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SECULARISAM IN INDIA: A CONCEPT TO SOLVE PROBLEMS OF THE MINORITIES

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Abstract

India is a wonderful nation. It is socially stable, culturally rich, geographically dynamic, and simply amazing. We refer to our nation as "Bharat Mata" and bestow upon her the title of mother. She possesses a special connection to the natural world and all of its rich history, customs, spirituality, culture, and architecture. The remarkable beauty of our nation is derived from the majestic Himalayan peaks in the north, the sun-kissed beaches in the south, the Great Indian Desert in the west, and the breathtaking natural heritage in the east. India's population take great pride and strength from their rich heritage, abundant resources, and biodiversity. With 1.3 billion citizens, it is the second most populous country in the world and the largest democracy.

31% of people live in vibrant urban centers, compared to 69% who live in rural areas. In addition to all these traits, our society is multireligious and comprises adherents of various faiths. The religious landscape in our nation is diverse. Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, Parsee, and Judaism are among the religions practiced in addition to Hinduism. However, Hindus make up the majority and are more numerous than other groups. Without a doubt, we have faith in the central motto "Sab Ka Sath Sabka Vikas" (Collective effort-inclusive growth) and we believe in the doctrine of Karma and the principle of Dharma despite the diversity of groups, sects, denominations, and subsections. However, despite the Indian government's attempts to make things better, religious minorities still have to deal with discrimination and prejudice. This study focuses on the causes of these issues and their solutions. It also highlights the significance of the secularism concept and offers suggestions for resolving the socioeconomic issues minorities in contemporary India face.

Keywords: Secularisam, Minorities, Religion, Caste, Issues, Provisions, Problems & Solutions

Introduction

India is a diverse country. The domains of religion also exhibit this diversity. India's principal faiths are as follows:

1. Hinduism: Hindus hold that while gods and divinities exist in many forms, they are all aspects of Brahman, the universal spirit. The three most significant manifestations of Brahman are Shiva, the universe's destroyer, Vishnu, the universe's preserver, and Brahma, the universe's creator. The following well-known Manusmriti sloka outlines the essential elements of Dharma:

धृतिः क्षम दमोऽस्तेयं शौचतमन्द्रियतिग्रहः ।

Manusmriti 6/92 states: "धीतविद्यासोधो दशकं धमिलक्षणम्"

As per the aforementioned, Sloka Dharma has ten attributes. These are the following: 1. Patience (Dhrti) 2. Ks'ama (pardon) 3. Dhama, or restraint 4. Asteya, who doesn't steal 5. Shaoca, or hygiene 6. Indriyanigraha, or organ control 7. Dhii, or the compassionate mind 8. Vidya (knowledge of the spirit) 9. Satyam (truthfulness with charity) 10. Non-anger, or Akrodha. Hinduism is a traditional way of life for those who follow it. Many practitioners call Sanātana Dharma, also known as "the eternal law" or the "eternal way," the "orthodox" form of Hinduism. Religion and the Sanskrit word dharma are not synonymous; dharma has a much wider meaning. The three main goals of a Hindu's life are obtaining wealth (artha), satisfying desires (kama), and achieving liberation (moksha). Dharma is the entire set of moral principles that comprise the "right way of living" and everlasting harmony.

Sanatana Dharma, according to the editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, originally referred to the "eternal" duties that Hinduism's religious edicts prescribed, duties like honesty, ahimsa (the abstaining from harming living things), purity, goodwill, mercy, patience, forbearance, self-control, generosity, and asceticism. These obligations were universal for all Hindus, irrespective of their social class, caste, or religious affiliation. They were in opposition to svadharma, which is an individual's "own duty" based on their caste, class, or life stage (puruṣārtha). Reformers, nationalists, and Hindu leaders have been referring to Hinduism with this term in recent years. Sanatana dharma has come to be synonymous with the "eternal" truth and the transcendental, "unchanging, indivisible, and ultimately nonsectarian" teachings of Hinduism.

