Mudit Jain GS-1 Society Notes

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** DECODE ETHICS BOOK BY **

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UPSC MAINS Ethics 2019 Paper Question Sources And Answer Content:
| Q. 1. (a) | What are the basic principles of public life? Illustrate any three with suitable examples.  
Decode Ethics Book Page No: Public life page 76, principles page 81. |
| Q. 1. (b) | What do you understand by the term ‘public servant’? Reflect on the expected role of public servant.  
Decode Ethics Book Page No: Public servant page 294, roles page 82, values from code page 195 |
| Q. 2. (a) | Effective utilization of public funds is crucial to meet development goals. Critically examine the reasons for under-utilization and mis-utilization of public funds and their implications.  
Decode Ethics Book Page No: 331-333, sample question 2 page 334 |
| Q. 2. (b) | “Non-performance of duty by a public servant is a form of corruption”. Do you agree with this view? Justify your answer  
Decode Ethics Book Page No: PoCA (forbearance) page 335, sample question 2 page 344 |
| Q. 3. (a) | What is meant by the term ‘constitutional morality’? How does one uphold constitutional morality?  
Decode Ethics Book Page No: 195 |
| Q. 3. (b) | What is meant by ‘crisis of conscience’? How does it manifest in the public domain?  
Decode Ethics Book Page No: 266-268 |
| Q. 4. (a) | Explain the basic principles of citizens’ charter movement and bring out its importance.  
Decode Ethics Book Page No: 315-318 |
Q. 4. (b)  There is a view that the official secrets act is an obstacle to the implementation of Rights to Information act. Do you agree with the view? Discuss

Decode Ethics Book Page No: Confidentiality page 182, administrative secrecy page 257, RTI rejections page 300

Q. 5. (a)  What do you understand by probity in governance? Based on your understanding of the term, suggest measures for ensuring probity in government.

Decode Ethics Book Page No: 291, 292, sample question 2 page 294

Q. 5. (b)  “Emotional Intelligence is the ability to make your emotions work for you instead of against you.” Do you agree with this view? Discuss.

Decode Ethics Book Page No: Values-emotion page 96, definition page 200, quotes page 219, 220

Q. 6. (a)  “An unexamined life is not worth living.” – Socrates

Decode Ethics Book Page No: Socrates ideal life page 222, Kierkegaard life page 239

Q. 6. (b)  “A man is but the product of his thoughts. What he thinks, he becomes.” – M.K.Gandhi

Decode Ethics Book Page No: 109-111, 125-126, sample question 10 page 242

Q. 6. (c)  “Where there is righteousness in the heart, there is beauty in the character. When there is beauty in the character, there is harmony in the home. When there is harmony in the home, there is order in the nation. When there is order in the nation, there is peace in the world.” – A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

Decode Ethics Book Page No: Kalam’s quote in reverse page 123
I would like to express my gratitude to many people who saw me through this book. I am thankful to my family, teachers and mentors for making me capable enough to write this book.

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Thanks for your pro bono contributions.
Secularism In India

- The challenges of castism, communalism and religious fundamentalism, involving separatism and violence in India, are the major threats to our secular polity.
- They weaken the working and stability of our secular federal system and militate against the basic principles governing our national life.
- Inter-communal and inter-caste tensions, communal riots, caste carriages and linguistic animosities have increased.
- This disruptive element should be suppressed with firm step if India is to emerge as a democratic secular polity.
- Secularism is one of the fundamental values of our national life, emphasized by the national movement and the founding fathers of the Republic.
- Secularism and communalism are considered to be binary opposites.
- Secularism is a sign of modernity, plurality, coexistence, rationalism and developing with a fast growing multicultural society.
- Communalism, which some consider as being based on love of one's community, has come to acquire the derogatory meaning of an attitude that is narrow, based on prejudices, hatred and violence. In India to pursue communal politics as religion is the main identifying factor and also acting against the interests of the 'other'.
- Its origin can be traced to the western world view.
- The word secular is derived from Latin word sacularis which meant, among other things, 'that which belongs to this world, non-spiritual, temporal as opposed to spiritual or ecclesiastical thing'.
- It is separation of state politics or administration from religious matters, and 'secular education.' is a system of training from which religious teaching is definitely excluded.
• Philosophically, the term reveals the influence of **positivism and utilitarianism**. Positivism supplied a conception of knowledge affording a basis upon which it was held that religious considerations could be ruled out and utilitarianism lent itself to a non-religious explanation of the motives and ends of conduct.

