

Secularism and National Integration

(With Special Reference to Orissa)

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Edited by

BIJAYANANDA KAR



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY
RASHTRAPATI NIVAS, SHIMLA

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FOREWORD

On January 25, 2006, I received word from Professor Bhuvan Chandel, the then Director of Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS), requesting me to hold a National Seminar in Bhubaneswar on behalf of IIAS on the topic 'Secularism and National Integration: Contributions of Indigenous Traditions in Orissa' in February-March 2006. I accepted Professor Chandel's suggestion and proposed to her to organise the said Seminar on behalf of the Humanist Philosophical Foundation with full sponsorship of IIAS. She agreed to my proposal and, consequently, the necessary preparation for the Seminar was carried out.

I requested Shree Rameswar Thakur, Hon'ble Governor of Orissa to kindly inaugurate the Seminar and invited Padma Bhusan Dr. Sitakant Mohapatra (*Jnanapitha Awardee*) to be the Chief Guest on the occasion. In consultation with the Hon'ble Governor, the Seminar was to be inaugurated on February 28, 2006 and it continued for three days, i.e. from February 28 to March 2, 2006. I extended invitations to specialists in this field on the theme of the Seminar, including Fellows of IIAS. Some experts were able to accept our invitation and participated in the Seminar, with their valuable contributions.

Besides the National Seminar at Bhubaneswar, I also organised two Colloquia on Secularism at IIAS, Shimla during 2005 (one for the Fellows and the other for the Associates). Out

of the presentations made in the two Colloquia, some papers have been selected to be included in this present volume, along with some papers presented by the participants in the Bhubaneswar Seminar held in 2006.

One important feature of the Bhubaneswar Seminar and the two Colloquia is that there is a free and open discussion-cum-dialogue among persons belonging to various disciplines. The IAS at Shimla has always conducted an inter-disciplinary fora. In Bhubaneswar too, there was an assembly of historians, sociologists, political scientists, social anthropologists, linguists, Sanskritists, litterateurs, journalists-cum-editors, apart from philosophers. The discussions carried on in the Seminar as well as Colloquia were found to be exceedingly multifarious as well as refreshing.

In this present volume the first three essays are pertinent to the theme of the Bhubaneswar Seminar, i.e., on Secularism and National Integration: Contributions of Indigenous Traditions in Orissa. The next five essays are directly on the theme of secularism, touching upon Nationalism and the typical Indian socio-political setup. The rest of the essays mostly touch upon certain prominent modern thinkers of Orissa like Padma Bhusan Pandit Nilakantha Das, Shree Bairagi Mishra and Shree Madhusudan Das. The essay by Shree Jagannath Dash also deals with the novel views of Professor Ganeswar Misra on Vedic thought. The other essays have focussed on the secular dimension revealed in *Jnanamisra-bhakti* tradition of Orissan *Pañca-Sakhā* movement, secular trend in the Mahimā movement of Orissa and the issues concerning tribal identity in national and secular perspective. There are also some discussions dealing with the secular trend found in the local customary functions of Orissa, like *Pūjā and Yātrā*, besides the cult of Jagannātha.

I am hopeful that the essays included in the volume will be well received by the readers and also encourage the readers to new modes of looking at secularism and national integration in the Indian context.

INTRODUCTION

The volume entitled 'Secularism and National Integration: with special referenceto the Contributions of Indigenous Traditions in Orissa' contains fifteen critiques, covering different issues related to the primary theme. All the contributions make an attempt to focus on certain points against the background of the Indian socio-political scenario, either directly or indirectly. These articles are placed in the volume in three sections in view of their focus on three different areas in the broad sense of the term.

The first section comprises three essays directly focusing on the theme of the Seminar from divergent perspectives. While some focus on the Indian response to secularism, one draws attention to a seminal Orissan thinker (Professor Ganeswar Misra) who has read the Vedic message in terms of secular humanism.

The first essay 'Secularism, National Integration: Contributions of Indigenous Traditions in Orissa', is by Dr Sitakant Mohapatra, possessing an excellent literary and academic background, besides evincing rich administrative ability, the author has dealt with secularism in the Indian context and does not find its equivalent in any Indian language, mainly because of its western origin. Even then, he concedes that secularism has been a part of the Indian tradition. He admits to the existing cultural diversity and rightly disapproves of the dull uniformity in the Indian context. Regarding contributions from Orissa, the author refers to the Jagannatha culture, Mayurbhanj's Siva temple with its tribal

santal priest, the communitarian approach of the tribals, and the communal harmony between the Hindus and the Muslims that contribute positively for national integration. In this regard, Dr Mohapatra has duly emphasised on the spirit of tolerance that is the backbone of Oriya tradition all along.

The second essay 'Secularism and National Integration: Contribution of Indigenous Traditions in Orissa' is by Shree Jagannath Dash, who possesses an excellent Sanskrit as well as a philosophical background. His presentation is a remarkable attempt in presenting the novel interpretation of the Vedas from the secular and humanistic standpoint, as advanced by late Professor Ganeswar Misra in his last book, *A Philosophical Analysis of the Vedic Dharmic Thought* (in Oriya). Shree Dash has brought out the salient features of this new rendering of the Vedic mantras and has convincingly proved its logical affinity with the modern concept of secularism with its free, open-mindedness, analytic discriminative approach along with humanistic basis, without any religio-theological underpinning.

The essay by Dr Rabi Narayan Dash (Ex-Superintendent, Orissa Museum), adopts a secularism suitable to the typical Indian context, having multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-racial groups of people. In this connection, the author proposes a definition of the term secular. To him, 'any novel idea, which is applicable to one and all irrespective of its time and space may be termed as secular'. The rational basis of the new definition needs further elucidation as it strikingly departs from the established one.

Regarding the effectiveness of national integration, Dr Dash has rightly held the opinion that neither military power nor the religious preachings supported by military might can achieve national integration. But can religion with its sectarian basis achieve the same? The human element in religion is rather subservient to the cause of the sustenance of sect/cult/group/community/institution. All these points have given rise to mutual hostility, hatred and jealousy. Crusade war, in some form or other, is found everywhere, west or east. So, harping upon the sense of humaneness/nobility/morality/tolerance, etc., in religion is only

to point to a general but not specific or essential core of meaning. Such an estimation about religion is virtually to transcend it and to make a move for a meta-religious stand altogether, having a social and not a trans-social foundation.

So far as Orissa is concerned, Dr Dash has referred to different literary sources as well as to certain modern enlightened thinkers who have contributed significantly towards national integration and have striven to popularise the sense of secularism among the general public. The essay is semi-historical as well as semi-cultural in its general framework.

In the second section, the discussion mainly centres around the theoretical construction of both the concepts of secularism and national integration. It also touches upon the Indian perspective. Related issues like state, nationhood and also the emerging phenomenon of new theodicy are taken up for scrutiny. The section begins with my modest presentation 'Secularism: Its Use and Abuse'. An attempt has been made to analyse the concept of secularism against its original setting and the modification suggested therein as well. The claim that the Indian socio-cultural tradition is deeply rooted in religious and spiritual basis of diverse formulations and, as such, it cannot accommodate the western sense of secularism is critically discussed in the essay. Is there any way out to move beyond the dichotomous situation of either trans-religious secularism or some sort of religious secularism?

The paper by Dr D.S. Kaintura (a specialist in English literature), 'Secularism and Pseudo-secularism', has touched upon the historical background in which both the concepts of secularism and humanism have acquired their currency in the western source. While adopting secularism in the Indian context, it has given rise to various problems and difficulties. The writer of the essay has clearly defined of those issues and problems.

The essay by Shree Bikash Kar (a noted journalist from Orissa) is a succinct account of both nationalism and secularism in the Indian context. He has viewed both these issues not as mere concepts but as attitudes of the characters of people at large. Shree Kar is skeptical regarding thoughtlessly imputing foreign ideas

into the Indian mode of thinking, which is an altogether different setting. The western concept of nuclearisation of the family, for instance when put to the Indian situation creates, according to him, a great deal of imbalances and social disintegration. Such a move is not simply untraditional; it is against the socio-moral human bond. In the name of modern secularism, the vulgarisation of human sentiments and attitudes needs to be prevented. So also, in the name of safeguarding religion, all sorts of corrupt practices of earning money by hoodwinking the mass need to be checked. Both the secular and national attitude spring from pure love among fellowmen and unless there is change of heart in the positive sense, mere slogans – according to him – cannot be effective in reaching the goal. Shree Kar's view is emotionally catchy and poignant. A detailed theoretical survey of the view is expected from him in future.

The essay 'Secularism, the Indian State and a New Theodicy' by Professor Tapas K. Koy Choudhury (a noted specialist in history and at present a Fellow of IAS) is a critical and analytical survey of the concept of secularism, its application on the Indian state and, consequently, the challenge advanced from a new form of theodicy. He starts with the problem: Whether India is qualified to be secular or India is to adopt it, imputing an altogether new meaning to the words. If secularism is diasporic in the Indian context, then what is the prospect of its adoption? The author refers to a remark by J.S. Mill (one of the pioneers of the secularist stand in the west), that anything that is not religious is secular.

In Professor Roy Choudhury's opinion, the Indian intellectuals, at the early stage at least, had no clear idea about the implication of secularism. They were vague as to how the secularist argument was to be located in Indian sociology. The device of pragmatism, the author holds, cannot be taken as a logical deduction from the secularist argument. The intellectuals felt that secularism is suitable to hold the sense of unity on which the Indian nationhood rests. But this assumption is not found to be tenable, as it lacks negotiation and consensus. In this connection, the writer has referred to the prospect of homeostasis as against homogeneity. The importance of will and liberty need not be overlooked in this

regard. Towards the end, Professor Roy Choudhury refers to Tagore's theory of *samājtantra* (societality) which emphasises on *sāmanjasya* (congruence) as against *aikya* (unity). Both state and society are not dichotomous; they can be rather participatory from this angle. Professor Roy Choudhury's analysis requires serious attention.

The last essay in the second section is, 'Reason, Democracy and Living Together', is composed by Dr Pabitrakumar Roy, a senior scholar in philosophy. Even after retirement from the University, Dr. Roy has been continuously engaged in philosophic investigation with all sincerity. At present, he is Fellow in IAS.

Dr Roy's contribution here is directed mainly to focus on what he terms as the problem of secularism. He views secularism as a matter of culture. This remark is a departure from the established sociopolitical version of the concept. In this regard, Dr Roy discusses reason in relation to democracy and points out as to how, instead of being *rational*, it is more important to be *reasonable*. For, most of our disagreements are – Dr Roy thinks – due to our being rational. Secularism rests on sociability and social harmony, but that turns out to be impossible. In this connection, he is reminded of Kant's references to our anti-social sociability'. To him, social harmony is always fragile. Man cannot exist outside society, but, his life is not simply to serve it. The collective drama of sociability creates the individual, his rights and dignity. Can secularism overcome the problem? Dr Roy's apprehension requires thorough probing.

The third section begins with a collection of essays focussing on indigenous traditions in Orissa, both on secularism and national integration in its varied dimensions.

The first essay in this section is 'Secularism, National Integration, Pandit Nilakantha and Bairagi Misra' by Professor Gouranga Charan Nayak, one of the well-known philosophers of India today. In his presentation, he has duly set aside the misreading that secularism is atheistic and materialistic. His essay is pre-eminently refreshing insofar as it dovetails with both secularism and national integration against the background of two

remarkable Oriya thinkers of the previous century, Pandit Das and Shree Misra. Both the thinkers are shown to be profoundly original in presenting new renderings of the *Bhagavad Gīta* in the non-theological rational mode that is found to be conspicuously in tune with the secular temper, having a clear humanistic touch. The two salient points emphasised by Pt. Das and Shree Misra, viz., *bhāktika mithyā* (devotional lies) and *buddhi saraṇāgati* (taking resort to discriminative understanding), respectively, are well highlighted in Professor Nayak's presentation.

The essay '*Jñānamiśrā Bhakti: the Secular Dimensions*' by Professor Tandra Patnaik, a noted scholar on Bhartṛhari's philosophy of language, is one well-documented account of the Oriya formulation of *Jñānamiśrā Bhakti* where a typical form of composition of devotion and knowledge has been advocated. Here, *bhakti* is interpreted not in terms of *saguṇa* but in terms of *nirguṇa*. It is, as rightly indicated by Professor Patnaik, closer to Śaṅkara's treatment of *bhakti* as probing into one's own being and, in that way, it is distinct from other Vaiṣṇava accounts of *bhakti* that imply a personal element of love and emotion to a theistic *saguṇa* Īśvara.

Professor Patnaik also makes an attempt to vindicate the secular dimensions of the Oriya form of devotionism in terms of *jñānamiśrā* formulation. She quotes extensively from the writings of Oriya medieval Vaiṣṇava *santhas* wherein the realisation of formless Brahman is said to be accessible to all irrespective of caste, colour and creed distinction. This sort of openness and non-discriminative temper, it is pleaded, suggests secular dimension.

But, has it not been also claimed by other Vaiṣṇavites and other theists that their stand is equally open to all, irrespective of any social discrimination? Is it not the case that they too advocate an all-pervasive openness and universal tolerance in their respective framework? Such claims are virtually confined to their sectarian fold and history reveals that there have been perpetually not only doctrinal differences but also mutual hatred, animosity and intolerant attitude permeating amongst them. As such, to trace

secularism in religio-theological domain appears to be somewhat conceptually unclear. The secular element that is noticed in such cases is rather due to socio-empiric pressure and not a result of typical theological conceptualisation.

Dr Amarendra Mohanty (an advocate of political science) contributes the essay ‘Madhusudan Das and Indian Secularism’. This is a neat presentation, consisting of two sections. To begin with, Dr Mohanty has touched upon the basic connotation of secularism followed by its adoption in Indian governance after independence. The Indian orientation of secularism is not callous or indifferent to religion but, accepting religion as a powerful social phenomenon, it is committed to guarantee freedom of faith and religious worship and non-discrimination on the grounds of religion.

In the third section, Dr Mohanty dwells upon the thought and action of Shree Madhusudan Das, one of the most outstanding Oriya leaders in the previous century who, in a pure dedicated spirit, fought, for the cause of Oriya identity on the socio-political front only along the lines of secular procedure, without being tilted to any form of cultism, religious communalism and sectarianism.

A most concise presentation is by Dr Namita Kar (a philosophy-professional), titled ‘Casteism and Secular Trend in the Mahimā Movement’. This article brings to focus certain significant points with regard to the dharmic concept of *varṇa* and its subtle but vital distinction from the degenerated non-dharmic social concept of *jāti*. Based on original sources like *Ṛg Veda* and *Bh. Gītā*, it is held that the classification in terms of *varṇa* is neither theological nor is it construed as static and inflexible. It is a classification of men in society as per certain criteria pertaining to a particular period with its needs and requirements. It was never designed to be inviolable and sacrosanct.