2. Islam: The religion is based on five fundamental tenets. These five fundamental acts are actually the cornerstone of Muslim life and are regarded as obligatory by Muslims. They are

enumerated in the well-known Gabriel Hadith. Although the Shia do not use the same terminology to refer to these acts, the Sunni and Shia agree on the crucial elements for their performance and practice. The Muslim profession of faith, or Shahadah, is one of the Five Pillars. It is sincerely recited.

- (b) Salat: offering formal prayers five times a day in the correct manner.
- (c) Zakat: giving to the needy and impoverished by way of an alms or charity tax.
- (d) Sawm: observing a fast throughout Ramadan.
- (e) Hajj: the Mecca pilgrimage.¹

3. Christianity: The main tenets of Christianity are: the existence of God the Father, Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the Holy Spirit, the ascension, resurrection, and death of Christ; the holiness of the Church and the communion of saints; the Day of Judgment and the salvation of the faithful; and the aforementioned events. The unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three persons in one Godhead is taught by the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. According to the doctrine, God is the Triune God, existing as one being but as three persons, or as the Greeks put it, hypostases. Christians try to assist those in need and pray for them as well. This life's evil and suffering serve as a practice for heaven. Suffering and evil give people a chance to become better people and improve their souls. They believe that God will reward them in heaven.

4. Buddhism: The Four Noble Truths are the central tenets of Buddhism. These four truths—the truth of suffering, the truth of its cause, the truth of its end, and the truth of the path that leads to it are said to have been conceived by Siddhartha Gautama, also known as the Buddha. In addition, the Eightfold Path comprises the following eight practices in Buddhism: right perspective, right intention, right speech, right behavior, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right samadhi (also known as "meditative absorption or union"). One of the main teachings of Theravada Buddhism is the Noble Eightfold Path, which is meant to lead one to Arhatship.

5. Jainism: The religion of the soul is Jainism. The path of salvation, where the infinite qualities (attributes) of the soul manifest at its highest point, is paved with the practice of Anuvratas and Mahavratas. The goal of several Jain holidays is spiritual purification. The most well-known of these is Dashlakshan Parva, which falls in the month of Bhadrapad (Bhado), during which nearly all Jains observe religious observance. To gradually increase the purity of the soul, Dashlakshan

¹ Five Pillars of Islam, From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_Pillars_of_Islam.

Parva emphasizes making a sincere effort to adopt 10 Dharmas one by one for 10 days. These responsibilities include chastity, self-control, austerity, renunciation, humility, honesty, truth, holiness, and self-restraint. Five primary vows are taken by devoted Jains: asteya (not stealing), brahmacharya (chastity or celibacy), satya (truth), and ahimsa (nonviolence).²

6. Sikhism: According to Sikh doctrine, life is a cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. They hold this belief in common with adherents of other Indian religions, including Jainism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. The law of Karma determines how each unique life turns out. In the hymns found in the Sikhism's sacred book, the Shri Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh gurus have portrayed God in a variety of ways; however, the oneness of the divine is constantly emphasized. Sikhs acknowledge only one God. Sikhism preaches that all people are equal. It promotes religious freedom, a life of morality and ethics, and daily devotion to remembering God.

7. Parsi Zoroastrianism: The fundamental belief of Zoroastrianism is that good and evil are engaged in a fierce struggle. Zoroastrianism is a monotheistic religion in light of this. It acknowledges two powers: Ahura Mazda, the god of light and wisdom, and Angra Mainyu, the demon. The prophet Zoroaster, who lived in the area between the Hindu Kush and Seistan in the seventh century B.C., is revered by the Parsis. Ideas about a creator god, forces of good and evil, free will, Heaven and Hell, the Last Judgment, and eternal life are all part of their belief system.

8. Judaism: Since the fundamental tenet of Judaism is the absolute oneness and singularity of God, worshiping an individual is forbidden as a kind of idolatry. Judaism is a practice that places a far greater emphasis on actions than on beliefs. Judaism is known as an of Life because it is a system of practices. These actions are known as mitzvot (mitz VOTE; plural of mitzvah). According to Jewish belief, all people are created in God's image and should be treated with respect and dignity. This is especially true when these actions serve as means for an individual to establish a more conscious connection with God. Identity, covenant, and monotheism are the three central tenets of Judaism. These lessons cover ethics as well as ritualistic behavior.