• Neither theism nor atheism enters into the secularist scheme. **Secularism was coined in 1850 by G.J. Holyoake** who saw it a movement, which provided an alternative to theism. Historically, secularism intermingled with and was at its best with atheism.

• **Bradlaugh** argued that secularism was bound to contest theistic belief and that material progress was impossible, so long as superstitions born out of religious beliefs and practices remained a powerful force in society.

• Its principles could be sustained by intellect and were equally applicable to all humanity. Morality was seen as being based on reason and as seeking to establish the common welfare, Reason had to be unfettered by religious considerations.

• Western liberal ideas such as nationalism, secularism and democracy had an impact on the Indian intelligentsia, which increasingly incorporated them in debates, resolutions and strategies of struggle against British colonialism and later included them in Constitution.

• Over the last fifty years many questions, both theoretical and procedural, have been raised. One of the questions much debated and contested in the 1980s and 1990s is the concept of secularism itself.

• The tendency to **privatize religion and compartmentalize life** into the private and the public sphere was never very marked in India, and religion continued to sway the lives of the people.

• The British Government encouraged the tendency to perceive and calculate political interests in religious and communal terms.

• In spite of establishing the concept of the rule of law and a common judicial system, it based personal (family) laws on grounds of religious laws and differences.

**The Impact of National Movement**

"When the national movement for independence gathered momentum, it was realized by the leaders of the movement that a united India which aspired for freedom could not be achieved from the British, unless the communal problem was satisfactorily settled.

Culmination of this idea can be seen reflected in the Nehru (Motilal) Committee Report of 1928. The Committee recommended for the first time, a federation as a constitutional remedy, to drive out the autocracy.

Gandhiji firmly believed that without Hindu-Muslim unity and understanding, the British would never transfer power to Indians. That is why, throughout his life he stood for Hindu-Muslim unity. He was also unreservedly opposed to idea of separate electorates among Hindus on a-caste basis. Hence, he opposed the British plan for separate electorates to the Scheduled Caste and even undertook a fast unto death till his position was accepted by both the British and Ambedkar.

Jawaharlal Nehru was very familiar with rationale of the (Motilal) Nehru Report. In the next decade and a half, he played a significant role in the Indian National Congress as one of its leading spokesmen. During that period, Nehru had the opportunity to study the communal problem in
depth and find a suitable solution for it. He was convinced that its solution did not lie in communal electorates and therefore he was opposed to that idea. In the same manner, he was also convinced that partition of the country on religious or communal basis was no solution and therefore he opposed it whenever he had an opportunity to do so.

So our national struggle was organized on the basis of religious groups. So it grew out of its past history of a wide and general movement in thoughts and feelings which emerged gradually from the intermingling of different groups and communities in consequence of the impetus given to it by changes in social, economic and political life.

The Constitution drafted by Motilal Nehru as the chairman of the Historic Nehru Committee in 1928, that eventually became the foundation for the Constitution of India; had a specific provision regarding secularism in these terms: "there shall be no state religion for the Commonwealth of India or for any province in Commonwealth, nor shall the state either directly or indirectly endow any religion or give any religion any preference or impose any disability on account of religious beliefs-or religious status”

INDIAN POLITY

- Nehru's secularism was based on a commitment to scientific humanism married with a progressive view of historical change.
- Jawaharlal Nehru has been a leading champion of the concept of the secular state. Religion is all right", he has said, "When applied to ethics and morals, but it is not good mixed up with politics." This statement seems to be in direct contrast to the views of Mahatma Gandhi, whom Nehru himself once described as "essentially a man of religion, a Hindu to the innermost depths of his being.”
- On the other hand, Gandhiji's secularism was based on a commitment to the brotherhood of religious communities based on their respect for and pursuit of truth.
- Gandhi and Nehru, the master and disciple, approached the problem of the relation between religion and politics from very different angles, but essentially, their positions were not so far apart as far as the nature of Indian politics was concerned.
- Gandhi, a deeply religious man, saw merit and truth in all religions and he "felt that any type of political association based exclusively on adherence to a particular religion was worse than undemocratic”.
- Nehru, who professed himself to be an agnostic, said that "I have no desire to interfere with any person's belief", but he objects strongly to any efforts that perpetuate "a complete structure of society by giving it religious sanction and authority”.

