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SECULARISM IN INDIA

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Abstract: The concept of Secularism in the contemporary socio political discourse has emerged as the most baffling, intriguing, and a matter of great debate. On one hand some has referred it to be akin to mutual respect between religions, some have understood it in term of communal harmony and neutrality whereas on the other hand in some of the critical writings, it has been used has a minority appeasement policy, anti majoritism. Some has coined the term “Pseudo Secularism”. But whatever the notion it might have taken in its explanatory path we need to understand this very concept in its contextual setting.

Keywords: Secularism , socio political , ideology , philosophical tradition .

INTRODUCTION

Secularism is an ideology which broadly connotes public life and the matter of government would not be dictated by the religion. Broadly its practice reflects two dimensions: Separation between State and Religion and Individual Being Free. Western concept of secularism depicts the practice or non practice of any religion. But in Indian context secularism means no religion can be considered as state religion; rather state will maintain equidistance or neutrality towards all religion.

Though in Indian Scenario the very idea and practice of secularism has found a very critical introspection in which many consider it to be losing its relevance. Secularism in India in its very spirit is an assumption of Indian society and politics having a very long philosophical tradition and its modern version is the manifestation of certain historical situation and a particular frame of mind. It represents a way of life and a sort of Ethical Code of Conduct applicable to individual, society and the State. It stands for spiritualization of Politics rather than its delinking from Ethics in Indian society. The philosophical orientation have emphasized on the spiritual man being reiterated through some fundamental concept like “Vasudhaev Kutumbakam” (whole world is our family), “Ekum Sad Viprah Bhudha Vadamita” (truth is one the voice call it differently), and “Bahujan Hitay Bahujan Sukhaay” (happiness and welfare for all). These philosophical orientations inspire us to adopt the two pillars of Indian secularism i.e. “Dharma Nirpeksha” and “Sarva Dharma Sambhava” which means unbiasedness towards any religion and tolerance of all religion respectively. These pillar stone provided a progressive path after independence. At the time of constitution framing we recognized the plurality prevalent in Indian society and thus rather than tilting for any particular religion constitution guarantee equal rights to all.

The close nexus between religion and politics or precisely the occurrence of communal violence makes secularism look pale and exhausted which makes many to be critical to the concept. However before criticizing this Indian concept of secularism we have to take a look on the socio-cultural arrangement of our society which makes us venerable to such things. The fault does not lie in the idea rather in its violation for which we not only need to strengthen the concept but also require restoring it in a collective way. Since it works as a spontaneous check on the mentality of violence and tyranny of majority, it ensures the minority right and right of none would be violated.

This model of secularism seems to be the working solution to the Indian democracy as enshrined in preamble and thus it reflects its normative nature that is what ought to be. In this sense it is a process not a product. The onus lies now that how we realize it, for which many suggest the triangular hobnobbing between individual, society and polity. An arrangement in which individual feel free to cling to any faith, there prevail mutual respect between religion in society and states neither compete nor disapprove any religion. The balance equation between

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the three will ensure the sense of security and belongingness which no constitution could substitute. It will also invoke the feeling of “we” the core word of our preamble.

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