The Mahimā movement is shown to be against casteism (*jātivāda*), but not necessarily antagonistic to *varṇa-vyavasthā* as a dynamic and flexible formulation. As stated by Dr Kar, the Mahimā movement is not opposed to the qualitative distinction

on the basis of bodily as well as mental performances. Of course, the ability of the individual is not construed to be fixed and inborn/innate, but is liable to alteration, depending upon several factors.

The Mahimā conception of Viśuddhādvaita is indicated to be not pointing towards a formless, unmodifiable static absolute/self-complete entity, but to emphasise that no description can exhaust it. In other words, Mahimā definitely opts for openness and dynamism of innumerable possibilities of manifestations. It is this significant sense of openness that keeps Mahima distinct from the usual sense of theological closedness and rigidity. Once this point is properly taken up in its proper logical spirit, it can be shown to have definite leanings towards human freedom, moral autonomy and a secular sense of equilibrium in socio-political affairs. Dr Kar's treatment of Mahimā in terms of secular trends, however, requires further elaborate studies and research.

The essay by Dr Madhumita Dash (a young enthusiastic scholar in philosophy) explores secular trends in *Pūjā* and *Yātrā* festivals of Orissa. In the first section of the essay, the author deals with the Indian version of secularism as figured in the Constitution and as more or less adopted by the Government. In the second section, she has dealt with some prominent *pūjās* and *yātrās* performed by the common people of Orissa which bear the secular trend in a significant manner. The essay is interesting but brief. A more vigorous and detailed study in this direction is expected from her in future.

Dr Durga Madhav Praharaj (a senior teacher of philosophy) writes on 'Secularism and National Integration: Contributions of Orissan Traditions'. In the beginning, Dr Praharaj starts with what he terms as 'background assertions' which appear to be not particularly precise as they are not elucidated further in the essay. It requires to be clearly spelt out as to how are historical religions different from non-historical ones and what precisely is strict secularism as different from loose secularism. If, by 'historical religions' it is meant as those which have some history and non-historical religion means which is brand new then, in what sense, can historical religions not accommodate

strict secularism whereas non-historical religion can do so, by implication, is not made clear. Why does the question of giving up religion occur in the context of the discussion of secularism and national integration? Do any of these topics necessarily suggest the elimination of religion from the social framework? Are both the concepts ever viewed as mere ideals? Is it not true that even in India today, at the time of national crises like wars with foreign power, people from different parts of the country – irrespective of their racial, linguistic and religious differences – stand up united to face the challenge with all seriousness? Does it not show that there is the presence of national integration all through, despite sporadic obstacles? Is secularism a mere ideal concept? Is it fully inoperative as a matter of fact? Does secularism mean denial of religion from the social level, or does it only demand non-interference of religious authority in matters of political governance?

While dealing with the contributions of Oriya traditions, Dr Praharaj refers to the view of Pt. Das and holds the opinion that the Jagannātha dharma is *mānava dharma/Añtmika dharma/Gītā dharma* and, therefore, it is bound to be humanistic and secular. It is somewhat obscure as to how all such different dharmic formulations are all put together as identical and, again, in what manner is semi-religious cult like Jagannātha claimed to be identical with a non-religious (not anti-religious) conceptualisation like humanism and secularism. There may be certain humanistic trends or even dimensions in the theoretical structure as well as practical operations in the said dharmic framework. Well, such cases need to be spelt out and validated. But from that, to arrive at a conclusion that the said dharma is identical with humanism/ secularism requires reconsideration. It is expected that Dr Praharaj will elucidate his viewpoint by detailed analysis in his future work.

The last but not the least essay here is ‘Tribal Identity in Indian National Secular Perspective: Contributions from Orissa’s Indigenous Traditions’ by Dr Rabindra K. Mohanty, possessing a sound sociological background. The essay is a somewhat accurate account of the numerous Oriya tribes, and their identities on the

bases of their socio-cultural specificities. It also deals with their role towards the formation of national unity and integration. An interesting feature of the essay is its focus on the gradual process of secularisation among the tribes through diversities like Sanskritisation, Hinduisation, Aryanisation, as also being exposed to modern cultural traits.

The present collection is a modest offering of a number of thought-provoking essays by some enthusiastic and inquisitive thinkers on the issues of both secularism and national integration against both the Indian and the Oriya background. It is expected that this contribution will be received well by the readers and arouse the need for further penetration on the theme itself.

SECTION - I

Secularism, National Integration: Contributions of Indigenous Traditions in Orissa

Sitakant Mohapatra

Secularism and national integration are both subjects of considerable importance to us Indians as a nation. There has been a great deal of thinking, debates and discussions on both the concepts, primarily on the meaning of secularism. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the word secular as 'not concerned with a religion', 'not sacred' or 'worldly'. The word secular was coined by Geroge Jacob Holyoake who, in his work *English Secularism*, defined it as 'a code of duty pertaining to life, founded on considerations purely human and intended mainly for those who find theology in indefinite or inadequate, unreliable or unbelievable'. In that sense, secularism emerged as an attempt to fill up the void and the inadequacy in theology and religion felt by its practitioners. It has been looked upon and used variously. Questions have been asked whether it is a political ideology, a social paradigm, a religion-neutral value system or perhaps one which has elements of all the three. Our Constitution did not

initially mention the word secular. The words secularism and socialism were incorporated by the Constitution (42nd Amendment) Act, 1976. In the absence of any explanation of the term secular in the Constitution itself, there was bound to be some vagueness about it with the distinct possibility that it could be capitalised by interested political groups and, thereby, the masses might be left confused. Secularism is surely not anti-religionism, as distinguished from equal respect for all religions. Secularism is not looking back into the past and emphasise only those values enshrined there. Those values, important in themselves, have to be reconciled with the emerging new word. Nor can the word secularism be considered as modernism in a loose western manner and suspect everything of the past as non-progressive and theology oriented. As a concept, it has to be understood as a reconciliation of two other important concepts – Liberty and Fraternity – enshrined in the Preamble to the Indian Constitution. The latter speaks of Fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the nation. Secularism should, therefore, give equal importance to an individual's and group's dignity and self-expression as also the unity and integrity of the nation.

Mahatma Gandhi's *The India of My Dreams* defined secularism as ... 'an India, in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country in whose making they have an effective voice; ... an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony'. The trouble with secularism as a concept is that it is western in its origin. In no Indian language is there any equivalent of this word. In the west, this word was a product of the separation of Church and State following the religious wars and the Reformation which led to the breakup of the medieval Church. In ancient India, perhaps the word nearest to this in its meaning was *dharma*. The *rishis*, when they blessed the king at the time of his coronation, wanted him to abide by *rāj dharma* which broadly meant the duty of the king to render justice to all his subjects. Just as secularism has no equivalent in our languages, *dharma* has no equivalent in the English language.

We are an ancient civilisation but a young nation. Neither the integration of the people nor a democratic political system and

a homogenous polity can be created without infusing a spirit of brotherhood, love and tolerance among the heterogeneous population in the context of our multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-religious population.

In our society, there are obvious elements that create disharmony. There are elements that divide, as also elements that connect. We must understand what divides us and have the patience and courage to understand the reason or reasons for the same and seek to find answers to our questions. It would be unwise to close our eyes to them and sweep them under the carpet. More importantly, we must emphasise what connects us – and they are many. Much before Nehru discovered India, Śāṅkarāchārya had conceived of the emotional need of integrating the people. That perhaps led to his establishing the *Chār Dhāms*, giving India an identity and integrity. The capacity of Indian society to integrate various, often antagonistic elements, is a fact of history. Max Müller said as much, referring to the Indian culture as ‘infinitely absorbent like the ocean’. The concept of India has been variously expounded. One can think of Richard Lannoy’s *The Speaking Tree*; Sunil Khilnani’s *The Concept of India* and several other works on the subject. Interpreted broadly, secularism has always been a part of the Indian tradition.

Looking at the entire nation, secularism as a social praxis can be seen working in Maharashtra’s Ganesh *Chaturthi* celebrations, Orissa’s famed *Ratha Yātrā*, the gatherings at Ajmer and Fatepur Sikri for the worship of the saints, as also the carnival of Goa. Instances can be multiplied. We should emphasise events like this which connect us both in our religion, philosophy and social praxis and, in fact, they are many. Secularism has been enshrined in the teachings of many saints born in our country. We have been fortunate to inherit the tradition of tolerance and universal love which is the message of their teachings. Many of them were critical of the hollowness of litanies and practices which were often opposed to the basic teachings of religions. Kabir, for example, was a great iconoclast who parodied the mullahs and the priests who mouthed empty words and forgot the real values of their religion.

We should celebrate our cultural diversity and not consider it as a burden. We should never aim at a dull uniformity. Instead, we should devise a multi-pronged strategy to combat those forces which militate against secularism as broadly defined and reconcile it to the imperative need to preserve the integrity of the nation that the Constitution speaks of.

In Orissa, forces which are built into and are ingrained in our culture and which promote tolerance, love and national integration are numerous. One can only cite a few instances. The most obvious and important example of this is the Jagannātha culture. That it is a confluence of various schools of philosophy. It is a well-known fact that great names in Indian tradition have contributed to its evolution. Tolerance is the key to national integration and tolerance is what the Jagannātha culture is founded on. Much has been said about the tribal origin of Lord Jagannātha. It is part of the literary tradition and finds mention in several leading lights of this tradition including Sāralā Dās, Jagannātha Dās and Achyutānanda Dās.

Mayurbhanj was one of the ex-states of Orissa that was lucky to have far-sighted and forward-looking kings. *Mayurbhanj Gazette* explicitly mentions the kings' directions and attempts to integrate the tribals of the state with the general population. As a specific gesture, the Santals and other tribes were encouraged to come to Baripada and be a part of the *Ratha Yātrā* procession. There is a Śiva Temple in the Santal area which was built by the local population dominated by the Santals and even today the priest of the temple is a Santal. The tribal world has a deep sense of community and regard for other people's opinion and other people's faith, qualities which are at the heart of secularism and which promote national integration. For the tribal, the integration starts right from the village. There is a communitarian approach to life which should be the envy of the modern society. Right from the birth of a child and giving a name to him down to marriage and death, everything is looked upon as the concern of the entire village. Just like the life-cycle rituals, there are several rituals associated with the different steps of agricultural operations beginning from the sowing of seeds to harvesting

of crops. Each of these events in the agricultural cycle have corresponding ritual celebrations. In all these celebrations, the entire village participates and functions as a unit. It is not as if there are no feuds or quarrels between families in the village but, traditionally, these are settled in a gathering of the village elders. This integration extends from the village to the clan and then to the entire community.

In Orissa's rural belt, Hindus and Muslims happily participate in each others' ritual celebrations. Even in larger cities which have sizeable Muslim population, the general atmosphere is one of cooperation and friendliness. Scholars have related this tolerant and cooperative spirit to the influence of Jagannātha culture. It is wellknown that in the decades since independence, there have been very few communal riots involving Hindus and Muslims in Orissa.

Thus, there are many aspects of secularism and national integration which form the basis of Oriya society. These qualities have to be seen in the perspective of social and economic change. The fact that the harmony between the communities is not disturbed despite many tensions which inevitably arise out of such changes is an evidence of the strength and resilience of the Oriya tradition of tolerance. Perhaps such instances are also common in different regions of this vast country. It is necessary to delve into these social practices and understand their connection both with India's historical tradition of tolerance, fellow-feeling and love and the teachings of its religion. It is also necessary to bring out these connections and learn how, the changing circumstances, they can be suitably modulated and used to subserve the purpose of national integration. The main approach should be to discover and emphasise the roots of secularism in the Indian tradition. Rapid socio-economic change does generate forces which militate against this tradition. We have to devise ways and means to ensure that the forces of integration enshrined in our history are encouraged and the rival forces which militate against it are discouraged and eliminated. There is an urgent need to rediscover the ancient roots of secularism and their multiple manifestations and use them in the modern context of rapidly changing social

and economic order. The parameters of what exactly is meant by the phrase national integration should also be clearly understood. Ours is a multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-cultural society. Each of these languages, religions and cultures have deep roots of their own. Surely, the objective cannot be to iron out all differences among them. The true objective should be to analyse these commonalties that connect. Only on the basis of preserving the uniqueness of each language, culture and religion can there be true integration at the national level.

We should realise that there cannot be ready made answers or solutions to the numerous problems which operate against our traditional roots of secularism and communitarian integration. But it would be important to ask the right questions and seek the right answers.

SECULARISM AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION: CONTRIBUTION OF INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS IN ORISSA

Jagannath Dash

1. SECULARISM

The word 'secularism' comes¹ from the Latin word 'saeculum', meaning 'generation', 'age', etc. In Christian Latin, the word means 'the world, especially opposed to the Church'. The word also means 'the doctrine that morality should be based solely on regard to the well-being of mankind in the present life, to the exclusion of all other considerations drawn from belief in God or in a future state'.² 'The elimination of the influence of organised religion from spheres of activity such as medicine, education and the arts has prompted men to construct for themselves a worldview in which ideas of God and of life after death, play no significant role. The term "Secularism" was coined in the middle of the nineteenth century to identify such a philosophy of life'.³ 'An important method for the treatment of planetary perturbations was introduced by Joseph Louis La-grange (1736-1813)... Since the

attractions of other planets cause a planet to follow a path differing from a fixed ellipse, the elements of its orbit so determined will necessarily vary with time Hence..... the term proportional to the time “t”, are called secular terms’.⁴ According to the Apostolic Constitution 1967, secular Christians are allowed to ‘... pursue Christian perfection... while living and working in and of the world’.⁵ *The Ajanta English-Oriya Dictionary* translates secularism as ‘Doctrine of this worldliness’ (*aihikavāda*). ‘secular growth stories are those where consistent high growth can be seen year after year ... IT and telecom services are two areas where this is true ... It is difficult to say at this point that the power sector is a secular growth story’ (E.T. February 20, 2006).⁶

1.1 The Core Meaning

We can observe that the word secularism was already in use in the field of astronomy in early nineteenth century before being adopted in the field of a humanist worldview. The spirit has also been accommodated in Christianity in the middle of the twentieth Century, even for the purpose of pursuing Christian perfection. We have also seen that secularism is used in today’s economic and financial field in the sense of freedom from extraneous influences. It thus occurs to us that this term has no religious or anti-religious connotations. We conceive it as a scientific and logical concept. Secularism represents the sense that one has to analyse the effect in terms of its various causal factors so as to ascertain and distinguish between the extraneous or accidental ones and the self-propelling or autonomous ones, so that the former ones can be eliminated or discouraged and the latter ones reinforced and encouraged, in order to facilitate the generation of the desired effect with the least degree of distortion. Some factors can be readily found to be accidental and eliminable. The rest can be treated as autonomous and ineliminable for the time being, until further investigation makes it possible to eliminate some of them. It follows that some factors are referred

to as autonomous, stable and ineliminable only in comparison with those that are considered to be less stable and eliminable. This can be an endless process. For practical purposes, therefore, and for the time-being, one has to halt the process at a point which appears to be pragmatically judicious in order to avoid infinite regress and also to ensure that the practical life carries on. There is practically no absolute secularism or its absolute negation. The method accommodates rectifications from time to time.