So, the Objective Resolution which he presented in December 1946, became the basis of the Indian Constitution in the following terms:

- Justice: social, economic and political;
- Equality of status, of opportunity and before the law;
- Freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship, vocation, association and action subject to law and morality;
- Adequate safeguards for minorities backward classes and tribal area and depressed and other backward classes…..
The Constitution was made in the backdrop of the partition of India and the most massive migration of population that the world has ever witnessed.

Firm on its commitment to uphold secularism the Constituent Assembly stood for a secular state as against a theocratic.

1. **Article 25** describes glorious freedom as the freedom of individual conscience;
2. **Article 15** prevents discrimination on the grounds only of religion, caste, sex, race, place of birth or any one of them;
3. **Article 27**: The state is prevented from imposing taxes on grounds of religion alone
4. **Article 26**: The state is prevented from imparting religious education in government schools
5. The Constitution also establishes a **single citizenship** and ensures **equality before law**
6. It retains cultural and educational rights for linguistic and religious minorities (**Article 28, 30**) in the hope that this would provide a constitutional guarantee to retain the plural fabric of society and eliminate any fear of the erosion of minority identities.

- Conceding these social rights to minorities is seen by critics as a violation of the principle of separation of religion from politics. Article 30 is a subject of controversy and the BJP demands its amendment on the ground that there should be no discrimination on ground of religion in matters of education and that the appeasement of the minorities must stop.
- **Who are the people who constitute a minority and what should be the relationship between the minority and majority on the one hand, and the state and the minorities on the other are important questions.**
- The political safeguards considered were the question of **joint vs. separate electorates**, reservation of seats in the central and state legislative assemblies and in the cabinet and the administrative services.
- By an overwhelming majority in the **Advisory Committee** on the subject of Minority Rights and later in the Constituent Assembly, the system of separate electorates was rejected in the new Constitution on the ground that a common electorate would help remove the poison of communalism from the body politic.
- Reservation of seats in the cabinet, as a constitutional provision, was also seen as giving rise to serious difficulties and a constitutional guarantee for representation of minority communities in the public services in proportion to the population was considered as a dangerous innovation that was not in keeping with a secular democratic state.
- The question which group constitutes the minority and which the majority remains a subject of debate. A majority community at the national level, say the Hindus, may be a minority in certain states. e.g. Punjab, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizorun, Jammu and Kashmir. It is not only religious groups who regard themselves as minorities. Minority status is also claimed by caste, tribal as well as linguistic groups to draw attention to a situation of self-defined deprivation.
- **If the litmus test of both secularism and democracy is the place enjoyed by the minorities’ one must examine their demands and issues.**

**SECULARISM: ITS BASIC OUTLINES**
The concept of secularism as embodied in the Constitution of India cannot be viewed in the sense
in which it is viewed in the West, but in the context of the following provisions of the Constitution:
the Constitution guarantees freedom of conscience, freedom to profess, practice and propagate
religion and also freedom to establish religious institutions and manage or administer their
affairs. It prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion and guarantees legal and social
equality to all by providing for equality before law and equal protection of laws, prohibiting
discrimination with regard to places of public importance and providing for equal
opportunity in matters of public employment. The Constitution also guarantees religious
minorities the right to conserve their script, language and culture.

The provisions would naturally indicate that the Constitution of India endeavors to build up in
India the philosophy of secularism on freedom, equality and tolerance in the field of religion. And viewed in this context it is clear that the Constitution does not build a wall of separation between the state and religion.

**Thus, the distinguishing features of a secular democracy as contemplated by the constitution are:**

1. that the state will not identify itself with or be controlled by any religion;
2. while the state guarantees to everyone the right to profess whatever religion one
   chooses to follow (which includes also the right to be an agnostic or an atheist),
   it will not accord any preferential treatment to any of them;
3. that no discrimination will be shown by the state against any person on account
   of his religion and faith;
4. that the right of every citizen, subject to any general condition to enter any
   office under the state will be equal to that of his fellow citizens.