9. Bahá'í: Among the main religions of the world, Bahá'íism is one of the newest. In the 1800s, Baha'u'llah established it in Iran. Within the teachings of the religion are three central claims known as the "threeonenesses" of the Bahá'í Faith. These three concepts are the unity of humanity,

² 2 On 30 January 2014, the Government of India explicitly awarded the status of a "minority religion" to the Jain community in India, as per Section 2(c) of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) Act (NCM), 1992.

religion, and God. They are also called the unity of humanity, the unity of God, and the unity of religion. The foundational text of the Bahá'í Faith, written by the religion's founder, Bahá'u'lláh, in 1873, is known as the Kitáb-i-Aqdas or Aqdas.

India is a country where people from many cultures and religions coexist peacefully. The joy of festivals demonstrates this harmony. All of India's religions and cultures convey a message of love and brotherhood. India's religions are celebrations of common emotion that unite people, whether it is the assembly of the faithful, bowing in prayer in a mosque courtyard, or the gathering of lamps that light up houses at Diwali, Christmas cheer, or Baisakhi brotherhood. In this fascinating and diverse country, people of all religions and cultures come together to share a common bond of brotherhood and amity. Additionally, the unity in diversity is evident when celebrations of Independence Day and Republic Day every year, on 15th August and 26th January respectively with great enthusiasm, joys and patriotic fervour.³

Secularism Defined

Secularism means liberation of politics from the hegemony of religion. In the words of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, former President of India, a great philosopher and teacher, "Secularism does not irreligion or atheism or even stress on material comforts. It proclaims that it lays stress on universality of spiritual values which may be attained by variety of ways".⁴ Eminent sociologist Prof. (Dr.) M.N. Srinivas states: "The term secularism implies that what was once considered religious is no longer so, and it also implies a process of differentiation which results in the various aspects of society, political, legal, economic, and moral becoming more and more distinct from one another."⁵ Secularism, according to Ian Robertson, is "the process through which traditional religious beliefs and institutions lose their influence in society."⁶

For various countries, societies, and individuals, the term "secularism" can signify different things.

- i. In general, it refers to the division of religion and the state.

³ Gujarat's Jewish community gets religious minority status :Times of India July 9, 2018, Please see <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/gujarats-jewish-community-gets-religious-minoritystatus/articleshow/64921599.cms>

⁴ Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, as quoted by Prof. Parvathi, A.A. in her 'Secularism and Hinduism – A Discursive Study, 1994, Page-15.

⁵ M.N. Srinivas in "Social Change in Modern India"

⁶ Ian Robertson in "Sociology" Page-384

- ii. It also entails treating all religious communities equally or keeping a similar distance from them all, especially in light of the fact that many communities enjoy religious freedom.
- iii. In communist countries, this could even entail focusing on the material or economic well-being of citizens rather than religion in state operations.⁷

Research has shown that the expansion of industries and the processes of modernization, liberalization, and globalization have an impact on religion, its purposes, and people's religiosity. Scientific, technological, and educational advancements have also raised public awareness of the harmful effects of religions' traditional roles and the absolutist positions taken on some ancient, evil customs, such as the "Dowry System," "Sati Pratha," and "Child Marriage." Therefore, the word "secular" literally means having to do with this world or this life, or avoiding religion and religious doctrine.

The Constitution of India Upholds Secularism

As was previously mentioned, there are many different religious groups in our nation, but the Constitution nevertheless envisions India as a secular state.

The Preamble did not initially contain the word "secular." In 1976, the 42nd Constitutional Amendment was added to it. Up until then, what was implied in the Constitution became numerous court cases from this era would attest to the fact that the idea of secularism was deeply ingrained in Indian constitutional jurisprudence even prior to 1976.

