

Jawaharlal Nehru: A Principal Advocate of Secularism in Modern India

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Abstract

Like Democracy, Human Rights, Justice and Equality, Secularism has become a buzzword in modern world. Different cultures and communities exist in India, after the independence it was a tough and difficult to government, how should a democratic state ensure equality for all citizens. Nehru wanted a secular state to be one that protects all religions, but does not favour one at the expense of others and does not itself adopt any religion as the state religion. His thought and vision supports the nation with all religions is same in the eye of Law and State. In addition he wants to see the garden (India) blooming with different flowers which are Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism and others. Present research paper highlights the role of Jawaharlal Nehru in formation of India as a secular state and his philosophy of secularism. Further the paper also discusses the present scenario of Secularisms in India.

Key words; religion, secular, community, domination, India

1. Introduction

Historically, there were rulers and emperors in different parts of the world who did not allow residents of their countries to enjoy the right to freedom of religion. Persons following a religion different from that of the ruler were either persecuted or forced to convert to the official religion of the ruler or kingdom. But in modern world most of the nations are secular states and the states or governments allow their citizens to follow any religion of the world and also gave the equal opportunities to the citizens in all sectors, whether the economic, political, social, cultural or educational without any discrimination on the base of their religion. From the 17th century Western Europe and Americans have been dominated by secular views which sought successfully to separate religion and politics, so that state's existence is not justified by theology. United States is first secular state in world among the Christianity was a majority religion.

Secularism in India refers to the equal status and treatment of all religions. The word "Secularism" is used to mean impartiality or non-interference by the Government of the

country in matters of religion. By secular state we understand that the liberty of belief, faith and worship. There should be no discrimination on the basis of religion which is also stated in the 15th Article of Indian Constitution. All individuals are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and rights to freely profess, practice and propagate any religion by Article 25 of Indian constitution. There should be no tax paid in the protection and promotion of any religion stated in 27th Article. By 28th article no religious instruction shall be provide in any educational institution maintained by state. Independent India is one of the largest democratic states in the world with a population nearly 120 cores. This vast population is made up of people professing different religions like Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Jainism, Christianity etc. and practicing different religious rites.

Secularism means no interference of state/govt in person's religious belief, faith and worship, a state is a secular in which people are physiology free, and take part in the all religious activities without any hindrances. Solitary of India's guiding principles in impartiality in religious matters. The state of India wants her citizens to adhere to any religion they like without any government intervention. The noble idea of the Indian government is unequivocally proclaimed in the amended preamble to the constitution of our country. Secularism and Democracy are the two notable and outstanding achievements of independent India. These two achievements have stood the test of the time and set the goals of the nation on religious and political fronts. The state remain free from religious obligations and can take a tolerant attitude towards every religion and can pursue the ideal of achieving the well-being of the people, irrespective of caste, creed, religion or any other. There is no doubt that we are moving from religiosity to secular way of life. However, evidences show that religious beliefs have not fully declined in our society. Communalism and fundamentalism in India suggest that no necessary connection exists between modernisation and secularisation.

“Religion is a faith and belief of a person on the Creator of Universe (GOD) and follows and practices the sayings of GOD, adage and habits of Messengers of GOD (prophets)”.

-Towseeef Ahmad Ganai

2. Principal Advocates of Secular Ideology in Modern India

The principal advocates of secular thought in modern India were Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Gandhi's secularism was based on a commitment to the brotherhood of religious communities based on their respect for and pursuit of truth. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad has the view that every individual has a right to follow and practice any religion without leaving their own motherland so; he prefers to live in India instead to Pakistan. The Indian constitution written in aftermath of the bloody partition which saw a predominantly Muslim Pakistan created, opens with a statement that India is a Secular Republic. Under the prime minister-ship of Nehru there was a clear commitment to a clear separation between the state and religion and avoidance of policies that discriminated on the grounds of religion. The Hindu nationalist movement has challenged what has been labelled 'pseudo-secularism' claiming that religious neutrality was neither possible nor desirable and sought to promote a political agenda which recognizes Hindu history and values. Such an agenda has been seen as threatening to religious minorities in the country, particularly Muslims, Christians and Sikhism, and associated with a heightening of communal tension.

The development which brought about a radical change in Indian politics was the espousal of Hindu-Muslim unity with the Lucknow Pact at the annual meeting of the Congress in December 1916. The pact had been initiated earlier in the year at Allahabad at a meeting of the All India Congress Committee which was held at the Nehru residence at Anand Bhawan. Nehru welcomed and encouraged the rapprochement between the two Indian Communities.

Nehru elaborated the policies of the Congress and a future Indian nation in 1929. He declared that the aims of the congress were freedom of religion, right to form associations, freedom of expression of thought, equality before law for every individual without distinction of caste, colour, creed or religion, protection to regional languages and cultures, safeguarding the interests of the peasants and labour, abolition of untouchability, introduction of adult franchise, imposition of prohibition, nationalisation of industries, socialism, and establishment of a secular India. All these aims formed the core of the "Fundamental Rights and Economic Policy" resolution drafted by Nehru in 1929–31 and were ratified in 1931 by the Congress party session at Karachi chaired by S.V.Patel.