Although the term secularism was not in the original text of the Constitution, secularism was a
subject of animated discussion when the Constituent Assembly look up for consideration the
provisions dealing with the freedom of religion.

**Indian Constitution the Supreme Court observed:** "There is no mysticism in the secular
color of the state. Secularism is neither anti-God nor pro-God; it treats alike the devout, the
agnostic and the atheist. It eliminates God from the matter of the state and ensures no one
shall be discriminated against on the ground of religion.

**Basic outline of the secularism is enshrined in the following Articles of the Constitution:**

1. Preamble: It is true that the word 'secular' did not first occur either in Article 25 or 26 or in any
   other Article or Preamble of the Constitution. But the Constitution (42nd Amendment) Act, 1976,
   the Preamble was amended and for the words 'Sovereign Democratic Republic' the words
   'Sovereign, socialist, secular, Democratic Republic' were substituted.

2. No State Religion.

It follows from that:

- Article 27).
• No religious instruction shall be provided in any educational institution wholly run by state funds.
• Even though religious instruction is imparted in educational institutions recognised by state or receiving aid from the state, no person at lending such institution shall be compelled to receive that religious instruction without the consent of himself or of his guardian. In short, while religious instruction is totally banned in state-owned educational institutions, in other denominational institutions it is not totally prohibited but it must not be imposed upon people of other religions without their consent (Article 28).

3. Freedom of Conscience: Every person is guaranteed the freedom of conscience and the freedom to profess, practice and propagate his own religion, subject only:

• to restrictions imposed by the state on the interest of public order, morality and health.
• to regulations or restrictions made by state relating, to any economic, financial, political or outer secular activity which may be associated with religious practice, but do not really related to the freedom of conscience;
• to measures of social reform and for throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus.

Freedom to Manage Religious Affairs:

• to establish and maintain institutions (or religious and charitable purposes.
• to manage its own affairs in matters of religion;
• to own and acquire movable and immovable property; and
• to administer such property in accordance with law (Article 26)

In M. Isnetil Earn p17 VS Union of India (Ayodhya Case) the Supreme Court has stimmerised the true concept of secularism under the Constitution as follows:

"It is clear from the constitutional scheme that it guarantees equality in the matter of all individuals and groups irrespective of their faith emphasizing that there is no religion of state itself. The Preamble of the Constitution read in particular with Article 25 to 28 emphasizes this aspect and indicates that it is in this manner the concept of secularism is embodied in the constitutional scheme as a creed adopted by the Indian people has to he understood while examining the constitutional validity of any legislation. **The concept of secularism is one facet of the right to equality woven as the central golden thread in the fabric depicting the pattern of the scheme in our constitution**".

It is amazing that some Christian leaders assert that the word 'propagates' in Article 25(1) gives them a fundamental right to convert people of other beliefs into Christianity, by any means. **The Supreme Court while examining the MP and Orissa Acts in 1977 held that** "if any such right to convert be conceded, such right would belong to every religion, so that there would inevitably be a breach of public peace if every religious community carried on a campaign to convert people belonging to other faiths, by the use of force, fraud, inducement or allurement. The state was, therefore, constitutionally authorized to maintain public order by prohibiting and penalizing conversion (including attempt to convert) if force, inducement or allurement was used by the person or persons advocating conversion in any particular case".
**Theory and Practice of Secularism**

According to Nehru, narrow religious groupings, binding or loyalties must exclude many sections of the population and only create Hindu nationalism, Muslim nationalism and Christian nationalism and not Indian nationalism. In a country with different religious groups, it is important to build real nationalism on the basis of the secularity. Secularism in essential for the survival of multi-nation state.

What is a secular state? Nehru was not happy with the word 'secular' but used it for want of a better word:

"It does not obviously mean a state where religion as such is discouraged. It means freedom of religion and conscience, including freedom for those who have no religion. It means free play for all religions, subject only to their not interfering with each other or with the basic concept of our state".

A secular state, therefore, is not an anti-religious state but a state without a religion. It involves the concept of religious freedom for all faiths, religious co-existence, equal citizenship rights. It also characterizes an attitude of mind which must be shared by the minority and majority religious communities living within the state.