1.2 The Moon on the Tree Top

If one intends to show the moon to a child, one asks the child to look at the top of the yonder tree. The child sees that the moon is perched at the tree top. At the same or another time, if the moon is seen at the top of a hill with and the child inquires about the real location of the moon, one explains that locations – at the top of this tree or that hill or elsewhere – are accidental, less stable, less durable and eliminable factors that go to describe the moon. The autonomous factor that goes to bring about a more durable and stabler awareness of the moon was that it is the brightest luminary in the night sky. When one ignores this and emphasises the temporary location – that too relative to the observe – one does not facilitate) generation of an awareness of the stabler and more durable nature of the moon's description.⁷ No one believes that a sitting crow will constitute the identifying and re-identifying feature of a house.⁸

1.3 Truth of the Autonomous is *Pragmatically* Relative

It is important to note here that what is considered to be autonomous and true for the present is pragmatically stable and durable in comparison with something which is less stable and durable. The function of water in a pond is considered to be more stable and durable in comparison with that of the water in a mirage⁹ and *vice versa*.

1.4 Secularism and Dogmatism

Conceived in this manner, the meaning of the word ‘secularism’ stands directly counter to that of the word ‘dogmatism’. What is ordained by the Lord, obviously through His chosen individual, has to be obeyed. No question is to be raised. No logic is called for. In direct contrast, the secular method shuns dogmatism. An individual is important because his participation is invited to raise a question. Social cohesion emerges from an open and constructive debate on all shades of an opinion, leading to a broad consensus. This consensus is likely to be more durable and stable than any dogmatic decree. This method is entirely open and democratic, right to its core. It is the scientific method. A desired objective is analysed in terms of its various possible causal factors. Observation and experiment are undertaken openly. Eventually, the factors found to be accidental or distracting are located in order to be eliminated or discouraged. The factors found to be autonomous and contributive are reinforced or encouraged so as to facilitate the generation of the desired objective. In matters concerning the society, strictly scientific observation and experiment may be somewhat difficult. This difficulty can be taken care of by means of a wide open debate. To participate meaningfully and constructively in this debate, a member has to possess wide awareness and an open mind.

1.5 The Cult of an Open Mind: Role of Education

Openness of the mind forms the foundation of this method. A proper system of education will strive to inculcate a deep sense of openness and graceful tolerance. The Upanisadic sage exhorts his own student to critically examine the former’s conduct and adopt only those that are considered conducive to/common good. Even his own conduct that does not pass the test of the common welfare is clearly denounced by the teacher himself.¹⁰ After all the instructions is imparted, the disciple is asked by the same teacher not to take the instructions as sacrosanct but to subject them to thorough analytical scrutiny and to conduct himself in a manner as appears most judicious to his open mind.¹¹

2. NATIONAL INTEGRATION

In this secular environment the participation of every member of all groups – in the struggle to bring about the desired effect – seems to be very highly probable than in case of any other method. It is to be constantly kept in mind that the truth of what presently appears to be an autonomous factor is pragmatically relative and that there is no room for dogmatism. A mind that is wide open is accommodative of rectifications at all times. The targeted effect, obviously, has to accord with the ethos of the group. A nation does not survive with the citizens disintegrated. Thus local, regional, national and international integration seems to be a corollary of this method of secularism. Logical and scientific secularism is a deeply democratic, tolerant, value-based social philosophy of human life. Adopting and applying this method intelligently, Ācārya Śāṅkara succeeded in his great mission of culturally integrating the whole of India, uprooting the degenerating and degrading sectarian rituals in his generation. Long before him the Vedic and the Upaniṣadic sages, Mahāvīra Jaina and the Buddha, and more recently, Swami Vivekananda and Mahātmā Gandhi did the same in their generations. It is true that each success story is followed by a group of sycophants with closed minds who contribute to the relapse into ritualistic degradation. The answer to the problem lies in an earnest openness of a mind always prepared to see the other view, to invite a free constructive debate, and to gracefully accommodate the consequent course correction. The group grows up into its full blossom of openness: the member grows up into its full blossom of openness: the one draws its sustenance from the other: the drawing from each other's strength further expands and strengthens each other's openness.¹²

3. ORISSA'S INDIGENOUS CONTRIBUTION: GANESWARA MISRA

The geographical area presently called Orissa has immensely contributed to this philosophy of openness. Emperor Khārabela patronised Mahāvīra's doctrine of multifaceted realism (*anekānta*). Emperor Ashoka was converted to Buddhism with its pragmatic

four-fold truth (*satya catuṣṭaya*) after he set foot on this land. Śankara's doctrine of truth as being pragmatically relative (*āpekṣikam satyam*) is now traceable to his Govardhana *Pīṭha* at Puri. The movement identifying knowledge and devotion (*Jñāna = Bhakti*) was propounded here. Muslims and non-Muslims jointly participate in many religious functions. The Mahimā cult, the caste-less and idol-less humanism, was born here. All these movements were spontaneous and indigenous awakenings, contributing to a secular openness of mind. But we will concern ourselves with the contribution of Professor Geneswara Misra towards secular openness during the late twentieth century, through his book '*Epistemology of Predicative Awareness: A Philosophical Analysis of Vedic Mantras*'.¹³ We will confine ourselves to certain relevant statements from his preface to the book, translated from the original Oriya version.

3.1. Professor Ganeswara Misra's Preface to his Book

When I was a child I heard the sweet and melodious chantings of Vedic mantras such as 'Honey is the air, honey is the order, honey is the river...' etc., in social functions and grew inquisitive about them. Soon after I came to read Mahātmā Gandhi's powerful and convincing arguments against untouchability in *Harijan*. I also heard dogmatists quoting from the *Gītā* that God himself has created the four castes according to their inborn qualities and functions. Some Vedic pandits were arguing from *Puruṣasūkta* that (untouchables (śūdras) are born from the feet of the cosmic person (*Puruṣa*). They were born to serve others and, therefore, were lowest in the social hierarchy. Such people were untouchable due to their low birth. These arguments were not convincing. My inquisitiveness to read and understand the Vedas became stronger.

When I was invited to contribute a paper to a seminar on 'Vedic Values...' sponsored by ICPR in 1984, I got the opportunity to study Cbriginal Vedic *sūktas* like *Jñāna sūkta*, *Puruṣasūkta*, *Śivasaiṅkalpa* and poems on cultivation and harvesting of *Ṛgveda* and *Bhūmisūkta* of *Atharvaveda*. The new light that dawned,

convinced me that the meanings of the Vedic mantras are entirely different from their traditional interpretations of the aforesaid unconvincing type.

One has to distinguish between what contributes to common good and what does not. To gain this discriminative knowledge, the best method was to ask appropriate questions, says the Vedic seer. In the *R̥gveda*, the first set of questions are such as ‘Who is this God?’, ‘Why should one praise Him? It became clear to me that the Vedic mantras are intended to argue out logical answers to such a question. The word ‘Veda’ means ‘knowledge’. Knowledge is the foundation of the Vedas.

Knowledge rests on the use of language. Knowledge cannot be formulated and made presentable without language. Unless presented for scrutiny by others, knowledge is superstition. Unless a thing is called by one name, communication and debate is impossible. There is no private knowledge and private language. This point is prominently pronounced in the Vedas. Language preserves knowledge for future. It makes teaching and learning possible.

Vedic seers are the seers of the mantras literally, instruments of thought. The seer sees a truth and presents it in words to facilitate debates in seminars. These truths are born out of deep introspection and are, therefore, called the mantras and their authors are called seers of mantras. ‘Seer’ here means ‘knower’. These seers have not said that they came to know the mantras from another seer. In this sense, ‘philosophy’ in India is called *darśana*. The Veda is authored by seers. It is not self born, nor is it presented by God. A true statement does not owe anything to any human option. It has to be entirely according to the thing talked about. The Vedic mantras are, thus, secular of human options (*apauruṣeya*), and authored by different seers. The Vedas emphasise the truth, not its seer. No God, no creator, no messenger of God presents the Vedas. There are no commands. Vedic value is firmly founded on true knowledge that withstands the scrutiny of many wise men.

The Vedas clearly declare that these are authored by general seer – Bhṛgu and others – and their progenies. Religious

commands are inviolable and dogmatic; Vedic values are founded on Knowledge. Knowledge is a social institution contributed to by many individuals communicating with each other.

Religious commands allow no question. The Vedic values are basically rooted in asking questions. The mantras are not dogmatic statements but are outcomes of logical arguments and debates.

Vedic value leaves no room for a creator. The Vedas do not talk of creation. With a logical outlook, they conceive of a process of a gradual unfolding. A logical outlook is natural in matters of knowledge. The Vedic seer declares that anything that folds out must be based on a rudimentary existence. Thus, the rudimentary existence that carries in its golden womb, as it were, all the possibilities of magnificent unfoldment, is conceived as the prime logical rudimentary (*Hiraṇya-garbho samavartata agre*). The whole world, the earth, water, air, the sun, the moon, the stars, the heavens, animals, plants and men, everything was perched unperceived in the heart of this prime rudimentary existence. The perceived world gradually sprang up from this unperceived womb. Through the use of language and knowledge, men have discovered the magnificent regularity of the world order and truth. Leaving all animals behind, they have conquered the world.

Knowledge, self-restraint, determination, constant practice and truth are the foundations of an enlightened society. The society goes on unfolding forever without death. The deathlessness of the society has been possible due to dispelling the darkness of ignorance (*āditya-varṇam tamasaḥ parastāt*). The society is deathless, no individual is so. A member is born into the society of deathless fluorescence (*amṛtasya putraḥ*). An individual must invite death on completion of a fruitful life of, say, a hundred or hundred twenty years. This was taught to us first by the Yama. Yama first embraced death to teach us this forceful factor of social welfare. He is, therefore, a resplendent (*devatā*) one. Other resplendent ones have similarly contributed to social welfare in various ways to earn their resplendence and glory. Whoever contributes to social welfare in various ways to earn glorious resplendence lives forever in the social mind. Remembering them and their achievements in social ceremonies, we acquire a deep

self-confidence... Vedic values propagate an enlightened social humanism of health, wealthy and efficient social life where there will be affluence for all, through social effort. Vedas do not teach us of any creator God. They do not teach us to surrender to the God. They do not teach us of a psyche of servitude.

If there is no creator, one may ask, who then is this Vedic person of a thousand each of heads, eyes, hands and legs? It is the enlightened human society, actuated with limitless self-reform and ever-widening excellence of achievement and growth. In this vastness of growth, people do opt for specialisation, resulting in categorised groups of specialised professionals in the areas of say, education military, commerce and services. The whole society is the great person. The categorized group is a group person. The group of agriculturists are described in the harvesting poem as the 'Field person' (*kṣetrapuruṣa*) also with a thousand each of heads, hands and eyes. The person of the *Puruṣasūkta* is not the creator God.

While concluding, I touch upon the concept of 'ātman' occurring in the Vedas. It is not a disembodied 'spirit'. It is the discriminating intellect that distinguishes between what is good and what is not for the human society, consistent with universal order (*ṛta*) and truth (*satya*). This discrimination was absent in homosapiens. It does not wander around in a disembodied state after the death of an individual. It is a gift (*ātmadā*) to us by Indra, the ordainer of universal order and truth. Indra, also gives us energy (*baladā*). So he is eulogised as such. Vālmiki, in his *Rāmāyaṇa*, also accepts this meaning. He describes Rāma as a person with discriminating intellect (*ātmavān*). Like riches this intellect has to be earned through discrimination between good and evil and is also deathless like the evolving society. An individual's discriminating intellect concludes on the death of the individual. The glorious resplendence of the *devatās* are deathless in social memory.... These Vedic values are unparalleled. Being based on universal order and truth, these are excellent virtues for all persons at all times and are, therefore, perpetual (*sanātana*). These ideas have been expounded in greater detail in the different chapters of this book.

3.2. Our Conclusion

We conclude with the belief that the term ‘secularism’ connotes a logical and scientific method of analysis of a desired objective in terms of its causal factors so as to locate the autonomous and the accidental ones with a view to encouraging the former and discouraging the latter ones. The concept has no religious or anti-religious implications. It assumes an open mind and a free debate. There is no room for dogmatism. At the core it is a democratic-value-based humanist philosophy of life. This practical philosophy is pregnant with all possibilities of accommodation, of course-correction, of growth, of social integration and of individual dignity. Being logical and scientific, in nature, the method is acceptable to all and ensures participation and, therefore, integration of all individuals at all times at all levels, family, local area, regional, national and international. Professor Ganeswara Misra has contributed to the concept by interpreting the Vedas – the world’s oldest linguistic record – in secular terms, highlighting the humanist discriminating intellect, based on universal order (*ṛta*) and truth (*satya*) and no superhuman power.

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SECULARISM AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION: CONTRIBUTIONS OF INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS IN ORISSA

Rabi Narayan Dash

C.J. Holyoake (1817-1905) provided the definition of secularism in the *Chamber's Dictionary*, as 'state, morals, education, etc., should be independent of religion'. But in a modern sense, secularism can be conceived as a way of approach based on neutralism to all kinds of sectarianism. It will be wrong to confine it to the religious and allied wings like the state, morals, education, etc. In our view, all finished artifacts or devices – mainly of material constituents – are the true representatives of secularism. In this respect, secularism is rather in a state of nature. If this is accepted as true, then we can say that secularism has an unidentified legacy of its own, originating and expanding since the advent of man on earth. Any novel idea which is applicable to one and all irrespective of its time and space may be termed as secular. A state may or may not be secular and, in assessing it, the viewpoint of the observer stands questioned. So, secularism is a relative term vis-à-vis man and his contribution to mankind with a universal appeal. Even morals vary from individual to individual and secularism of any

moral may be devoid of the idea for which it may not be useful to mankind, i.e., all the while taking a course of evolution and development. Similarly, secularism in education at times prevents invention but the product of which can be taken to be secular. But Indian secularism is based on universal family norms, i.e. *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakan*, beyond boundaries.

