culture and the society for the state (Nandy 2006). In fact in everyday existence, India experiences the innumerable interaction of the patriotic citizens. Their affiliation to the country is non-ideological; their outlook is constructed/ developed not keeping in mind hostility against 'others', their love for their local community and culture pre-existed the modern society as peasants, farmers, workers, artisans as members of various ethnic groups. Their patriotism provides the foundation of a plural society and culture in India and the foundation of a multi-national/multi-ethnic society therein. Hence it would be a disproportionate claim to assume that nationalism pre-existed in modern India as a hegemonic common construct.

To Eric Hobsbawm (1990) nationalism evolved from cultural folkloric to national idea and then to mass based national movement. To him in the chronology of national movements, nationalism occurs before the creation of a national state; probably more often it occurs afterwards, as a consequence of that nation state. To him in the Third World, nationalism does not take shape even after the formation of nation state (Hobsbawm: 1990). He was concerned with the formation of political/ cultural nationalism. Though political nationalism is a Western import to India and gradually took shape during the independence struggle against the British, civic nationalism as reflection of patriotism was a part of great tradition of Indian society that connected the people's multiple cultural threads. Though most citizens of the country are the bearers of elements of civic nationalism, in contemporary India, political nationalism as an ideology has a thin presence in most citizens. Hence Nandy observes that nationalism at this level is a viable ideological entity mainly in the small minority of urban, educated, modern citizens in whom the principles of the older way of life have become shaky (Nandy 2006).

Contemporary India witnesses confrontation of ideas between the civic and political/cultural nationalism. While civic nationalism has predominantly remained a process to promote solidarity, sympathy and fraternity among people of diverse ethnic origins and to preserve the glory and heritage of the plural foundation of the society, the political nationalism emphasizes uniformity and commonness . In many ways hegemonic cultural nationalism threatens the plural foundation of the society by identifying 'other' from within and brings in a sense of fragmentation in this society by imposing an overwhelming homogenization

even at the cost of morality and human obligation. It makes man enemy of man. The recent attack on the Christian churches, attack on the Muslims for alleged beef eating, Ghar Wapsi and Love Jihad etc are only a few pointers to the creation of such 'others' from within. These incidences only make the apprehension of Tagore (1955) true that "nationalism is a great menace and nation is the greatest evil for the humanity'.

If a nation is to be a soul and a spiritual principle founded on rich legacies of memories as thought of by Renan (1882), or if it is to be an imagined community with the image of their communion as propagated by Anderson (1983), or if is to be an effort for establishing an impersonal society with shared culture as propagated by Gellner (1983), or to be a good nationalism as elaborated by Greenfield (1993) and Ignatieff (1993), the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious foundation of Indian society is to be protected. The good legacies and memories of co-existence, forming of communion across the social groups, long tradition of sharing and give and take provide the foundation of Indian nationalism and not declaring the imagined 'other' even from within. As Gandhi writes: There is no room for race hatred here. Let that be our nationalism (Gandhi 1947).

Though nationality, citizenship and ethnicity as manifestation of identity available to all, people use them more pragmatically than as a matter of emotional expression in their everyday life. In a multi cultural and multi-ethnic society relationship between the identities of ethnicity, nationality and citizenship are intrinsic. These relationships have acquired complicacies in contemporary India in the wake of fast economic social and demographic shift in society, proliferation of regional ethnic and sub-national movements and resurgence of right wing nationalism. The foundation of India's common man's identity that is widely located in spiritualism, animalism and innumerous folkloric traditions of primordiality also finds a space for nurturing within the constitutional foundation of brotherhood, fraternity and secular citizenship in India. The constitution of India has empowered the people to assert for secular citizenship for equality, justice and development, and simultaneously made commitment to preserve and promote diverse linguistic, religious and cultural practices. Efforts so far have been not to impose hegemonic cultural assimilation on all groups, but to promote civic culture in the public space by ensuring equality, rule of law and justice for everybody and also to show equal respect to all cultural and religious groups. Efforts are also in the making with people's initiative from below for inculcating a culture of secular citizenship and civic nationalism through a process of compartmentalization between secular and primordial in public discourse and simultaneously accommodating and showing respect and providing equal treatment to all cultural and ethnic groups as part of historical diversities as realities of India. The challenge however remains as to how such compartmentalization, complementarities and culture of accommodation is to be retained in contemporary India. The answer in all possibility lies with the inculcation and assertion of citizenship rights.

Check Your Progress 3

1) Explain the secular facets of Indian nationalism and the challenges to it.

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2) Explore the dynamics of co-existence with diverse complementarities in Indian nationalism.

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14.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have described the important facets of Indian nationalism and then relation with ethnicity and other primordial identities. We have also introduced you with the dominant concepts of nationalism. The concepts of nationalism as universal struggle for justice, perception of nationalism as an evil, cultural articulation of nationalism as a product of inherited indigenous commonness of Indian society and the debate on nationalism as a project for normalization of differences are presented in this unit at length. It has also provided a critique of the perception of Indian nationalism in terms of inherited commonness; described the facets of of state centered and state renouncing nationalism, secular facets of nationalism and the contradictions in it and realities of co-existence with diverse complementarities in nationalism in Indian society.

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GLOSSARY

Nation- building – The process of development of national identity

Nationalism: Nationalism is the feeling of individual(s) or groups that he/she belong to the nation. It is the sense of belongingness to the nation or a sense of loyalty which comes due to his/her birth or as a member of the particular nation.

State – A political association characterized by territorial jurisdiction, non-voluntary membership, definable rights and duties of members and monopoly over legitimate use of power