K.N. Panikkar argues that there are three characteristics of the kind of secular state that India claims to be:

1. Political institutions must be based on the economic and social interests of the entire community, without reference to religion, race or seat; that all must enjoy equal rights and no privileges, prescriptive rights or special claims should be allowed for any group on the basis of religion.
2. It eliminates from the body politic ideas of division between individuals and groups on the basis of their faith and racial origin.
3. It is obvious that a composite secular state must accept as the basis of its policy what Aristotle termed as 'distributive justice', the idea that all communities must have power, as they must share the duties and responsibilities of being citizens.

Secularism is essential for democracy, even though in its ideal form it may not exist anywhere in the world.

India ran into difficulties soon after independence on the question of a **Common Chit Code (CCC)** which was meant to bring about gender justice and equality uniformly amongst the different religious communities. The government, in spite of its majority in the Parliament, had to give in to pressure front orthodox Muslims those changes in the personal law amounted to interference in the religious laws of the community. Instead the Hindu Code Bill was passed which enacted changes in the Hindu marriage laws.

The issue of a CCC has since been beset with acrimonious debate, convicting a question of gender justice and equality into a communal one. Many other such questions acquired a religious connotation and therefore became problematic for state policy..

Thus, we see after forty years of independence Nehru's concept of secularism has begun to be subjected to considerable critical appraisal both intellectually and politically. This vision is treated
as idealistic, unrealistic and influenced by alien western concepts that cannot take roots in the Indian environments.

The majority does not know whether it is desirable to privatize religion and if it is how that may be done. Secularism, therefore, is a ‘social myth’ and an alien ‘cultural ideology’ that takes the support of the state and has failed to make the desired headway in India. What has made great strides are Hindu revivalism and Muslim and Sikh fundamentalism.

It is important to note that while none of the above critics rejects secularism, they all see it as problematic to define and its, as a concept that in some ways involves, in the Indian context, a mismatch between state and society.

Further, the implementation of the policy of secularism left a lot to be desired. Communal parties and organizations continue to be operative in politics. Even secular parties do not refrain from exploiting communal sentiments for political gains. External support to communal and secessionist movements aggravates the situations the government under pressure tries to placate different groups by allowing time on the radio and television for religious preaching, sometimes to one group and sometimes to another.

The Supreme Court and Secularism

On a highly politicized issue like secularism it is difficult for the judiciary to play a conclusive role. However, it is important to examine a few cases and judgements made by the Supreme Court which highlight the issue of secularism versus communalism.

The constitution of India vests the Election Commission of India with the authority to hold free and fair elections and to take preventive steps to control malpractices.

Section 123(3) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, declares appeals on the grounds of religion, race, caste, community, language or the use of religions or national symbols by the candidates or their election agents or by any other persons with the consent of the candidates or their election agents as corrupt practice. In the R.K. Bukhari v. Mehra Case (AIR-1975, SC 1788), the returned candidate and the other contesting candidates were both Muslims. It was argued that one of the candidates had criticized Mr. Chagla of the Congress party for not living a true Muslim as he had supported a change in the Muslim Personal law and that such criticism on religious grounds amounted to a corrupt practice under section 123(3). The Supreme Court upheld the view that propaganda on grounds of religion, profession and practice is not merely an undignified personal attack on candidates but also an attempt to get votes by arousing the religious sentiments of electors. It further upheld the view that the unity and integrity of the nation and public peace and order cannot be allowed to be disturbed in the name of religion, for that would violate the secular democratic character of Constitution.

In the S. Harcharan Singh v. S. Sajjan Singh, AIR 1985 SC 236 it was alleged that the returned candidate, his election agent and other persons with his consent had appealed to the electors in the name of Sikh religion. The trial court dismissed the petition and justice Saliyasacllii Mukherji speaking further court held that mere distribution of tickets and sponsorship by a religious body like this would not itself constitute an appeal on the grounds of religion. This infirmity cannot,
perhaps, be avoided so long as parties are allowed to function and are recognised, through their composition trap be predominantly based on membership of particular communities or religion.