India is a country of various castes, sects, religions and traditions. The castes come down to the present state from extremely remote periods, beginning from Manu, who left the first record of castes it. The caste system based on division of labour was coherent and no social dissension was ever excessive in order to precipitate any movement of one against the other. Rather, it was based on mutual give and take. So, secularism in India was practiced in deed in lieu of being preached. On the other hand, various religious sects like Jaina, Buddha, Vaiṣṇava and the Kabir and Nanak *panthis* have contributed their lot to assimilate the fragmental communities into their all assimilating fold. In this context, religious movements in India have remained a conflict of ideas to prove their points and to be followed. Hence, Indian secularism is based on religious matters with respect to other philosophical thoughts. In this way, other sects were thriving side by side without interference in their group individuality. We see that various philosophical thoughts persist such as Nyāya, Yoga, Bhāgavata, Vaidica, Cārvaka, etc., having their followers. But no conflict has ever occurred between them, although each have their group followings. This is Indian secularism in practice and it rests on mutual respect.

Secularism in Orissa, particularly in religion- is outstanding. We see human relation overshadowing sectarian bias in religion. The most numerous sects such as the Hindus and the Mohammedans live together and participate in each other's religious functions. The *Urs* and the *Durga Pūjā* attract people of both the communities to participate in the same. There are Mahimā Dharmīs professing their own customs who also coexist with other religious communities. The essence of Indian and Oriya secularism is tolerance between different religious sects, which has percolated down to the present as a strong traditional heredity

and manages to blunt militancy among the Indian communities. A Buddhist community that exists in Tigriria of the Cuttack district does not face any religious hardships in dealing with other religious sects. Orissa being a centre of Vaiṣṇava, Sakta and Saiva creed, their coexistence amongst themselves as well as with other sects has been cordial with an humanistic approach. The most outstanding of secular representation comes from the Jagannātha cult. It embraces preachers and followers of different religions, caste and creed to its fold, who have contributed to the Jagannātha cult through literatures, services and devotion. Probably Jagannātha had a Vedic origin and gradually Jainism and Buddhism mingled with this cult. The *Mahimāpanthīs* at one time claimed Him to be their own. Jagannātha had Sālābeg, a Mohammedan as His devotee. Nanak, Namdev and many more devotees from all corners of India paid their homage to this deity. Even the Jagannātha-trinity represents the three racial traits, in the form of colour, such as white, black and yellow or yellowish, representing the Caucasoid, Negroid and Mongoloid races. Jagannātha is not human in form but a symbol of the almighty having a secular approach in form, colour and an all-embracing spirit whom each and all can claim as their own. His worship is conducted by the purest Brāhmins as well as the tribals. The rath festival allows one and all to have a view of Him from close quarters when He comes away, leaving His sanctum, for the people, rides who pine for a holy touch of Him. Thus, Jagannātha is a mass deity, who moves among the people a car and is pushed along the roads and is brought back into the temple. He maintains His family and there is love and quarrel in the house. He has a brother and sister as any householder has; and it makes Him a symbolic householder deity. This is secularism in practice within a religion.

National Integration cannot be imposed. It takes place with fraternity and love. Indian philosophers of the Upaniṣadic times have preached their devotees to stay together, eat together and work together. These should be the key words to reach a stage integrated through action, and not speech of preachings. In the bathing incantation it is uttered that if one applies a bit of earth

collected from the nine sacred rivers emanating from the tip of the foot of Viṣṇu during the time of bathing, then he will remain holy. All these rivers are like Gaṅgā or river Ganges itself. The relevant verse is,

*Adya Godāvarī Gaṅgā Dvītīyaścha Punahpunah
Tritīya Kathita Revā Caturthī Jāhnavī Smṛta
Kāverī Gomatī Kṛṣṇā Brāhmī Vaitarṇī Tathā
Viṣṇu Padagrasambhūta navadhā bhūmi Saṁsthitā
Yetānipuṇya tīrthāni Snānakāle Prakirtayet*

The rulers in the past tried their best to integrate the Indian subcontinent by military force. The Maurya king Chandragupta conquered the whole of India excepting Kalinga and Ashoka achieved it by annexing the Kalingan land into Magadhan empire. But these integrations remained temporary and soon the Magadhan empire disintegrated. Samudragupta Conquered almost the whole of India but the Gupta empire crumbled soon after, History has further confirmed that integration by military means is never long lasting.

National integration was attempted by various religious saints preaching Jainism, Buddhism, Śaivism, Śāktism and Vaiṣṇavism. They carried it through subordinate preachers and patronisers. At one time, the Jainas occupied the Indian scene beginning from Magadha to that of the south and it was almost adhered to from the east to the west and south of India. Kings like Chandragupta, Dadhivāmana and probably other monarchs patronised the same. But very soon the religious sway of the Jains lost their hold due to their rigorous moral discipline. Then the Buddhists took over and Ashoka almost converted the whole of India to the Buddhist fold and further took it abroad. But very soon it crumbled and preferred life in lieu of *nirvāṇa* or emancipation from the living state. Aśoka, Ajātaśatru, Kanishka and many more kings patronized this religion. At one time, Buddhism seems to have attained an invincible position and contributed towards national integration in religious practices. However, this religion could not maintain the status and soon there was a backlash of Jainism again on the advent of Kharavela, but it could not contribute to national

integration. The way to national integration lies in the love for the motherland. Without it, no integration can be conceived. In the past, Indian saints like Śaṅkarāchārya have established different centres to preach their religious philosophy. These centres have been established at four cardinal points of India and pilgrimage to these spots by the devotees following their preceptors evokes a sense of unity of territory, morals and creed.

The Śaiva ascetics appearing soon after 2000 CE gradually developed shrines at different centres of India and promoted Linga worship. The Vīra Śaivas coming next ushered militant patronisers in spreading the religion. Though changes occurred in the ruling heads, yet the Śaiva religion seemed to pervade different regions. For a while, it seemed that they would be able to achieve national integration. But it was not to be. The reason is that a vast country like India could not be bound in one thought and religion. The Vaiṣṇavas coming after them also failed to achieve this aim. On the other hand, they mingled in religious disputation trying to overcome the other until a stage of coexistence appeared.

The last endeavour to dominate was by the English in India. They tried their level best to bring India and greater India in one administrative control and achieved the same. But no national integration could be enforced. Thus it has become clear that neither military power nor the religious preaching and religion supported by military might can achieve national integrity. Hence, it must be approached by some other means.

Another experiment is going on at present to integrate the country democratically. This too has not achieved success in India, because heterogenous living status, customs and the speedy progress of technology have created wider gaps between individuals, groups and economic standards backed by MNCs that create problems to reach a particular level between communities. Hence, national integration will remain behind in the course of national progress. As such we see that the conditions fulfilling national integration vary from time to time. Any world order acceptable to all the people has not evolved as yet and will not do so in coming future. Against this background, national integration can be achieved if there is mutual respect aided and promoted by

caste, creed, religion and economic stages and progresses sans private interest.

Coming to the indigenous tradition of Orissa vis-a-vis national integration, we can cite a few examples. The Orissa state was under monarchies till the Mohammedans occupied it in the mid 1600 CE. This process delayed all decision making on the spot and everything had to wait till the directions came from Delhi, the ultimate centre of power. The Mohammedan culture and religion was quite different from the existing Hindu ways. It has no similitude to the Hindu social activities. The temple systems in Orissa, be it Śaiva, Śākta, Vaisnava and to some extent Buddhist, were having their own worship patterned devotees behaving in their separate manner from the Mohammedans. The ways of worship are inter-related to the temple, deity, the temple servants and others mingled in the system. This was also based on the subsistence pattern on a permanent basis. So there was the security of living on one side and peace and freedom on the other. But the industries failed on this account. Even the exploitation of mines and mineral resources were limited in their efforts to meet the requirements of the state. The precious stones are quarried and finished products are sold or traded so as to earn a profit after due utilisation in the state itself. Soon after Orissa lost her independence, its wealth was forcibly occupied and traded by others and the profit did not come of any use in the state. Even the sea trade was captured to cripple the economy of the state, During the British rule, subordination scored to great heights, impoverishing Orissa. All these factors were anti to Orissa's prosperity and fostered an antagonistic mental set up for national integration. Even after independence although the state of affairs changed a bit, yet the illiteracy rate and the undeveloped communities lagged too far behind to understand and think of national integration. In Orissa itself, integration is not yet complete even after 59 years of independence. So, all these factors stand in the way of national integration.

In spite of all these drawbacks Orissa had contributed towards national integration through its activities. It is a well-known fact that Orissa has contributed to national integration from the ancient

times by many ways. The most important contribution was the trade in the sea and colonization outside India. The South East Asian countries like Java, Bali and Borneo were enriched, by Oriya settlements, culture and trade with the mainland of India. In the same manner, Ceylon was colonised by the Oriya people and there inter marriages with the Ceylonese royal house by princesses of the Oriya families. Even during succession crises, the Oriya princes were chosen to head Śrīlankān kingship and the evidences of the same are to be found in the Mahāvamśa, Dīpavamśa and Dattavamśa. So it was an attempt to integrate Sri Lanka with India.

The Oriya shrines of different periods have shown that different religious sculptures have been depicted in them, irrespective of the creed, belonging to Śaiva, Śākta and Vaiṣṇava faith. Even Jaina or/and Buddhist sculptures have found their way into Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava temples. The evidences of the same are to be found in Śaiva temples of Bhubaneswar and Jagannātha temple at Puri. Almost all the Bhauma period temples have incorporated Buddhist styles in sculptures and depiction of Avaloketeśvara and miniature Buddha images. The Buddhist chaityas carved on the *rahapagas* of such temples indicate integration of cultural trends in Orissa vis-a-vis India. Even the bricks used in the Buddhist shrines are identical in measurements to that of the famous Buddhist centres in middle and eastern India of the early middle ages. The paintings do reveal a regional tradition (i.e., *Oḍiśī*) yet they do depict dress, ornaments and hair styles of the people in a secular style. The painting of Kṛṣṇa in Navagunjara form (depicting parts of nine living beings) is a vivid example of secularising the Kṛṣṇa cult.

The contribution of Oriya erudities like Viṣṇuśarma, Viśvanātha Kavirāja, Jayadeva, etc., have in the past made their efforts to educate the people of India through their works and cement national integration within the literary field.

Even during the British rule, Orissa did not lag behind. Eminent leaders like Madhusudan Das, Pandit Gopabandhu Das and Pandit Nilakantha Das contributed their might in the national integration., although their field of action was confined to different localities. Madhusudan was an elite and his field of action was from a

different viewpoint, away from the national movement, although he ushered the qualitative aspect of politics by rendering free ministerial service, Oriya handicrafts by establishing the Utkal-tannery which was intended to prepare only the best shoes. He also contributed towards national interest – based baristership, when he pleaded on behalf of the king of Puri, the representative of Lord Jagannātha, being himself a Christian by religion.

Pandit Gopabandhu brought the politics of Congress to Orissa and converted the Utkal Union Congress (Utkal Sammilani, intended to amalgamate the outlying Oriya tracts and form the Orissan province) with the Congress. In this course of his action, he has stated in an essay in *satyabādī magazine* that ‘for the area the village is to be sacrificed, for the province the area is to be sacrificed and for the good of India the province of Orissa should be sacrificed’. This clearly indicates his vision for integration of India as he had sacrificed Utkal Sammilani for the cause of National Congress, which was fighting for the freedom of India. He also dedicated the *Satyābadī* press and his paper *Samāja* to the Lokasevak Mandal of India, in order to pursue the overall national cause.

Pandit Nilakantha, during his career as a teacher and headmaster of the Satyabādī school, had setup an ideal to the Indian subcontinent in the line of *Gurukūla*, a model of education in the school standard, which attracted Mahatma Gandhi and the English administrators alike. Even the English administration was interested in protecting it from collapsing. Pandit Nilakantha organised port-workers’ strike and the labourers’ strike in the Assam tea gardens to fight for the cause of Indian labourers. He also left a protest march for the formation of the separate Orissa province on the Parliament Street at Delhi. Though this was meant for the Oriya people, yet it was the courageous protest demonstration against the brutal English administration in challenge to the arbitrary state or province formation. During that period, it needed such moves to create among the people a state of bravery in India. The most important contribution of Pandit Nilakantha was to free the legislature from the executive control. In this process, he made the Orissa Assembly independent from

the Governmental Executive powers, which became a trend to be followed by other states in India.

True integration can be carried out by introducing common laws irrespective of caste, creed and religion; otherwise it will promote discrimination between communities which will retard integration. The Indian policies to create more states on linguistic and community basis will not contribute to integration. Rather, these separate entities will try to demand autonomy and segregate soon after that is achieved. If India as a country and sovereign state is to thrive, then laws and justice should be made available to all similarly and equally.

Orissa's contribution to the Indian and the world culture is the heritage sights of Konārka and Jagannātha temple with its deity. It is symbol worship and the deity is not a human form. Thus, it has an universal appeal irrespective of religion and faith. The symbol not being in anthropomorphic form can be any visual imagery of the almighty so dearly worshipped the world over. The idol here is rather the iconography of *puruṣasūkta* of the Ṛgveda and the non-entity in existence and yet the universal presence in the same representing Oriya, Indian and the global integration.

SECTION - II

THE CONCEPT OF SECULARISM: ITS USE AND ABUSE

Bijayananda Kar

The term 'secular' stands for the involvement with affairs of this world, as against conveying anything sacred or spiritual. It is not concerned with religion. It has, accordingly, no interest in any ecclesiastical or monastic order. Thus, by being secular, one is committed at neither to have belief on a particular religion as against any other religion/religions nor having any affective attitude with any particular religion as such. A secularist's interest becomes confined to the worldly phenomena and no visionary speculation concerning supra-empirical transcendental sense of divinity or hell is ever included in his framework. He remains bound to look into the world affairs and to contribute his role within that frame of reference with his own ability as far as possible. The welfare of others is, of course, looked into by him along with his own betterment. In this sense, within the secular trend, morality is comprehended and is also operated. Any transcendental and spiritual coating of moral sense is not needed for a secularist. This is the manner in which secularism has its sanctioned use.

From this point of view, a secularist is clearly different from a spiritualist, who opts for spiritual realisation or attainment that is far remote from any worldly existential status. Such a move for pure transcendence is rated as not simply higher than the worldly state but that is solely considered as value par excellence and the worldly mortal existence is graded as considerably low in the valuational scale.