Secularism is a difficult concept to define, and the Constitution makes no mention of it. A few postulates form the foundation of the idea. India does not have an official religion as a result. There isn't a church or religion that the state recognizes. Freedom of religion and worship are protected by a number of fundamental rights, which also forbid discrimination based on religion. They implicitly forbid the creation of a theocratic state as a result. Treating all religions and religious sects equally is mandated for the state. No one's religious beliefs prevent them from holding any office. The names of all eligible voters are born onto a single electoral roll.

The fundamental tenets of the Indian Constitution are, of course, that every citizen is created

⁷ Dr. Parvathy A.A. in the article "Secularism Vs Communalism" in the Journal "Third Concept", July 2003.

equal and that a citizen's religion has no bearing on his ability to exercise his rights under the constitution. The Constitution guarantees religious freedom to all people and stipulates that a citizen's religion has no bearing on socioeconomic issues. Although the Indian Constitution is secular and does not restrict religious freedom, it also forbids religion from negatively affecting citizens' secular rights or the state's ability to control socioeconomic relations.⁸

In order to ensure economic justice and the abolition of income and standard of living inequality, the 42nd Amendment Act, 1976, amended the preamble to the Indian constitution by adding the words "Socialist," "Secular," and "Integrity." On the advice of the Swaran Singh Committee, which the government had appointed earlier that year, the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution was adopted in 1976, adding the Fundamental Duties of Citizens. Only citizens are subject to fundamental duties; non-citizens are not.

The Indian Minority Concept

The Indian Constitution contains no accurate definition of the term "minority." Additionally, the term appears very infrequently in the Constitution. Two articles of the Constitution do contain the term "minority," but they do not serve as definitions.⁹ Language and religion play significant roles in defining a community's cultural identity, in addition to the fundamental requirement of "numerical strength" for a community to be classified as a religious minority. Therefore, it is appropriate to note that the Indian constitution only recognizes two types of bases for identity of "minorities," namely language and religion, as well as those based on both in combination. This is in order to be more precise and rational from a scientific standpoint.¹⁰

Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, and Zoroastrians have all been granted minority status by the Indian government. Any group residing within Indian territory is entitled to the preservation and promotion of its own language, script, literature, and culture, as stated in Article 29 of the Constitution. The right to establish and manage educational institutions of one's choice is guaranteed to minority groups, regardless of their religion or language, according to Article 30. For all Indian citizens, justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity are guaranteed by the Constitution's

⁸ I.L.I. Secularism: Its implications for Law and Life in India 4-5 (1966); Also please see, V.P. Luthra. Concept of the Secular State in India (1964): J.M. Shelat; Secularism, Principles and Application, (1972); Srivastava, Religious Freedom in India, 1982.

⁹ Mohd. Imam, Minorities and the Law, Bombay, 1972, p. XXVII.

¹⁰ T.K. Jope, The Constitution of India, Bombay, 1963, p. 30.

preamble. No basis whatsoever is used to discriminate against the minority.

The following are the primary traits of minority groups in India:

1. A minority group experiences a range of negative effects at the hands of a dominant group. Minority groups typically experience unfair treatment.
2. Physically discernible group characteristics are used to identify minority groups in society.
3. A group that is highly conscious of their "oneness" is considered a minority.
4. Most people who are born into a minority group do not choose to join it voluntarily.
5. A community must meet a minimum number of members in order to be classified as a religious minority. However, numerical strength is not always a determinant of minority status. Religion and language are two crucial pillars of "minorities" identities.
6. Members of a minority group typically marry within the group, whether by choice or by necessity.

Issues Facing Religious Minorities in General

There are minority groups in several states of India. The majority of minority groups, according to their recent history, struggle with two primary issues: (a) prejudice and discrimination; and (b) maintaining their unique social and cultural identities.

1. Prejudice and Discrimination: Prejudice and discrimination can be found in any hostile environment involving different religious communities, racial and ethnic groups. Although the terms are frequently used synonymously in everyday speech, they actually refer to two distinct but connected phenomena:

(a) A "pre-judged" attitude toward people in a different group is referred to as prejudice. Simply for being a part of a specific group, these groups are hated because it is assumed that they possess the negative traits that the group as a whole believes to be common.