**Thus, the courts have failed to strike a balance between the requirements of secularism in the country and the right of a candidate of political party having religious affiliation to exploit his affiliation for winning the election.** This separation is essential for the unity and integrity of the nation since election propaganda whether based on linguistic or communal rivalry can be quite poisonous and disturbs the whole democratic polity. However, courts come into the picture only when a particular Act is alleged to have been committed. There is an inherent limitation which prevents the courts from going beyond the judicial circumference and therefore the courts cannot be the appropriate forum for preventing the use of such practices.

**Conclusion**

- Secularism has to play a decisive role at present stage of Indian democracy.
- It is so because today when the Indian democracy seems to face the challenge of narrow divisive trends and tendencies, a rational and scientific approach which is the basis of secularism has become a matter of utmost importance.
- Communal disturbances which have distinguished the public life in the recent past, as well the birth and growth of narrow and divisive trends and obscurantist theories are mainly the result of ignorance can be fought not by legislation alone, nor by a negative fiat alone, but by education, and in the process of educating the traditional Indian mind, secularism and all that it stands for the political leaders have to play a major role.

I do not expect India of my dreams to develop one religion, i.e., 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: Mahatma Gandhi.

Is India a secular country only on paper or does secularism actually exist in India; or is in the form of pseudo-secularism, a term the BJP and its allies seem to repeatedly harp on.

During the freedom struggle, secularism was emerging as the most dominant principle. The leaders of the Indian National Congress; Gandhi, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Nehru and others were deeply committed to the ideal of secularism, though each expressed it in very different manners. Secularism became the mantra of the Indian nation, a nation exhausted by partition and sectarian riots and above all the assassination of Gandhiji, did not want any more divisive talk. The founding fathers represented the aspirations of the different sections of society and it is due to the struggles of these different people that secular principles got enshrined into the Indian constitution.

Under Jawaharlal Nehru and later under his successors in the Congress Party, the concept of a secular nation-state was officially adopted as India's path to political modernity and national integration. Unlike in the West, where secularism came mainly out of the conflict between the Church and the State, secularism in India was conceived as a system that sustained religious and cultural pluralism.

In the post Independent scenario the social dynamics was very complex. The process of secularization/industrialization was going on at a slow pace. Even at this stage, though constitution was secular, the state apparatus: the bureaucracy, the judiciary, the army and the police were
infiltrated by communal elements. The Congress government, though predominantly secular, had many leaders in important positions that were influenced by a Hindu communal ideology. This resulted in a social development that was mixed; on the one hand secularism thrived and on the other though communalism remained dormant, was never dead. With the social changes of the late 70's and the early 80's, communalism got a strong boost and it started attacking secularism in a big way.

The B.J.P. was quick to take up the mantle of 'the' communal party, riding on the wave of the post-mandal upper class/caste backlash. The BJP began attacking, what they called "pseudo-secularism", which pampered the minorities at the expense of the majority and demanded that special rights for minorities be taken away.

Supporting the BJP was the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, a relatively new outfit with branches all over the world and drawing on support, both moral and financial, from the Hindu diaspora in the West. This took an aggressive form when the Babri Masjid\Ramjanambhoomi controversy erupted. This period also saw the rise of other militant Hindu organizations such as the Bajrang Dal and the Shivsena. These groups quickly mushroomed and poisoned the social space with communal rhetoric and the agenda of Hindu Rashtra; and launched an ideological, social and political onslaught on secular ethos, syncretic culture and composite nationalism.

The attack on the Mosque at Ayodhya led to a rash of violence across the country. The events leading to the demolition of Babri Masjid and their aftermath of communal carnage mark a watershed in the history of free India. The traumatic events clearly exposed the chasm that had been created between the two communities by communal forces.

The year 2002 witnessed one of the most devastating riots in Gujarat where mobs went on a rampage, destroying Muslim homes and businesses, killed Muslims, including men women and children and drove thousands of people away from their homes. The ostensible reason for this fury was the burning of a train coach that was carrying Hindu pilgrims returning from Ayodhya. Fifty-nine people including women and children died in the fire. This action, sparked off, as the state's Chief Minister put it, in Newtonian terms, a reaction, except that it was grossly disproportionate to the original crime. A Human Right's Watch report paints a chilling picture of state complicity in the religious violence in Gujarat. This marks the first time when the state has emerged as a major player and actor in violence by mobs, a qualitative change from previous such situations in India. It is in this backdrop that one has to understand, as to why it is only during the last decade and a half that secularism has come under a cloud and the concept of a Hindu Rashtra is being asserted aggressively.