However, some moderate spiritualists, in this context, offer a stand which, prima facie, appears not to belittle the value of this worldliness. According to them, the role of one's duty, obligation and other noble virtuous thoughts and actions are not neglected and set aside in the socio-individual setup. The concern about human welfare at the worldly sphere is, of course, important. Moral thoughts as well as actions in the worldly plane are, however, construed as means for the ultimate goal, i.e., spiritual elevation or attainment. Spirituality is accepted as the final end; but that never discards the material prosperity, bodily comfort and socio-moral dealings at the phenomenal level. All such steps are considered as suitable means for the ultimate goal.

Conceding to this approach, attempts have been made in certain quarters to formulate a *via media* between two opposite views such as secularism and sacerdotalism. That may be designated as a modified or liberal form of spiritualism. It does not outright reject secular morality, but keeps a space for it within its belief structure.

But, conceptually this so-called reconciliatory move is not as clear as it appears to be at the outset. The term 'secular' has its origin in the western European tradition as diametrically opposed to both religion and theology on account of their spiritual leanings. The primacy of spiritual transcendence even to the neglect of morality at the socio-individual plane has caused considerable impediment for the free, open-textured investigation in different intellectual disciplines. Not only has it arrested intellectual growth, but it has also turned out to be grossly immoral and inhuman. In the name of religious supremacy, there has been persecution of many free and open-minded thinkers in course of the dark chapters of human history. Crusade war, forcible religious conversion

(either overtly or covertly), forcible killing of men and animals on the pretext of attaining religious success and reward are some gruesome instances which are noticed both in the east and the west. Philosophy, science and any variety of free enquiry have not been accepted, if these are found to move in different directions without acknowledging the higher status of the set religio-spiritual foundation. Even the neutral outlook towards religion and theology is not tolerated in certain quarters.

So, during the period of enlightenment and reason, secularism is found to have been originated in the west as a strong antidote against sacerdotal dogmas, prejudices and anti-social superstitions. Against this background, it can be seen that there is virtually no scope for any sort of conciliation between the two standpoints. Religion is, more or less, bound by faith in the closed circuit and therein reason is at best admitted as its obsequious auxiliary. Secularism, on the other hand, is committed to the free flow of dispassionate rational enquiry. It has stood for independent functioning of morality at the socio-human frame within the empiric worldly plane. It does not find any justification for linking morality with spirituality. The very move of making morality as a means for a spiritual end is self defeating, because thereby, moral autonomy gets adversely affected. In this way, the theological overlordship over social morality is not found to be rationally defensible.

Secularism, despite its strong different stand from that of religion and spiritualism, is not in favour of a radical materialistic outlook either. It does not subscribe to the metaphysical position that matter alone is real (ultimately). It is held that the socio-individual needs and necessities have not to be grounded on foundational materialistic *weltanschauung*. The socio-individual harmony, mutual cooperation, understanding, peaceful coexistence and, above all, human concern are not mere practical, prudential requirements; it has a deep-seated moral dimension. Moral awareness is not visionary in the sense of transcending humanity in the secular forum. That is why secularism has been viewed as a logical neighbour of humanism, meaning thereby, that it implies the concern for humanity.

It is notable that secularism is not committed to embrace atheism, either because both theism and atheism are prone to hold either positive or negative assertions concerning the supra-empirical realm of divinity. But a secularist, in order to be consistent to his stand, is not under any obligation to make any pronouncement about the transcendental, either positive or negative. Its concern is only with this worldliness and human welfare or prosperity within that framework alone, without bypassing the socio-moral requirement. There may be change of a specific criterion in a changing situation or circumstance; but that does not dismantle the socio-moral fabric altogether and, for that, any transcendental spiritual or material ontologization is not indispensable.

There is another important facet of the theory of secularism. Its stand is not simply opposed to religious dogmatism/theological transcendentalism; it is meant to be relevant on various transactions made in the empirical plane. Socio-individual relationships of varied types – inclusive of cultural, economic and political relevance – are viewed in terms of secular perspective. The problems and issues that crop up in any such field are dealt with against a secular background. Particularly, in the western world, almost after the downfall of monastic rule and adoption of constitutional form of governance based on democratization in some form or other, secularism has become well-established in the political circles. Religious institutions, their core beliefs and age-old traditions are not, however, rooted out; but their interference in matters of socio-political concern is least entertained. The decision made in that level is, by and large, determined by the secular outlook.

After independence, India has made its political identity in terms of a democratic sovereign republic, with the formation of a constitution in which there is clear acceptance of secularism (vide 42nd Amendment). Pandit Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, opted for secularism in full earnest. India is declared as a secular state, as distinctly opposed to a theocratic form of government. The Indian democratic setup, it is held, is not to entertain any religious interference in matters of socio-political decision.

Secularism thus stands, in the context of India, for equidistance from any religious formulation – a stand not very much different from the adoption of secularism that is found in currency in the western front. The implication of ‘equidistance’ from religion does not suggest that the government should suppress all religions and advocate a strong negative policy towards them. Rather, a secular government only insists that its sociopolitical decision must be free from religious interference. Political functioning must not be supervened by any religious authority. A citizen is to be equally treated, irrespective of his affinity to any religion or to no religion.

But, so far as the use and application of the theory of secularism at the practical front is concerned, there are glaring incoherent moves in the Indian political scenario. For instance, though secularism is adopted in the theoretical structure of the constitution, actually during the present age, any elected political party or its leader does not hesitate to join hands with any other party or its leader in order to retain or capture power. Not only from the ideological point of view do such parties have nothing in common, but it has also been noticed that while one overtly professes secularism, the other openly supports the cause of a particular group or community. For unprincipled political expediency, alliances are formed to have the government by coalition. The implicit aim for such a coalition is to gain power. The stability of the coalition government is not necessarily due to its efficiency or popularity. In most case it enjoys the full term because each party and members therein do not want to lose power and other inherent advantages. In many instances, the secular principle of non-subordination to matters concerning religio-theological authority are found to have been set aside for a parochial political gain and the adherence to secular principle is only a lip service. It only functions at the outer level and there is no genuine support for secular thought. Consequently, the noble aim of a democratic form of governance to ensure social justice and solidarity becomes self defeating. It is ridiculous that the political parties, having distinct pros or cons towards religion, now claim themselves – with almost of equal force – as truly secular.

Apart from rival political groups some commoners, including educationists and other professionals, have found it difficult to adopt secularism in the Indian context. Some of them have become critical about the adoption of secularism, as advanced by Jawaharlal Nehru. They do not mind passing a castigatory remark that the Nehruvian secular model is fully unwarranted and outmoded in the Indian socio-political scenario, mainly because of India's age-old traditional religio-cultural roots. India is formed by people of different religions with their specific belief-structures and dogmatic foundations. To inject into their psyche, a non-religious secular temper is neither easy nor practicable. There has to be, according to them, some sort of syncretic move to have a blend or harmonious compound between religion and secularism. Instead of sticking to the meaning of secularism as 'equidistance from religions', another version is proposed and that is known as equal respect to all religions (*sarva dharma sama bhāva*).

The plea advanced here is that the multi-religious phenomenon is prone to mutual conflict and hostility. A state, in order to maintain peace and stability, should not adopt coercive measures completely banning all religious activities in the social sector. Through the passage of time, religious beliefs and faiths have already been turned into part and parcel of social reality and, accordingly, the Indian republic cannot bypass the sociality of a diverse religious scene. It has, therefore, to follow a policy of equal treatment to all religions in which the spirit of accommodation and tolerance needs to be emphasised, instead of authoritative regimentation. It is against that background can the propagation of secularism in India become meaningful. The essence of secular thought can be adopted taking due regard of the typical Indian situation and its age-old social status. In this way, an alternative use of the concept of secularism has been introduced, by way of attempting a harmony between religion and secularism.

Now, whether such a device is pragmatically effective is not the main issue so far as the present conceptual probing is concerned. What is primarily sought here is to see whether the alternative use of 'secularism' gives rise to a conceptual clarity or its adoption is indispensable and logically valid. Firstly, what

is the ground for such a combination of religion and secularism? In what way does such a combination exhibit and preserve the essence of secularism? If secularism has been built up with a distinct non-religious background – and that is the only standard use of the concept of secularism – then any attempt at imputing religion within its meaning-content would be surely incongruous. To change the basic meaning virtually amounts to non-use of the concept of secularism itself. If one is to safeguard the interest of religion by way of insisting on its privacy, then that by itself is not unacceptable. Anybody as a citizen is free to have his personal attitude, belief and freedom of choice. Secularism also approves that. It least interferes with the personal element.

But there has been some misuse and mis-reading of freedom of religion. In the name of privacy, certain moves are taken up by different religious groups which are found to be not only mutually conflicting, but create definite occasions for social unrest and indiscipline. On such an occasion, political interference cannot be ruled out. Viewing this, secularism is kept apart from religion. So far as socio-political decisions and their implementations are concerned, the non-interference of religion/religions is insisted upon by a secularist. It is plainly because the political move depends upon different factors concerning people or citizen in a wider frame. It is the religious authoriality over a state that is critically dealt with. It is the theocratic state that goes counter to the secular state. Any religious stand cannot be the determining factor for the state-policy to be implemented.

It seems that any kind of blending of the two concepts virtually points to both eating the cake and also having it. It is at least palpably improper to use a concept completely in a different sense other than its inbuilt well-established sense. Thus, the very idea of religious secularism turns out to be self-discrepant and conceptually muddling. Such a move is not use but rather abuse of secularism.

Secularism, as hinted before, does not move at rooting out religion from the society with an iconoclast attitude. All that it insists for is the non-interferences of religion in the affairs of state-politics. In the name of having religious freedom, in certain

quarters, there is the propagandist movement leading to upgrading one's own religion and downgrading others in public. Quite often, this gives rise to social disruption. A state cannot remain silent over this. In the name of equal respect to all religions, the so-called secular state cannot opt for non-interference over the issue. It may be noted, in this connection that both 'respect' and 'hatred' are emotionally charged, value-loaded expressions. Secularism as a state-policy has been designed to treat varied social issues and problems objectively as far as possible, probing those both in their strength and weakness. The emotional overtone on either side is undesirable for free and open enquiry, so far as the functioning of state is taken into account.

The pretext that, in the Indian context, religious factor cannot be so ignored seems to be not that binding. It is true that India today consists of citizens who are multi-religious, multi-racial, multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and so on. But, it is almost equally the case that there are many other countries that have opted for a democratic form of governance are also found to have citizens of multifarious groups. If the state-laws and its mode of operation are manageably well in order and the people therein are by and large disciplined, well conscious of social morality and civic duties/responsibilities, then the adoption of a secular trend becomes not only effective in political affairs, it also becomes well tuned with other walks of socio-individual transactions. The very insistence of having a religious coating of secularism only reveals that one is not prone to openness and free thinking.

Moreover, it is worthy to note that in the present state of affairs, at least, a citizen of a country (India included) is not bound to adhere to a religion. He, without being irreligious, does not cling to any religion at all. He is, at the same time, a good citizen, being loyal to its different norms and objectives. This is not a mere possibility but true, as a matter of fact. Many youngsters of our generation do not feel shy of overtly identifying themselves as secular and not seriously having any sort of religious affinity. They do not insist on observing and practicing any prescribed religious rules and regulations. In their case, a secular outlook does not seem to have any necessary compromise with a religious

bent of mind. Among them, quite often one, gets the response to the question concerning religion as: ‘Well, we are born to a family being grouped and identified as of “x” religion. But we, left to ourselves, are free from any religious beliefs whatsoever. We are just secular in our outlook and that is all.’

Hence, the argument that in the Indian context secularism has to make adjustment with religion in some way or other does not appear to be that well grounded. Such a supposition seems to be neither reasonable nor is shown to be that compelling. But the irony is that, in the present Indian context, under the plea of accepting equal treatment to all religions, our political leaders have – either while in power or aspiring to get power – come forward eagerly to make themselves associated with festivals and functions organised by different religious communities in order to gain cheap popularity. Here, appeasement is made solely with a selfish motive and an evil design to capture the vote-bank and to be in power, sacrificing socio-political justice. That means, under the garb of religious tolerance, religious groupism/communalism is politicised and is utilised for political gain and that, in turn, jeopardises the prospect of social justice as also equilibrium of the state.

Sometimes, in this regard, issues are raised concerning tradition as well as cultural heritage. It is pointed out that the Indian civilisation has a rich legacy. At the event of collapse of different ancient civilisations, the Indian civilisation somehow or other has persisted amidst all sorts of obstacles and remonstrance. The spiritual and moral edifice has sustained the process of civilisation down the ages. History has witnessed a number of foreign invasions and there have been noticeable collision as well as fusion of diverse cultures. But, nevertheless, there has been in some way or other a soft but solid tyne of continuity representing the Indian identity. In this sense, the people at large have imbibed here a long established heritage of a religious mode of life. On the plea of welcoming the new conceptual tool of secularism it is not wise, perhaps, to relinquish the time-honoured traditional linkages. The sense of modernity has to be mingled with tradition on a harmonious footing.

This sort of appeal appears to be initially impressive, at least from the national perspective. The sense of being an Indian seems to have been boosted tip at the background. True, there is long-standing traditional setup in India with an exceptional cultural continuity. The ceremonial rites and rituals being performed on the bank of river Ganga at Varanasi are as old as the time of epics. The galaxy of living temples, mosques, churches and other shrines scattered throughout the country testify to the profundity of religio-spiritual psyche among the Indian mass; and to bypass the importance of those in socio-political level is not, it is thought, feasible. All that can be fruitfully carried on at the socio-political sector is to retain the spiritual character of the Indian psyche and introduction of novelty must be in and through that mental makeup.

But, in that case, what is the need of blending religionism with secularism that is rooted on an altogether different (almost diametrically opposite) connotation? Let there be, if one insists, the exploration for any other political device that can accommodate the religio-spiritual element. To preserve and to boost up the so-called traditional Indian heritage, let a new conceptual formulation at the socio-political sector be explored. There is neither moral nor legal justification of using a concept without its set and established meaning and introducing a sense that does not logically seem to be suitable to that concept at all. Such a move only brings in its wake confusions and impractical consequences.