The ideas of Nehru about the secularism can be found from his childhood, when he experienced being nurtured in a secular environment. He got inspiration from several of his teachers like, Ferdinand T. Brooks, Annie Besant and Munish Mubarak Ali. He also spend time with Jews in Harrow left a deep impact on him and at the initial level removed many religious dogmas from his mind. The inspiration for secular thought in Nehru has a good background form the English philosophy. He has a great encouragement from the Buddhism which dissolved the feeling of discrimination in the society on various grounds. On the time of entering in politics, he applied his experience and knowledge of history to interfere that the communal force received wide support from the political system. Due to communalism attitude of British rule in India through which they were dividing the Indian society on the base of religion, Nehru opposed the British rule. His anti-communal approach was thus governed by the larger cause of reinforcement the national movement. His only this approach before independence era culminated in the post – Independence phase when Nehru nourished and chairs secularism with the clear objective of ensuring respect for religious diversity and focus on national development by associating all sections. His thought was a rationalist knowing well that human values were superior to religious orthodoxies.

Pandit J. L. Nehru's secularism was based on a commitment to scientific humanism tinged with a progressive view of historical change. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has been a chief champion of the concept of the secular state. The creation of India as a secular state has been accepted as one of his greatest achievements. Furthermore he was especially concerned with transforming India from a 'caste ridden society' in which communalism constitutes a major threat to all the values that he cherished to a 'national state' which includes people of all religions and shades of opinion and is essentially secular as a state. He concluded that a functional government structure must encourage and sustain religious diversity. Nehru applied secularism in the improvement in the human spirit and homeland. He under no circumstances used religion for votes. He articulated the humanistic values inherent in religious equality. His secular ideas flow from the great Indian tradition. In contemporary India his ideas on secularism are of utmost relevance when new clouds of fears, apprehensions and uncertainties are congregation over the nation's social horizon.

Pandit J. L. Nehru was a man who have the dream of a nation where all religious treated equally by state, the state have no religion as an official one. In 1976, by his own daughter, the first women Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi, brings an Amendment bill in parliament. With 42nd Constitutional Amendment Bill which were passed and became an Act with this Act India became a Socialist and Secular country. And the dream comes true, who was saw by Pandit J. L. Nehru long ago.

3. Present Scenario of Secularism in India

In a secular society the principle that religion and politics are independent realms is accepted, but religion continues to influence politics in a number of ways. At present scenario, in the context of Indian, the separation of religion from the state constitutes the core of the philosophy of secularism. The expression 'secular' has also a special significance in the context of the historical development of Indian polity. It is of pivotal importance in the context of political realities on the ground as they exist now. In India, the word secular is identified with tolerance among the different religions. In a secular state, no one enjoys any special privilege in national life or in any type of conduct for international relations. No group of citizens arrogates to itself the rights and privileges which it denies to others. No person suffers from any form of disability or discrimination because of his religion but all alike to be free to share the fullest degree of freedom in his the common life.

In 21st century the nations are much more lease-fear in the matter of citizens religion. India is a secular country before independence but legally and constitutionally the India became a secular country in 1976 by the 42nd amendment Act, which declares India as a secular state. After the declaration of a secular state in a preamble of Indian constitution, the people of all religions feel much relief and contentment with this institutive. There was also some provisions for minorities rights and there development.

In the 16th General Lok Sabh elections of Republic India the UPA government was defeated by NDA and in the history of India there were some open changes in various sector of country whether it is Planning Commission into NITI Aayog on 1st January 2015, impose of Goods and Service Tex has commenced with enactment of 101, Constitutional Amendment Act on 8th September 2016, new names of various Places and other initiatives which made an open changes in India society in various sectors. The continuous win in the second time in the 17th general elections of India, the government made major changes in the constitution of India as they already mentioned in there election manifesto which was not in

the favour to secular nature of India. The three major initiatives which government introduced in parliament are Triple Talaq and was passed on 3rd July, 2019, a dispute of Babri Masjid- Ram Janam Boomie was solved by Indian Supreme Court on 9th November 2019 and recently the citizenship Amendment Act was passed. The removal of Articles 35-A and 370 on 5th of August in 2019 by which the uniqueness of Jammu and Kashmir comes to an end. The constitution of JK, the flag, the PRC, and various other commissions comes to an end. And the Government also divided state into two union-territories. With all these amendments the Muslim community, which constitute 13% of total population of nation are very sad and disappointed from the Apex Supreme Court and Constitution of India. According to the minority community of India these initiatives are against the secular nature of the Indian state and are also a biggest threat to the one of the biggest democratic country of the world.

4. Conclusion

Secularism is being considered as the hallmark of democracy. The idea of secularism refers to the desire for the better life in a country. This is a very powerful desire and important for the national peace. Secularism is not only a term, but it is an instrument by which we can maintain balance and equilibrium between politics and religion in the world largest democratic country with a very vast diversity, culture, religions and festivals.

After a long history of communal incident in India, still now, Secularism is seen as the only possible option that would be able to provide harmonious and peaceful survival for the different religions and castes of Indian society. It is point to note that we need proper educational plan too, to slightly redesign our existing curriculum in the schools and colleges. The text books presenting distorted historical facts have to be changed and secular ideas will have to be inculcated in the innocent minds of our young generation. All religions should get their weightage in the textbooks of history. The culture, traditions and festivals of any particular religion should not be over-projected. The sacrifices and hardships of all religious communities and their contribution towards freedom and development of the country need to be focussed in the books of the history at school and college level. And we should follow and cherish the noble ideas of our great leaders like Gandhi, Nehru and others. The importance of various culture and traditions of different religions in the peculiarity of the country should have to be discussed properly. At last since, India has been declared a secular state by its written constitution, therefore it is the responsibility of every Indian and Apex Court of India to stand by and believe in this declaration and preserve the secular nature of our country.

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