Today, the biggest challenge to the Indian nation is coming from forces claiming to represent the mainstream majority. There is an emergence of extremist voices that claim to speak for Hindus and they are laying down demands that threaten the very idea of a secular India. The biggest area of concern is that the state has emerged to be complicit, as an actor and player in mounting this challenge to Indian pluralism, which goes under the name of Hindutva.

The communal forces are actively propagating the myth that Secularism is a new mask of fundamentalism. They denigrate the secular policies, which are a hindrance to Hindu Right's unobstructed march to subjugate the oppressed in general and minorities in particular. They are
equating fundamentalism with Islam; and the policies of Indian rulers with secularism, and the appeasement of mullahs as being synonymous with secular policies. Further, Hindutva forces accuse that secularism pampers the Muslims as a vote bank. The Muslims are accused of extraterritorial loyalty because they allegedly cheer for Pakistan whenever India and Pakistan play cricket. Since Muslims are being thought synonymous to fundamentalism; therefore the assertion that the Indian state is appeasing fundamentalists in the name of secularism. It is precisely on this charge that the Father of Indian Nationalism, Mahatma Gandhi, was assassinated by one of the votaries of Hindutva.

The Christians, who are much lesser in number, are accused of being more loyal to the Vatican, another outside force and of trying to convert poor Hindus with inducements of education and food. Who can forget the brutal burning of Graham Staines and his two minor sons by a member of the Bajrang Dal in the name of religion? Or even the rape of some sisters in Gujarat, their fault being the spreading of the word of their God.

The fact, however, is that the social and the economic conditions of the Muslim community is dismal. If at all the opportunist political policies of various governments have struck compromises, it has been with certain religious leaders of the minorities and the minorities have been kept in abysmal conditions. In that sense, the govt. policies have been anti-oppressed, rather than pro Muslim. Further, the fact that 130 million Muslims decided to stay back in India rather than joining Pakistan, should settle their status as true citizens.

Secularism introduces science, technology and rationalism in the society and forms the basis of a modern secular state. In the process, it has to oppose and struggle against the clergy and vested forces in the society. And as such, the fundamentalist communal onslaughts are the 'other' of secularism and secularization. The oppressed sections join the secular movement to wrest the accompanying liberal space that can be the base for launching the struggles for their rights. Fundamentalism is the regressive reaction of feudal elements and sections of middle classes in league with the clergy, to crush the aspirations of oppressed class, whose movements for their rights is a big source of tension for them. The secularization process and the accompanying movements of the oppressed increase the insecurity of fundamentalist forces. They try to lure these classes into their fold through religion and liberal use of money and muscle power.

The burgeoning neo-middle classes have emerged as pivotal points that embraced consumerism as modernity but simultaneously began looking towards culture and tradition for support. The advent of globalization has been welcomed in India but it has also shaken people who fear that their own cultures will be destroyed. Hence they show an inclination towards the conservative Hindu identity. It's all about culture, religion and ritual, all cleverly juxtaposed with nationalism: what is Hindu is Indian and from that follows, what is not Hindu is not Indian.

A new disturbing trend has been witnessed in recent years where villages are no longer tranquil as urban-rural interactions have become much more intense. With subdivisions of land holdings, there are few jobs left in the villages for the agricultural class. They are looking outside the village and getting involved with the issues and ideas that have a reach beyond the village. The prosperous classes in rural India have also actively promoted the VHP and other communal forces. We can no longer ignore the possibility that post Gujarat 2002, villages too can become sites of ethnic riots.
There is a blatant attempt to subvert history, change school curricula and create a new set up in line with a Hindu Rastra. There is a new, muscular nationalism, one that holds up the nuclear bomb as a sign of strength and wants to keep neighbours and internal minorities in their place, and which derives its strength from invented mythology; and has taken over the polity. Indian secularism, once thought to be non-negotiable, is beginning to look shaky now. In a country with over 140 million Muslims and million of Christians, to say nothing of hundreds of other castes and communities, this can have very dangerous consequences.