Further, is it the case that in the Indian tradition, down the ages, there has been no change, no modification of a considerable strength and magnitude? Is it purely static and immobile? Is it not the fact that cross-cultural blending has notably contributed to the enrichment of culture itself and also for a peaceful coexistence of a strong amicable foundation? So far as the age-old Hindu dharmic tradition is concerned, it has plausibly housed within itself theism, non-theism and even atheism. The Buddha and the Jaina trends have been acknowledged as alternative dharmic trends despite their clear non-theistic stand. Hindus, Muslims, Christians and others live together almost without any clash and conflict not because of their respective religious dogmatic rigidity,

but because of their socio-political exigencies. That means, the demand for a religious authority is found to have been softly liquidated and a socially pragmatic device has been fruitfully adopted by the general intelligentsia, side-tracking the rigid theological approach and accommodating a move towards secular modernism. This appears to be the growing tendency, specially among the younger generations, barring a few exceptions. Not only that, if one carefully reflects over the past, one can notice that throughout the Indian socio-cultural history – amidst conflicts and doubts at, the initial stage – there have been changes and reforms in tradition as a result of both rational and the then social pressure. Rigidity and inflexibility are not found to be the identifying mark of dharma in its theoretical structure. It has, never been noticed in the general Indian psyche throughout the ages. Social needs and requirements seem to have clearly paved the way for meaningful religious transformations, of course not transgressing practical reason and having due cognisance of the spatio-temporal situation.

Keeping these things in view it seems that in the Indian context, if one is to entertain secularism, it is reasonable to stick to its original use than to move towards something that is found to be nothing other than abuse. Of course, this does not imply that one is to become fully opaque to the typicality of the Indian situation. Only minor adjustments are needed without rupturing its standard use. One Indian national outlook has to be retained, without making any compromise. Indian tradition and cultural legacy are not damaged simply because there is change in certain aspects out of necessity. Reshaping or restructuring tradition is not abnegating and losing one's traditional identity.

SECULARISM AND PSEUDO- SECULARISM

DS Kaintura

The spirit of Renaissance had shattered the age long belief of medieval period in Europe which was yoked by the faith of religion. The Roman Catholic Church and its atrocities became unbearable to the people in the contemporary European establishment. Therefore, the thoughts of change had started in some way or the other. The ecclesiastical set up of the medieval period came under the attack of the Protestants – who believed that man is not for religion, but religion is one segment of human life – and couldn't be misinterpreted for those people who were bound to follow the Church. Thus began the story of separation of religion from the affairs of the politics of that time. It was a period when religion was so dominant that a king could not go against the will of the Church or, so to say of God. The Pope was His substitute on this earth and to violate Pope was to go against God.

But the spirit of humanism awakened the people, and they became more and more liberal in their ideas and behaviour. This had been stated by KN, Panikkar that, 'one of the chief

characteristics of Renaissance humanism in Europe was revolt against the other worldliness of medieval Christianity and an effort to bring into focus the problem of existence in this world' (Panikkar, 1997: 9).

The battle started in the west about the realm of the Church and human values continued to strive the emergence of secularism. When the religious people of different parts in Europe failed to impose their faith on the people, the unity of social order started on issues other than the religious grounds:

Moreover, religious conflict had proved to be destructive of the social order. In the second half of the seventeenth century, therefore, thoughtful people decided that, if social peace was to be restored, religion and the controversies associated with religion would have to be bracketed. In that was the birth of modern secular culture. It would in time lead to secularism and a culture that is properly described as secularist Pannenberg, 1996: 3).

Thus the theories of Hobbes and Locke talked about the new foundation of natural law instead of the divine law, which the Church had been propagating for a long time. Then came an end of religious warfare in European nations and the independent culture developed in the form of a secular society.

II

Secularism, broadly speaking, is a modern political thought which comprises the values of morality, natural justice and human welfare without citing and taking help of any particular religion or religions. It talks about the equality of all people belonging to the different faiths and sections of the society, who are equal before the law, the constitution and the policies of the government. In other words, there can't be a mixing of religion and politics. There cannot be a discrimination of any citizen on the grounds of religion as well. Religion, being the matter of a personal faith, cannot be interpreted for solving the personal disputes or the disputes of a state, or of any man in the society. Any individual

under the sun may practice his or her values on the basis of his or her faith in a particular religion with a tolerance with other religions and harmony as well:

This meant in practice that the public domain had to be regulated by certain norms of agreement which were independent of confessional allegiance, and could in some way be ensured against overturn in the name of such allegiances (Bhargava, 1998:32).

The ideology of secularism has played an important role in India for the social and political development of the country since the beginning of the national movement for freedom. But, the Britishers' division of electorates on the grounds of Hindu-Muslim divisions and the partition of the India in 1947 were major set backs in the harmony and tolerance that existed during the national movement.

But, after independence, our constitution was framed on the motto of secularism and the right of equality was introduced along with other fundamental rights for citizens. Secularism in the Indian constitution was not only incorporated for the equality of all religions in India, but it has been, therefore, for a broader welfare of the state:

Secularism, thus understood, is the technique of building a national political community in a situation of religious pluralism. Pluralism and secularism are conceptualised terms and as such they are often used to represent a phenomenon rather than reflect a reality. As against monistic conception of society, pluralism is a theory denoting that in a social structure there are distinct cultural units revealing themselves as multi-layered society, having plurality of religions, castes, sects, cults, etc. (Shankhdher, 1991: 73).

In fact, to shape India's national character, we needed this secularism, as in the words of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, 'India will be a land of many faiths, equally honoured and respected, but of one national outlook. (Jawaharlal Nehru January 24, 1948).

For India, secularism was an essential feature, because only by it could the country have become united and make progress

in each and every field. Because of this secular spirit of a nation, we were able to sustain the difficulties altogether:

To accept the ideology of secularism is to accept the ideologies of progress and modernity as the justification of domination, and the use of violence to sustain these ideologies as the new opiates of the masses (Kaviraj, 1997: 340).

This understanding of secularism in India is absolutely different from the western concept, because it is an outcome of rational plans of social reconstruction. In this view, the Gandhian secularism was based on the *Sarvadharmā Samābhava* – the tolerance and equality of all religions which Gandhi spoke about, but he was quite perturbed by the riots that took place after the partition of India. But Nehru believed in the protection of minorities and believed that the Indian state must be a modern state, free of all the communal features and all kinds of prejudices so that India could progress in the world. The Freedom of Religion in Article-25 (1) talks about the individual freedom to follow one's faith, worshipping and belief in any faith or sect without the interference of the state. And no discrimination on the grounds of religion, caste or belief; the state shall neither interfere nor shall impose any religion on any individual. 'It is not the function of the state to promote, regulate, direct or otherwise interfere in religion' (Bhargava (1998: 180).

All people have a right of citizenship within the framework of the constitution of India, having the equality of opportunity for public employment, education and voting or representing without considering the religion or caste of an individual. 'It follows, therefore, that there can be no discrimination against anyone on the basis of religion or faith nor is there room for the hegemony of one religion or majoritarian religious sentiments and aspirations' (Jayaraman, 1997: 1).

III

Pseudo-secularism is a state of implicit non-secular trends to be followed by the state on the name of secularism. This is usually

an allegation by that group who perceives a double standard of treatment within the established secular governing policy towards the people of the different groups among those governed.

In Germany, the state collects taxes for the two groups of Christians. There are religious lessons at school given by the state, which indicates its pseudo-nature. In the United States of America the currency bears 'In God we Trust'. The proceedings of Congress and Legislatures open with the phrase 'God Save the United States and this honourable court'.

What happened in Ayodhya on December 6, 1992, when a group of Hindu fundamentalists demolished Babri Masjid, is a serious blot on our secular character. In our country, Muslims and Christians are in a minority; the Hindu right wing groups allege that the Government appeases them in the name of minority. There is no Unified Civil Code that all the liberal, rational people are demanding. There is the Shah Bana judgement, and the alliance of politics and religion in the Akalis, which is governed by SGPC. Shiv Sena, Bajrang Dal, Jamaat-e-Islami and Indian Union Muslim League are organisations and parties which reflect the pseudo character of secularism in this country. The affiliations of the Church in the Catholic Congress of India are some more examples of the same.

But, despite of all these odds in India, it is only democracy based on secularism which will keep India united and the other road will lead to social violence and disintegration of the country'. (Bhambhri, 1994: 306).

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NATIONALISM AND SECULARISM IN INDIA

Bikash Kar

Man is a social animal. Everyone knows that.

Nationalism is an emotion of inclusiveness, bonding a large number of the population, may be individually unknown to each other, but in the deepest layer of the subconscious having a feeling of relatedness and potential love for each other in an ethereal sense. This bonding cannot be thrust on anyone or preached into someone's heart.

Secularism and nationalism are not mere concepts but are attitudes inhering in the characters of men and women. These cannot be injected from the outside. Outside efforts, at best, may to some extent foster their development but cannot force a flower to bloom in a dead soil. Seeds – good quality seeds – grow better in an appropriate soil if cultivated properly. This home truth is forgotten and lots of tax payers' money is squandered away in thoughtless dream culture of secularism and nationalism. Drumming up slogans is no magic wand to produce real secularism or nationalism.

India's indigenous culture made it a great nation despite the lack of administrative or political unity. The secret was the secular attitude of its people which respected differences in opinion, views, life styles religious beliefs, interpretations of scriptures and what not.

Throughout Indian history, civilisation has journeyed through patches of good times that have invigorated its life, while trials and tribulations have left wounds that took time to heal. Unfortunately, we Indians, time and again, create situations for the cicatrices to fester.

One such effort is the repeated attempts of many to ignite communal passions, which runs against the grain of Indian ethos.

Now what is the sustaining Indian ethos? It is mutual respect for different faiths and beliefs – linguistic sartorial – life style and cultural differences that have enriched the mosaic. Though historically Hinduism is the dominant religion of the country, it has never attempted to dominate over other religions. History is testimony to this often-ignored fact.

Religion has become a career, a lucrative profession. Social service is now a brand name for earning name and fame.

A secular mind cannot be something you can buy in a shopping mall. Surgeons cannot implant one. Schools and colleges cannot train a brain to become secular.

Let's ponder as to what has gone wrong. It is, in short, our rootlessness. We are ashamed of being Indian. We hungrily grab at everything 'foreign' and that go ahead and buy up all the trash from their divergent cultures without batting an eyelid.

Symbolically, political power was ritualistically handed over to Indians on a midnight in mid August in 1947. But there is no sign of political independence being enjoyed by the people. The reason is simple. The actors in the political arena have no vision of their own. At least three and half crore employable population in the age bracket of fifteen and sixty are without a job and our democratically elected people's representative are proudly flaunting their legally or illegally imported expensive luxury cars. Shamelessly.

Independence was won by the sacrificing people led by selfless idealism. Achievement of independence has made devils of saints.

Religion has become a brand name. Selling religion is a lucrative business. Let's not buy religion like cosmetics or illusory gadgets. But how to stop this sales promotion? Don't ban it. It would be dangerously counterproductive. It would strengthen the sales value of the banned products. Freedom of Religion Act is not enough.

Secularism would almost automatically flower in a state of enlightenment. Teach the tiny tots to be human beings first. To be humane. For that, one has to pull out their parents from their socio-cultural cocoons, cleanse their minds of the toxicity of looking down upon fellow human beings. Running after the mirage of reaching the land of money and honey. Snatch out their blinkers. Let them look around, look up to the blue sky, the changing colours. Enjoy the lush green of the earth in season, the varied colours and chapes of foliage, flowers, landscape and watershape. Widen their horizon. At least visually.

A secular attitude cannot be factory produced. The right healthy seeds have to come first from the father, then ovulated by a loving and caring mother.

Secularism and / or nationalism are matters of a sense of bonding. This linking to be natural and strong and long-lasting has to be of the purest love, which is lacking in the world today.

Religious preachers to politicians are all I found to be seeding hatred amongst communities – religions, caste and creed – in order to fish in the troubled waters. 'My religion is the only way to heaven', 'My party alone is secular' are the major refrains of many if not all. Unfair trade practices of conning gullible customers with sales promotion techniques have entered these areas during the previous century. As a result, secularism has entered the minds of the propagators as a magic panacea for various manifestations of communal hatred. That is their own slogan coined to serve their selfish interests. The real issues are so deep under, that no one is interested in addressing the issues.

Nationalism is yet another feeling of brotherhood, and needs the same attitude of bonding well with others, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, etc.

The most dangerous villain is the neuclearisation of family, not merely on the economic front but also at the emotive level. The Indian culture of universal love has been shrunk to a precarious unit of 'me, my spouse, and a minimal number children'. The philosophy of the universe as a family as encapsulated in the mantra of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam has died unsung and unlamented. This ethos was inclusive of nature as a whole, the trees, mountains, rivers, the sky, wild life, et al.

Whether to be secular or national in attitude shall depend on upbringing and not on preaching from the pulpit or amending constitution and introducing the term secular into it.

Most of the tax payers' money has been spent through several decades for what is euphemistically called national integration but no one has sincerely put a bit of his/her heart to the situation which is worsening by the day and is being specially exacerbated during each election time. Too often religious communal, caste, and creed and, of late, the gender card is being played to buy or corner extra votes. Economic disparity, religious diversity, linguistic, socio-cultural differences are criminally used to divide the people.

The only hope is that the seeds of true natural love is still there in every human heart, the milk of human kindness has not totally dried up from human breasts. The imperative need of the hour is to put the hearts and heads to act naturally instead of as patterned by the traders of falsehood who tout degradation of the nature, disturbing the environment, polluting the environment as development good for the economy, good for the people and for the entire World. Let us ask who are these people and

what is this economy which is making the poor die of hunger from exposure to winter and summer, and making a handful of *crorepatis*.

We have to decongest our mind as also the unthinking collocation of a large number of people in demarcated open prisons

without provision of / attempts at bonding them into cohesive communitisation. Urbanisation must put a limit on crowding, and make convenient provisions for different classes of people, walks of people, people of different tastes and calling. Segregation must get a no. It distances and divides people, with an eye on local culture and needs. Campus planning ideas should be adopted but not blindly imitated either from foreign societies or elsewhere but designed specifically for a particular locality.

The purpose here is the crying need for bonding between people and easing the exposure to different cultures, bringing them closer through interactions, exchanges of thoughts, etc.

The Harvard or London School of Economics does not have answers to the needs of India, my country. Their way of measuring development would take the country farther away from the goals set by our constitution.

Begin at the beginning. The central family bonding has weakened. Put on your thinking hats and strengthen the same, without aiming at the western concept of nuclearisation of the Indian family.