(b) On the other hand, discrimination describes actions taken against individuals based only on their membership in a particular group. It entails denying members of another group the same opportunities that one's own group would offer to members who are equally qualified.

When considering the Indian context, discrimination is not practiced at all, particularly when it

comes to giving opportunities to members of different religious communities. All people will be granted equal rights and opportunities regardless of their caste, class, color, creed, sex, region, or religion, according to the Preamble of the Constitution. Articles 15(1) and 15(2) forbid discrimination based on religious beliefs. The freedom to practice, profess, and propagate one's religion is guaranteed by Article 25. It is evident that no religious community in India is legally prohibited from taking advantage of the opportunities—economic, educational, and otherwise—offered to the general public. It is accurate to say that some religious communities have not had the same opportunities as other communities.

Prejudices and stereotypical thinking are prevalent aspects of a complex society, to be sure. India is not an outlier in this regard. Commonly used statements, such as "DEF (name of a community) are dullards and STU (name of another community) are convertors; ABC (naming a community) are cowards and XYZ (naming another community) are rowdies," etc., are examples of how prejudices are perpetuated. Common people who are easily duped never bother to investigate the veracity of these claims; instead, they are taken in by them. Prejudices like these exacerbate the social divide between religious communities. India is still dealing with this issue.

2. The issue of maintaining unique social and cultural lives: India is one of the countries that has allowed religious communities the freedom to follow their beliefs and practices. Such a right is guaranteed by Article 25 of the Constitution. Furthermore, Article 30(1) guarantees the freedom to create and manage educational institutions of their choosing for all minorities, regardless of their language or religion. This includes the right to select the medium of instruction..¹¹The right to maintain their sociocultural traits is granted to them. Even in cases where the institution is receiving full state funding, no law, regulation, or other action can take away the minority educational institutions' authority to choose their own leaders. A law that tampers with Principal's minority choice would be against Article 30 (1).¹²

3. The Issue of Protection: Minorities frequently experience a need for safety and security. Minority groups often seek police protection, particularly during periods of communal violence, caste conflicts, mass festival and religious function observance. It is also challenging for the ruling government to offer this kind of protection to every member of the minority. It is also very

¹¹ 4 D. A. V. College v. State Of Punjab (AIR 1971 SC 1731)

¹² St. Stephen's college vs. University of Delhi and others. (WP(C)5226/2008 Decided on 21-8-2008 by Delhi H.C

costly. State governments are constantly criticized for not offering this kind of protection. As an illustration, (i) the Rajiv Gandhi

The government faced harsh criticism for failing to provide security for the Sikh community in Delhi's Union Territory on the eve of the communal unrest that erupted there shortly after Indira Gandhi's 1984 assassination. (ii) The Gujarat State Government came under fire for failing to protect Muslim minorities during the most recent outbreak of communal violence [February–March, 2002]. (iii) Similarly, it is widely denounced that the Government of Jammu and Kashmir is incompetent in protecting the State's Sikh and Hindu minorities from the atrocities committed by Muslim extremists.

4. The issue of riots and communal tensions: Since independence, riots and communal tensions have been steadily rising. Minority interests are endangered whenever there are riots or communal tensions, regardless of the cause, and widespread fears and anxieties result. Restoring public trust in the ruling government becomes a difficult undertaking.

5. The issue of underrepresentation in politics and the civil service Despite the fact that the Constitution guarantees equality and equal opportunities to all citizens, including religious minorities, the majority minority group—Muslims in particular—has not taken advantage of these provisions. They all feel as though they are being ignored. Nevertheless, it appears that other religious minority communities, like the Christians, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists, for they seem to be economically and educationally better than the majority community.

6. Separatist Problem: Some religious communities in some places make demands that other religious communities find intolerable. The distance between them and others has grown as a result. Examples: Others find it unacceptable that certain Muslim extremists in Kashmir have a separatist inclination and advocate for the creation of an independent Kashmir. A demand like this is seen as anti-national. In a similar vein, some Christian fundamentalists in Mizoram and Nagaland are calling for their provinces to become independent states. Since both of these requests encourage "separatism," they are unacceptable. Proponents of these demands have been a major source of disruptions and issues with law and order in the corresponding states.