It is not so much a question of defending or preserving the existing secular character of the Indian polity, but rather a need to create and build a secular polity in the nation. Only the ideal of building a secular democratic nation can stem the tide of communal fascism in the country. Sarva Dharma Sambhav has to operate at the personal as well as the social level, while Dharma Nirpekshata or Secularism per se continues to be the state policy. Religious clergy, bigotry, dogmas and rituals cannot be allowed to guide the state.

Mahatma Gandhi has rightly said: "I swear by my religion, I will die for it. But it is my personal affair. The State has nothing to do with it. The State would look after your secular welfare, health, communications, foreign relations, currency and so on, but not your or my religion. That is everybody's personal concern!!"

Hinduism is a faith that on the whole is favorable to the development of the secular state in India. It also has a strong tradition of freedom of conscience and tolerance of religious diversity that is not rightly projected by the Hindutva forces.

This strength of the Hindu religion is now viewed as a weakness. Secularism in the Indian context should imply respect for pluralism and a non-coercive and a voluntary recourse to change. Respect for diversity not only embodies the democratic spirit, it is the real guarantee of unity. We should value democratic, not fascistic, unity. No democratic society can downgrade diversity and pluralism in the name of unity. Secular ethics can be strengthened only when the acts of vandalism are sternly dealt with and the guilty are made to pay for it. With secularism that insists on the inalienable rights of the citizens and a due process of law, it will be easier to mount public pressure against sectarian killers and those who promote hatred. The battle of secularism and democracy has also to be fought at the grass root levels where a set ideals generating strong idealism is required to mobilize and prepare the masses for struggle.

In the end, secularism begins in the heart of every individual. There should be no feeling of "otherness" as we all have is a shared history. India being a traditional society that contains not one, but many traditions owing their origin in part to the different religions that exist here, has so far managed to retain the secular character of its polity. Ours is a society where Sufis and Bhakti saints have brought in a cultural acceptance for each other. Are we going to let it all go to waste and listen to people who have concern for their careers as politicians or leaders rather than our welfare at heart? Let us instead concentrate our efforts at making India a powerful and progressive nation.

**IMPOARTANCE OF SECULARISM IN INDIA**

India is a multiple religious country although India has a Hindu dominated country but, population of all the minorities are in Crores. We all know that Britishers deliberately bifurcated India on
religion line. They knew that if Indians stayed together and work for development of India then India will become a super power in a near future. Britisher were master strategist and they knew that if they wants to be successful in this strategy they must find two person who can make their strategy successful. Britisher found those two person in form of Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, Jinnah constituted Muslim League and Hedgewar created Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Along with India Britishers were afraid of China also and how correct was their their visualization is for every one to see, both India and China have became super power already.

India have witnessed too many communal riots in the history. But, it’s seems we haven’t learned any lesson from this experience, still our political leaders playing with religious sentiments of people and trying to encash it with political success. Recent spat between Narendra Modi of BJP and all other secular parties including Congress was really in bad taste, no one should play with religious sentiment of people. Gandhiji was the first victim of this communal frenzy. Terrorism is also on communal line which has taken toll of thousands of people all over the globe. In Bosnia Herzegovina at least 10,000 people died due to communal hatred. Adolf Hitler too killed millions of people due to his allergy towards Jewish people.

When Taliban destroyed an age old statue of lord Buddha in Bamiyan region of Afghanistan every nation condemn it. This ugly incident happened in March, 2001 but we Indian must remember that Babri Mosque was similarly destroyed by our own communal forces, hence we have no right to condemn Taliban for their ugly sin. When Bosnia Herzegovina massacre happened India was facing heat of Ramjanma bhoomi agitation and it was estimated that had Muslims not shown constraint Bosnia type communal flare up in as many as 26 area, this is a shuddering thoughts. BJP hasn’t learned any lesson from these experiences of the world and they are continuing with their communally sensitive rhetoric, not only that but they also appointed 2002 Gujarat riots accused Narendra Modi as their prime ministerial candidate for Lokshbha poll scheduled to be held in early part of next year.

Difference between BJP & Congress is that Congress has never given any post in the party and never allowed them to contest elections on Congress ticket, while BJP has elevated Narendra Modi. From all this illustrations one can easily understand that how dangerous it is to play with communal sentiments of people.