SECULARISM, THE INDIAN STATE AND A NEW THEODICY

Tapas K Roy Choudhury

India has been ambivalent in the sense that its assertion for a single nationhood for India may/may not be technically political. So, India's proclamation for it is likely to be treated as no more than a pedagogy of semantics and the social illegitimacy of its graphonomy. The State – assumed to be very livid, for the question of nationhood is open-ended – has negotiated with uncertain ideologies and several social, cultural and cartographic embattlements. Hence, the question is: is India united, if at all, other than in our imaging it to be so? A host of archaeologists, digging into India's lived-experiences and anxious to stumble on the ruins of a tentative approximation to political unity, have floundered on hostile repudiation. It has acquired no better competence to conduct the present other than its competitive political and social slogans. Single-nationhood, therefore, has persisted in its myth; empirical certification for its reality being difficult to secure India appears to be balanced on the twilight between hope and false empiricism. It is indeed an extremely complicated political paradox that if the innumerable boundedness of the Indian society

are admitted to any political legitimacy, they defeat *stasis*. On the contrary, if the state decrees non-identitarianism except in the non-descript conceptual vastness of the State, specific identities may contest the State's authority. In this state of inadequate theoretical mediation, *secularism* has been engaged by a hesitant State to interpret its political mission. Presumably, the decision has been contingent, because the decision to seek desperately a cognitive code of political conduct may be taken by a selective leadership, though it has been hegemonic. There is no evidence that it was popular choice which the citizens of India had arrived at in a process of *negotiated consensus*.

I

The argument has been installed between the double cutting edges of two questions; is India qualified to be secular, and is the Indian mediation to impute a new meaning to the term *secular* qualified for a serious theoretical scrutiny? Indian sociology does not find the term to be ordinary; it is diasporic, in as much as enlightenment, rationalism, humanism had been migratory in colonial India. Severe polemics on rationalism had certainly disturbed the quiet confidence of tradition and its legitimacy on authorial purposes. So, the issue of secularism, re-viewed at a political plane after the emergence of the Indian National Congress and its post-independence incarnation, is basically a reiteration of the rationalist argument. The nineteenth-century debate was largely theoretical; secularism had not been studied in isolation from rationalism and, therefore, there was no indigenous construct of the concept. Nor can it be said that there was any informed negotiation with the idea beyond the confused dialogue between the Bengal positivists and tradition. Being influenced by Congreve and whatever little of theoretical discourse that came to Calcutta in the mid-nineteenth century through Lobb, Geddes and Cotton was not sufficient for any active engagement in the. debate. Interestingly, it cannot be definitely said that the nineteenth-century Indian liberal intellectuals were at all informed about the secularism debate conducted between Holyoke, Bradlaugh and

Mill, much less conceiving a serious argument either to qualify Mill for his view that ‘anything that is not religious is secular’, or even to reject it.

The Indian intellectuals had confused secularism with the general theory of rationalising and so they did not observe the finer shades of arguments embedded in the secularism debate for a closer scrutiny. Consequently, an incomplete idea of secularism had operated in the domain of limited vision. Secularism had not been engaged to interpret the political dynamics of an emergent State. On the contrary, it contended with the pre-existing, the under belly of cultural reiteration which could be targeted by an itinerant discourse on progressivism. A debate with the existing order is anticipated, but a hesitant idea of progress had obliterated the larger theoretical implication of the secularist ideology in politics and sociology. What is secular is not inductively sequestered from what is sacerdotal. Nor is it discussed as to how will it interrogate the State. The one response that can be anticipated is an uncertain belief, carefully laid on a rational scrutiny of the erstwhile. The other – the way of the practical men of the world – is to instal a sociological mediation so as to legitimise pragmatism in the negotiation between State and a non-religious ideology. Unfortunately, the nineteenth-century India had none of it – in the form of a contentious theoretical issue – in its political and cultural engagement with the colonial state. It is true that a predatory state operates at different planes of political and cultural understanding to obscure its intents from the gaze of the colonized. The nineteenth century, under the circumstances, could not employ any more than a critique of the Indian tradition. The theory of progress, on which the intellectuals claimed to ground their argument was enlightenment, but not being able to engage into any polemics on the idea of secularism the operation took place on no virtual time, on no virtual space and on no virtual epistemology of the idea. The enterprise appeared to have collapsed – after a few decades – in its redemption from its own paradoxes. It was an enthusiastic endeavour to organise revivalism to narrate cultural identity. While Rajnarain Bose, a product of the Hindu College and an important member of the

Brahmo movement symptomatised the trend by writing *Hindu Dharmer Sresthata* (The Greatness of Hindu Religion), Nilkantha Mazumdar, the first Indian Principal of the Ravenshaw College of Cuttack and a positivist argued for the revival of the cult of Jagannātha as the ideology of cultural nationalism.

Understandably, a serious paradigm shift has taken place in India to locate the secularist argument in Indian sociology, but it has never been argued as to why was the shift necessary. There is no inner contradiction in the concept itself that would serve to explain the shift. The *Id* of the humanist logic is held to be in continuous and friendly dialogue with the *Id* of the secularism theory for the congruence of both. Secularism, hence, may be taken for a theoretical proclamation for the retrieval of the pre-humanist space that has been appropriated by theology. *Discovery of Man*, therefore, is no recuperation from the *homo sapien* ancestry; it is a serious recovery of man from the obscurity of a pre-humanist ambivalence between existence and its theological denial. So, the induction of 'anything that is not religious' is a counter discourse; which could not but be poised, under the circumstances, against the hegemonic disclamation of the Church. How is the relationship between the church and the overwhelmingly political State defined then? The shift in India, presumably, cannot be accounted for by this debate. And besides, neither was it a part of the Indian intellectual concern. Nor did they argue that secularism was defeated by its inner contradictions. The shift has been necessitated, for all practical purposes, by a severe pragmatic urgency. Against the lethality of cultural imperialism, no theoretical posture could be augmented unless it was foregrounded by a discourse of cultural nationalism. Stated by the trope of progressivism and with a narratival mediation of enlightenment, imperialism strove to uproot the moral resistance of the Indian tradition. It was decided on logical grounds that a certain degree of rational censoriousness might be engaged to re-locate the pre-existing. But its refutation by any critical theory of progress, when the theory would be no more than derivative, would be a self-defeating enterprise against cultural nationalism. Nevertheless, pragmatism cannot be held as a logical deduction

from the secularist argument, the point on which Bradlaugh had contested Holyoke. So, it was virtually an incomplete debate for the Indian intellectuals. In other words, it has been the ontology of India's lived experience rather than the inadequacy of the secularist epistemology that had conducted the discourse.

II

The truce that the early Congress had signed with religion for its political expedience had virtually originated in the preceding dialogue between religion and politics. It was political interest that the Congress had metonymised as national interest as also to argue the point that the political interest should secure precedence – in the prevailing condition, upon ethnic, cultural and cartographic conditions – that the Congress had foregrounded it. The Congress too did not develop any aptitude for any critical engagement with the ideology of secularism; it was an infantile reductionism that was observed, or seeking to equate – by overlooking the anti-narratives, even though they were empirically true – secularism with politics. Its entire argument had been grounded *a priori* on the assumption that India qualified for a single nationhood, an erasure that sought to invalidate the erstwhile sequestered claims of race, language and religion. The Congress had no definition for a nation than seemed to be a desperate dis-belief that the dis-unity of India was a-historical skepticism and a meta-fiction. The shift of the grounds of dialogue with the colonial authority to the claims of some civil liberties and finally to self-governance. had taken to be sufficient argument to instal a metaphysical unity amongst the empirical sub-texts of dis-unity. Not being able/striving to define the Indian nationhood was perhaps a discursive strategy; it had been engaged to circumvent the more embarrassing theoretical questions such as what was it that they took for *homogeneity*. Was the idea of national interest hegemonic? Was the nationalism issue contingent to the political confrontation with colonialism? The point that secularism addresses a profound theoretical issue rather than the historical contingency of colonial intrusion was either not realised at all, or it was in a frantic search for an anodyne, in a

climate of multiple contestations, that they needed secularism to conduct negotiation. It is true that there was immense vagueness in their interpretation of the term *secular* but they, nevertheless, reposed their faith in it as the single appropriate theory to construct an argument of unity. The unity that they could visualise then was that of a nation-state; to this political contrivance, they hopefully anticipated the diverse, meaning thereby the originary absence of sameness in religions, ethnicities, castes and gender authorialities to surrender their plurality. The question is that the interrogation of a concept with some new terms is not transgression of its metaphysics. But the argument of desperate necessity commands limited theoretical validity; it may qualify a pragmatic decision, though it may not satisfy with equal validity an epistemic interrogation of the contingency. Here the problem is as serious as that of a questionable inference. So, certain political interests held to conclude that the formation of a single-nation state is a historical inevitability is to propagate a theory of fatalism. At some level of limited logical consequence, the argument may be treated as strategic, a contrivance to repudiate colonialism. But for a larger theoretical significance, it was needed that the inner contradictions would be resolved, before the entire argument had finally collapsed at the intimidation of the *two-nation theory*. The other argument that the theory of secularism could be founded on the arguments of nationalism had augmented neither empirical, nor moral legitimacy. So, it turns out to be a serious political dilemma that as long as the idea of *nation* remained a ground of embattlement between claims of false empiricism and the contestation of the logic of the *notion* of a nation, the debate on nationhood remained embedded in a historicity and in the polemics of utopianism. It had been a dangerous ideological parochialism, on that account, that no *alterity* that could address the Indian diversity more convincingly had been explored. Some faulty premises that: (i) secularism is political; (ii) nationalism is grounded in secularity; and (iii) nationalism is political, have been applied to conduct the argument, *though it was not incomprehensible that nationalism might not be secular/political,*

or no deduction could be performed from such a contingent relationship.

How was it that two contesting texts of nationhood had been scripted in India, one by the porous efficacy of secularism and the other by the consolidated Islamic theology? How was it that secularism could not contest it and prove the essential paradox in theological mediation in politics? How was it that innumerable sub-texts of nationhood were inscribed – and are being scripted even today – on ethnic grounds, on the broader political canvas of nationalism? Presumably, the enterprise to construct a holistic model for such complexities cannot be unsuspecting. But what is paradoxical is not to understand that the issue, in its inner depth, encloses a number of social surprises; that an argument of holism is likely to be defeated by an unanticipated particularity, at any point. If the Congress proclaimed that it intended to differentiate between religion and politics, which it did, it is no argument and, of course, no better than a faith to interrogate the theologism of the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha, in a logical encounter to seat Indian unity on the foundation of civil society. Interestingly, here secularism had not been very argumentative; its incapacity to argue is largely explained by a reference to the Indian society that had never been secular. If secularism fails, it does not necessarily suggest that the exclusive theological, ethnic, or linguistic constructs of nationhood could not be defeated by other theoretical means. The problem was and considerably is that secularism is not argued well; the problem is entangled with the issue of the location of the idea outside Indian historicism and sociologism. Why one cannot be tolerant? Is simultaneity held in esteem as tolerance, without being irreligious? Why cannot one be political at one plane and religious at another? Why should one work out the notion of unity as singular rather than the aggregation of the diverse and the plural? Neither the questions and, therefore, nor their answers had ever exercised the liberal intellectual establishment of India. They had no specific ground to think that other than a recuperation in the holiness of secularism from India's religiosity it would be improbable to think of India

as a political entity also. Understandably, this is one serious theoretical posture which can be debated not only to conclude that what had happened should not have happened, but also to argue that there is no reason why a certain element of criticality cannot be engaged in the contemporary notions of secularism and the legitimacy of single-nation statehood.

Why do we have to argue that India has to be politically united to satisfy the conditions of unity? Why do we have to postulate that India professes single nationality for the certification of its nationalism? It may be assumed that those who have argued for self-governance have held that the legitimacy of self-governance is good governance. Therefore, political nationhood has been singularised amongst others to stress on single-nationhood and political unity. However, the issue can be debated more intricately; the hyphenation between State, as an international personality and its secular/theocratic, single/multiple nationhood is contestable in a detailed theoretical scrutiny. The fact is, the question of nationhood is related to the specific context of its structural status rather than to its legal or moral operations. Even a single-nation state can exist against the norms of ethics and thus, in contravention of the principles of good-governance. Nevertheless, its international personality is not affected by it in as much as a multi-nation state loosely federated for good-governance is not disturbed, for its federalism, in international esteem. Good-governance is a transcendental ethical property of government; unitary or federal structure of government may be traced to social roots/ideological affiliations, though they may/may not ensure good governance. State-formation may be treated as a valid moral argument against foreign rule. In that case, the stress necessarily ought to have been laid on State, the political entity, than on its dynamics and ideology, on the criticality than the theology of any dogma or creed. It is not sustainable argument that a State originating from one ideology is more legitimate than another affiliated to another ideology. It could have been validly argued that the Indian State, even if it had originated from plural nationalities, would not invalidate India's claim for nationhood and freedom. The argument for single-nationhood, therefore, was

irrelevant. Further, to foreground secularism in the domain of theologism is no different from an engagement in solipsism. There might have been parallel texts of nationhood, but parallelism would /would not processually suggest contestation. On the contrary, to seek to introduce the single text of secularism between texts may instal contestation.

The idea of one nation, as a transferred epithet of unity, had severely intimidated the idea of many, the idea of equity by the primacy of hegemony, the idea of social obligation by political rights. One of the reasons why the feeling of alienation was deepened when the entire argument – at the elitist level – was found to be conducted against religious revivalism was the failure to decipher the coded meaning. It was at the arena of culture that the subversiveness of colonialism had been initially felt. Revivalism formed the indigenous cultural critique of colonial cultural constructs and the narrative of rejection. To shift the burden of the argument to the ideology which could not but be critical to religion caused an apprehension that the moral foundation of the cultural critique was obscured by the axiomatics of a political argument. Besides, however strong the faith in a secular ideology might be, the debate for single nationhood is taken for a plea for the hegemony of the dominant, either numerically determined, or defined by any other social, cultural or economic group status. Presumably, the logic of single-nationhood would espouse the obliteration of the diasporic, the migrant, the estranged by the indigenous, the minority by the majority, for all practical purposes. It was in this tragic confusion to appropriate neologism that the argument was defeated over the corpses of unsuspecting faith and the legacy of Indian societality.