7. Not Adhering Tightly to Secularism: India has proclaimed itself to be a "secular" nation. Our Constitution's very spirit is secular. Nearly every political party, including the Muslim League, asserts its secularism. However, in reality, no political party is sincere in its dedication to secularism as defined by the term. These parties frequently politicize matters that are purely religious. Likewise, issues that are solely related to law and order as well as secular issues are colored religiously. Political parties are constantly on the lookout for chances to politicize social issues and attempt to gain political capital from them. As a result, these parties' credibility regarding their adherence to secularism is eroding. This has led to mistrust and a sense of unease in the minds of minorities.

8. Issue with the Implementation of the Common Civil Code: An additional significant obstacle to the relationship between the majority and the minority pertains to the governments that have taken office thus far failing to implement a common civil code. Some argue that national enforcement of a common civil code is a prerequisite for social equality. Certain communities are against it, most notably the Muslims. They contend that since a common civil code conflicts with the "Shariat," imposing it will violate their right to religious freedom. These days, this is a contentious issue. The distance between the religious communities has grown even wider as a result.

It is true that India frequently experiences group confrontations, religious disputes, and communal unrest. For the past 71 years, the country has continued to be secular despite these upheavals. In addition, the government has been working extra hard to protect the rights of religious minorities.

Governmental Efforts To Promote The Welfare Of Minorities

Of all the minority religions in India, Muslims make up the largest and most vulnerable group? Therefore, their issue is real and needs to be resolved right away. However, it appears that government schemes, programs, and initiatives for the welfare of minorities will not be sufficient to advance the cause of national integration without the full participation of Muslims and other minority groups in all facets of national life. The hard reality that minority communities everywhere have a tendency to be extremely sensitive and that concerned community members often react whenever any suspicion is raised lies at the root of the communal unrest between Muslims and Hindus. Because of their mistrust and terror, minorities' psychology cannot be helped.

However, minority communities in India must exercise extreme patience before responding to any unfortunate event that could lead to intercommunal conflict. They also need to understand the part that vote-bank politicians and other antisocial actors who are out to further their own agendas play in the politics of selfishness. The well-educated and powerful members of society should step up to expose and denounce those who are acting selfishly and not in the best interests of the country in order to safeguard their "vote bank." The Indian Constitution safeguards minority rights and acknowledges their ability to maintain their language, scripts, and culture as well as to create and run the educational institutions of their choice.

Two categories of constitutional provisions can be distinguished in order to safeguard the interests of minorities:

- (a) **General Provisions**, which prohibit discriminatory treatment and treat minorities equally before the law (Articles 14 and 15); Equal Employment and Educational Opportunities, which guarantee equal treatment under the law (Articles 16 and 29(2)); The Right to Universal Adult Franchise, which guarantees everyone this right (Articles 325 and 326); and Arts. 44, which establish a "Common Civil Code."
- (b) **Specific Provisions Protecting Minorities**: The Constitution's Articles 29 and 30 safeguard minorities' rights to their language, education, and culture. Every Indian community has the right to maintain its own unique language, script, and culture, according to Article 29. In addition to stating that the State shall not discriminate against any institution when awarding grants because it is a part of a linguistic or religious minority, Art. 30 declares that all minorities in India have a constitutional right to establish and manage their own educational institutions.
- (c) The Anglo-Indian communities' interests are also protected by provisions found in Articles 331 and 333.

Along with the constitutional safeguards for the protection of minority interests, there is a fifteen-point program for minority welfare that includes protection from communal riots, appointments to State and Central Services, and measures to ensure that minorities receive their fair share of government-funded programs and projects for development.

A "National Commission for Minorities" was established by the Indian government in January 1978 in addition to the aforementioned provisions. Its purpose is to assess how well the various constitutional safeguards for the protection of religious minorities are working and to ensure that all laws and safeguards are effectively implemented and enforced for the benefit of minorities. The National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992's provisions gave the Commission a statutory status, displacing the previous commission. On May 17, 1993, the National Commission for Minorities was established. The National Commission was then reorganized, taking effect on January 31, 2000.

The National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation, the Administration of Wakfs to Promote Muslim Interests, the Maulana Azad Education Foundation, which promotes education among minorities and the underprivileged in particular, and the "National Foundation for Communal Harmony," which works to rehabilitate children who are victims of terrorist violence and communal riots, are some other organizations that support the welfare of minority communities.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The goal of a "secular State," which protects all religions equally and does not promote any one religion as the official state religion, has been to foster unity and fraternity among the people of India who practice a variety of faiths. Secularism is a legal question rather than a moral one. The Constitution (42nd Amendment) Act, 1976, added the word "secular" to the Preamble, explicitly expressing the state's secular goal. Articles 25, 26, and 27 were incorporated by the original constitution's framers in an effort to promote secularism. They had a strong secularist foundation in their constitutional philosophy. When "secularism" was formally added to the Preamble by the 42nd Amendment, it only made clear what was already implicit¹³ The fundamental framework of the constitution includes secularism.¹⁴ The constitution does not, as some other constitutions do, declare any religion to be the "establish Church." However, the Preamble's promise of "liberty of belief, faith, and worship" is put into practice by incorporating the fundamental rights of all citizens regarding "freedom of religion" in Arts. 25–28. These rights ensure that every person has the freedom to profess, practice, and propagate their religion, and they also guarantee the State

¹³Asok Kumar Thakar v Union of India(2008) 6 SCC 1

¹⁴ Bommai v Union of India, A.I.R. 1994 SC 1918. Also see Sri Visheshar of Kashi Vishwanath Temple, Varanasi v. State of U.P.(1997) 4 SCC 606 (para 26).

and its institutions of strict impartiality towards all religions.

One of India's great democratic achievements is that when her neighbors, like Pakistan¹⁵, Certain religions are recognized as official state religions in Bhutan and Sri Lanka (Ceylon). India is considered a "Secular State," meaning it maintains an impartial and neutral stance toward all religions. A secular state is founded on the notion that the relationship between a person and other people is the state's concern, not the relationship between a person and God, which is a matter of personal conscience. Without in any way restricting an individual's freedom to practice their religion, faith, or worship, the State is required to treat all religions and religious groups equitably and with respect. There's no excuse for using any kind of coercion to influence someone's religious beliefs. A number of provisions in the Constitution ensure that there is an impartial attitude toward all religions (Please see Arts. 25-28).

Additionally, the National Institute for Transforming India (NITI) Ayog seeks to improve India's ability to handle difficult challenges by implementing the following measures:

- (1). Making the most of India's demographic dividend and realizing the potential of young people—both male and female—through job, skill development, education, and the eradication of gender bias.
- (2). The end of poverty and the opportunity for each and every Indian to lead a life worthy of respect and dignity.
- (3) Correction of economic, caste, and gender-based disparities.
- (4). Institutionalize village participation in the process of development.
- (5). Supporting over 50 million small businesses with policies that protect our ecological and environmental assets and are a significant source of employment creation.

It is anticipated that by promoting citizen engagement, egalitarian access to opportunities, cooperative federalism, participative and adaptive governance, and increased use of technology, the NITI Ayog will aim to offer a crucial strategic direction and input into the development process of the Indian community, including minorities who require special attention for their

¹⁵ Islam is the State religion of Pakistan under the Constitution of 1972. This position had been maintained by the Provisional Constitution Order, 1981, issued by General Zia-ul-Ha, who assumed power in 1977 as the Chief Martial Law Administrator. In Bangladesh, Lieut General Ershad, the President and Chief Martial Law Administrator declared that Islam would be the State religion (please refer to Statesman, dated 30-12-1982).

socioeconomic growth to keep up with the mainstream society.

A group of prominent Indian politicians and public figures called the National Integration Council, an unconstitutional body, first sought solutions to the nation's caste, regionalism, and communalism issues. In order to combat the evils of communalism, casteism, regionalism, linguism, and narrow-mindedness and to formulate concrete conclusions that would lead the nation, then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru called the National Integration Conference in September and October of 1961. It was decided at this conference to establish a National Integration Council (NIC) to examine all issues related to national integration and offer recommendations. In 1962, the NIC convened for the first time after being duly constituted.

The National Integrating Council has convened fifteen meetings thus far. On September 10, 2011, the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh chaired the fifteenth meeting, which drew in attendance from 148 members. The National Integration Council's 1968 declaration of objectives, which stated that "The foundation of our national life to common citizenship, unity in diversity, freedom of religions, secularism, equality, justice-social, economic, and political, and fraternity among all communities," was reaffirmed by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh.¹⁶

Suggestions

Despite its rapid development, India is a nation rich in linguistic, cultural, regional, and religious diversity. The social issues, particularly those that affect minorities, also take these diversity into account. We must uphold the principles outlined in our Constitution in order to safeguard their interests and create a progressive, prosperous country that fulfills the aspirations of our national heroes, freedom fighters, and distinguished leaders. The primary recommendations for the welfare of religious minority groups—particularly the Muslim community, which is more numerous than other groups—are as follows:

1. Minorities are protected by laws and provisions of the constitution, but these must be strictly adhered to.
2. The government and local authorities should take good care of managing and maintaining

¹⁶ Basu, D.D.: Introduction to the Constitution of India, 22nd Edition, LexisNexis, Gurgaon, 2015 (pp. 387-88)

the Wakf properties. There are numerous instances where even the Joint Parliamentary Committee's recommendations for the appropriate administration of Wakf have not been carried out.

3. Those found guilty of failing to protect and manage Wakf properties on behalf of the State or statutory bodies should face harsh consequences.
4. It is important to appropriately and quickly implement the committee and commission recommendations for minorities' welfare, as the Muslim community has become leery of new initiatives due to the previous commissions' and committees' recommendations not being followed.
5. Generally speaking, women carry the flag for a community's identity. Women display outward symbols of their community identities on their person and in their behavior, sometimes voluntarily and other times due to social pressure. Women need to have an education in order to reflect positively. Therefore, the girls' education needs to be prioritized more.
6. Muslim women should leave their homes and enter society fearlessly, as many Muslim women in India today believe that the "safe" space lies only inside the confines of the family and community. It is imperative that Muslim women receive appropriate training in order to elevate their status within society.
7. The overbearing behavior of the police toward Muslims was criticized, stating that "Muslim boys are picked up by the police whenever any incident occurs." When taking action, policy should act impartially and objectively.
8. Because "every bearded man is considered an extremist," members of minority groups experience an inferiority complex. Since there are good and bad people in every society or community, this kind of thinking needs to change.
9. Since there are few schools in Muslim communities that go beyond the primary level, more should be opened.
10. School textbooks should no longer contain "communal" content, and the school's culture should be one of fraternity and mutual trust.

11. Because the anganwadis used the Urdu language, the workers in the Muslim neighborhood should be able to speak the language, allowing students in Urdu-medium schools to voluntarily transfer to regular schools with prior preschool education.
12. The State must fulfill its duty to offer, through the formal education system, an affordable, high-quality education.
13. Women ought to engage in economic activities. This will undoubtedly raise the percentage of Muslim women who work, enhancing the community's economic standing.
14. It is highly recommended that inclusive development and the "mainstreaming" of the community while honoring diversity be given first priority in policies aimed at addressing the relative deprivation of the nation's minorities.
15. In order to achieve diversity and eradicate the impression of discrimination, the procedures for guaranteeing equity and equality of opportunity to promote inclusion should be designed in such a way. Only when the significance of religious minorities as an integral component of the rich social mosaic that is India will this be achievable.

Considering the significance of the previous conversations regarding the magnificence of our nation, its status as the world's largest democracy, and its secular nature, we are honored to be Indians. There are numerous reasons, but "Unity in diversity" is the most crucial one. India boasts a plethora of diverse cultural and traditional practices, delectable cuisine, exquisite dances, rich heritage, folkways, breathtaking tourist destinations, multiple languages, and much more. Despite our differences, the Indian people are one and we would like to stress once more that "Saare jahaan se achha hindustan hamaraa"