III

The continuation of the same argument which had been already defeated does not suggest any rational engagement. On the contrary, in its ignoble defeat the argument has espoused a few other cultural notions; the Indian State cannot contend with them for its dilemma as also for the crisis of uncriticality. The

two important conjunct to the erstwhile secularism debate are claims of supreme authoriality of the Indian State and the notion of homogeneity in the governing policy of the State. The fact that it is *homogeneity* and not *homeostasis* which is needed for India is a decision taken in the fortress of political authority than after negotiation and consensus. To acquire political consanguinity, the application of secularism is strategically privileged; it is also a convenient reference to differentiate between State and religion. Even if it is useful as a cognitive code of political conduct, the problem originates from the hypothetical notion of sameness on which the argument is founded. The initial idea of unity was assumptive; the demand for identity tends to suggest a uniform political behaviour for the citizens of the State. However, it is not argued with equal clarity that the State is also normatively constrained to instal civil liberties to effectively operate political sameness. Taking this context into account, homogeneity may be broadly defined in many other meanings than political alone. To refuse to admit it is to foreclose parallelism, the simultaneity of the many, the secular and sacerdotal, to expect abedience to the rule of sameness. Hence, no space is left to enable one to try the other option, *i.e.*, *homeostasis* in this state of foreclosure. It cannot be visualised in any other conceptual determination that the Indian state has lodged a Utopia and to do so it has opted out of social legitimacy for political determinacy. So, two important questions arise: Why should the state insist on homogeneity, while homeostasis would be the more appropriate option? And secondly, why should the Indian state dispense with *will, liberty* and participatory development for hegemonic ideologism?

There are several ways to deal with the first question. There is the registered historical narrative of 3500 years to suggest some trends; there is a distinct sociology to explain the dynamics; and there is a distinct metaphysics to encounter issues of mind and matter. Even if it is not well advised to reverse history to try to look for the erstwhile, the pre-existing of our present for policy decision, to ignore it altogether is no evidence of criticality, as long as the relation between tradition and authority is held to be valid. If the Indian ontology, the meta-narrative of the diverse –

both in their parallelism and contestation – could not prescribe sameness, what was it that held them together? Predictably, a social accord that has been arrived at on different planes of negotiation to develop a network of reciprocity. Neither the social nor the political consequence of that truce could be classified as *unity*, the metaphoric expression for singleness. Why do we have to strive for homogeneity then? It might be taken for the essential property of scientism, and any theory of growth that will be laid on it will necessarily insist on the rule of conformity. Presumably, the idea of homogeneity has arisen, for all practical purposes, from the scientific singularity, and in a trendy argument that social laws may be reduced to the rules of induction. The position is very difficult to hold, since sociological/historical laws, unlike laws in the physical sciences, are not founded on a correspondence theory of truth. Their validity, argumentatively, is drawn more from their falsifiability than from any argument of repetitiveness. The argument of homogeneity is porous in virtue of the fact that its prediction of certainty is porous. Secondly, the secularist stance to be anti-religious is an avowed rejection of the theory of tolerance. So, the idea of homogeneity drawn from the rigidity of secularism cannot but be rigidly sensorious about non-political identity, or its non-identitarianism. The paradox that confronts us today is that it cannot be effectively argued that religion is necessarily intolerant, as it cannot be equally assertedly argued that secularism is tolerant.

The political indulgence into the idea of single-nationhood is finally traced to the argument of sameness. A single-nation State is the logical conclusion from this argument. For an understanding of the theoretical integrity in the position held, secularism appears to be used as the moral bond. However, the argument is guilty, in the final count, of moral impudence and of social indiscretion. How is the question of *liberty* answered in the rigid formality of singleness? Indian democracy may be poised, as it is done very often, as the ground for consensuality *qua* liberty. Democracy *per se* originates from the operation of consentuality, no doubt; but when democracy is exercised by contending claims, viz., the monolithism of secularity and the principles of liberalism it

performs a constrained conversation rather than a free negotiation. The State may trumpet its avowed claim that it is indifferent to religion, the fact remains that such claims do not qualify the State to assert that it has conducted a dialogue with liberalism. Nor does it seem to be necessary to espouse secularism to do so. The issue of morality, in this situation, is embedded in the ambivalence of the State. For, it is committed to liberalism, and it is also entangled in the unilinear directionality of secularism, single-nationhood and the political urgency of sameness.

It has not been scrutinized as to what is the precise theoretical configuration which are released by the Indian society. Nor is it systematically argued why simultaneity will not contend with the emerging new nation-state system. Instead of putting the Indian experience, i.e., *societality* to a rational interrogation, it appears to have been presumptuously rejected. It can be debated that underlying the contingencies of history the political, social and cultural turmoils of India had eventually rested on the functional grounds of tolerance. It may be treated as the fundamental social dynamics; its basic principle was laid on dialogism instead of – and after a careful consentuality – rejection to try to avoid binarism in order to engender social reciprocity. It was a socially compulsive participatory function that tended to explain the rational choices of the different segments of the Indian society. Contrary to homogeneity, which often would be the function of power, the obvious option was a pragmatic and non-conflictual decision for *stasis* to maintain the integrity, of the social system. The entire argument seems to have rested on the realisation that: (a) it is free will that should operate to determine important social decisions, (b) that multiple options furnish social space to realise the importance of indeterminacy; and (c) at all stages of the decision-making process, participation and dialogue should be performed to arrive at consensus. The additional argument that could have been applied then is *custom*, a verbal registration of the decision for conformity and operation. Presumably, an idea of civil society has been arguing for its emergence; with an emphasis laid on individualism it has been posited against the pre-modern inter-changeability between rights and duties. The

debate, therefore, cannot be conducted on eschatological issues. What remains important is the need to operate liberty for optimal choices. At no stage of our decision to be secular, to be one-nation state, to be homogeneous was popular participation involved. At no critical juncture of India's political crisis was popular mandate secured; whether an overt paradigm shift from voluntary tolerance to secular intolerance is privileged to reap some additional theoretical advantages was never discussed. By doing so, the Indian State seeks to appropriate all the principles of governance. However, the Indian society, being doubtful about the capacity of the Indian State to maintain *stasis*, is refusing to transfer its authority to the State. So, the crisis of the contemporary Indian State turns out to be the incompatibility of State and society; some morphological competitiveness which has been installed between the State and society by ideology have engendered a climate of retaliatory repudiation of each other than any complementarity. That the proclaimed secular identity, for instance, is regularly surrendered to the pressure of caste and communal politics is virtual abrogation of its own ideology. It cannot be explained by structuralism; it is a dangerous game played between state and society for encroachment and appropriation.

On the whole, the Indian state has not had any interpretative negotiation with society. Can it, in the logical conclusion of the secularist argument, disclaim caste? The state should and certainly can interfere in the disprivilegation of several castes from entitlement of civil liberties. Even if the vested interest is disgruntled – which is presumable – to share rights and status, it cannot espouse any moral argument to continue to be hegemonic and privileged. But how does the state espouse a moral legitimacy to disturb social stasis to achieve social homogeneity? Caste is an institution of social authority; if its operation conflicts with the principle of humanism and of civil liberties, it should have been weeded out by a determined State and also by its determined legislation and execution. But a discursive strategy to engage a disorder in order to acquire some political advantages, to engage caste and community in electoral politics to instal entitlement – if at all it is the metaphysics of the contemplated

social transformations – is a precarious engagement in the dynamics of social instability. Either one is secular, or one is not; it cannot be a dialogue between principle and convenience. To allow caste and community to rally around specific and obviously non-secular discourses not only defeats the purpose, but it also engenders a serious doubt about the intentionality of the nation-State on matters of civil liberties. It is understandable that a weak State is a dangerous State. It is equally dangerous if the State fumbles and finally fails to locate its basic source of strength for the execution of its business. For the Indian State, the assumption, and howsoever strongly it is adhered to that India is a single-nation State, is not tangible State building force. India is essentially federal, which the Indian history endorses, and its federalism travels beyond the principle of centre-state constitutional relations to the inner depth of ethnic, cultural, religious relations to achieve a consented social relations. The idea of civil society, in several matters of sameness, may not be structurally integrated to the idea of societality. But federalism is privileged for its flexibility, and accommodation of the basic humanistic concern of civil liberties, in that state, may not be too difficult to accomplish. In that case, the political organisation and the social organisation can be engaged together in an intimate conversation on two different aspects of the same humanistic concern. There may be reasonable anticipation of sequestration of positions, civil liberties arguing for individualism and societality debating for collectivism, rights positioned against duties. But in the final round of conversation the individual and the collective may come to terms with each other on grounds of simultaneous legitimacy of private and public spaces.

It may be further argued that perhaps a liberal definition of the term *nation* may be serving India's diverse purposes more usefully. A nation, in its political meaning derived from the State, may be held to convey a specific contextuality. It may be debated, on political grounds, that nationhood is a derivation from statehood instead of conversely arguing that nationhood preceded statehood for legitimation of the latter. If the initial position taken

in the argument is treated as valid, then it can be further argued that the question of multiple nationalities is purely domestic, and federalism by accommodating them negotiates only a domestic truce between state and society. In that case, nationalities can be born of cultural, ethnic, religious cartography and can also habit the same territorial space with political nationality either in friendly isolation, or in unavoidable social congruence. It is not at all unlikely – in case of the validity of the previous argument – that from the agreement between the State and people, the State will be advantaged by a perpetual support for its strength to conduct domestic and international negotiations. The stability of the State, in such a condition, can be found to being laid in *homeostasis*, a physical and emotional property of consanguinity and interdependence. Some social inflexibility, at times, may cause rivalry, contestation and also rejection. Mutuality, in that case, is seriously spoilt. This situation often arises from a threat perception of one from the other in terms of physical or cultural obliteration. In that case, on grounds of the avowed constitutional responsibility of the civil-society State, it must intervene by its multiple arms of authority to protect civil liberties either against subalternism, or against total obscuration. Federalism, arguing for division of authority, is not constraining the function of the state if, of course, the political components of the federation work on an agreed principle that there cannot be two definitions of civil liberties and that the arms of justice should be strong enough to reach each and every person. If, for quick dispensation of justice, the State agrees to share its function with society at the bottom and intermediary levels and can grant validity to preventive and curative customary laws interpretedly, the moral conscience of society, which presumably is a collective conscience, can effectively operate to contain transgression of law in two different ways. First, the physical prevention of crime, in a mode of the collective participation of the society, is an effective long-term deterrence. Secondly, society can introduce a moral orientation, by its informal means, of stasis by the plural intersections of the private and public spaces. The Indian society has lived on

the operation of this principle. It is about time that these social functions may be admitted into the larger theoretical determination of state function for their indigenous roots and wider acclaim.

One of the reasons why the contemporary Indian political system has alarmed those who are exercised over the stability of the state is its strategy of survival. Instead of, as it is being observed for several decades, the State, contrary to serving determinedly and somewhat confrontationally to instal social justice, is surrogating political parties, pressure groups, caste and religious communities by a discursive discourse of incitement. It is true that in a climate of plural disparities no social stasis can be obtained very easily. The Indian state cannot address each disparity, perhaps for strategic reasons, without prioritisation. There may be some federal priorities, and the republics/provinces too can freshly determine their individual social priorities. If a province gives priority to land reform and another to transgression of human rights on grounds of caste/religion, and the third to economic entitlement, then such decisions at one level and at the federal stage may collectivise to combat disparities. Through this process, a reasonable degree of success can be achieved towards human rights' performance in the State as a whole. Whatever be the nature of the decision, it must originate from the public space of the government rather than from some dark corners of electoral politics, or from a motivation of power. Reforms contrived thoughtfully, as a part of the policy to introduce social change, are different from instigating clamour for reforms. Neither the federal government/ nor the provincial government can retrieve its/their full legitimacy after the specific objective is realised or not, and clamour subsides. Besides, it endangers the spontaneity of social stasis beyond repaid because the act is performed by abrogation of the authority of State to generate and release the dynamics of change. Whatever be the way it is done, and the normal safe procedure to do so is by legislation it tends to shift the argument from enlightenment to the base irrational instinct of survivalism. Consequently, the State ceases to remain the supreme political authority for various dispensations, or even a confident partner in a constellation of state and society. It is this

serious state of degeneration that the Indian State has reduced itself from ideology to ideography.

So, how is secularism, assumed to be the single theoretical guidance for our prospective society, poised to contain the ambivalence of the State? The question assumes seriousness in virtue of the fact that a hegemonic state founded on hegemonic ideology is contending with heterogeneity within the framework of its own structure of argument. The discourse has been initially viewed as omnipotent; with its theoretical stance it would be able to fruitfully negotiate with India's heterogeneity. But it has disintegrated in counter-discourses and anti-narratives. The official meaning of secularism has been reduced into a discourse of convenience, a proposed narrational mediation for a course of conduct than its semantics. There are several anti-narrational engagements in which the meanings have been imputed to serve ideological confrontations. The fact that the Indian state will profess no religion, and so, it will not interfere in religious matter is the official moral posture. Here secularism is being used in a single meaning, i.e., the relations between the Church and the State than in the larger context of matters non-religious. Amongst those who have constructed other discursivities, the Indian Left is one. Unable to follow the orthodox position of Marxism towards religion *per se*, or unable to reconcile between their position of convenience, and the dialectical materialism of Marx, they have placed their secularism on the same wavelength as is minoritism. For the minority communities, secularism is a mode to strategically position the State for the protection of theologically conducted rites and identities, even for those that contest the national notion of civil liberties. It is understandable that the *Two Nation Theory* has been argued principally on religious grounds. Its political success appears to be haunting, as a spectra of political theologism, the Indian State which itself has been paradoxically born of the defeat of its ideology.

IV

But no dignity can be induced in any political discourse if the

reaction is paranoid. On the contrary, a fresh critical effort is needed to clarify our understanding of the pre-existing issues in order to engender social stasis. The one convenient reference that can be made at this point for our guidance is Rabindranath Tagore. While arguing against the theory of nationalism *per se*, he coined a word viz., *samajtantra*, to explain the epistemic singularity of this social theory to explain stasis. Tagore contended that in an operation of *will*, *liberty* and *consciousness* arose a *social consent*; lived-history, in Indian historicism, was treated as shared-history which was taken for the major premise in India's social epistemology. *Samājtantra*, as he had argued, had originated from the diverse experience of Indian history to debate for *sāmanjasya* (congruence) against *aikya* (unity) that could be a theory of oblivion. Pluralism, therefore, is not taken for a premise of disadvantage; *samājtantra* has emerged as the conclusion after a long historical debate that the many, in a collective choice, may remain ensembled in stasis rather than in any obliterating unity under duress. Tagore has argued that the Indian experiment had been very specific; instead of building a State – as it had been done in other civilisations – India was conceiving the idea of a society without disturbing *liberty* as the single important property of civilisation. The Indian theory of society is founded, according to him, on *consensus*, *social-stasis* and *social liberty* to engage the plural in a conversation through a dialect of convergence and congruity. Presumably, the argument has been posited against the theory of the State where the State operates only on the notion of political culture as a single major axiomatic of development.

The point is that if Tagore's argument is held to be empirically valid – even at least a part of the entire argument – a strong traditional basis for the prospective Indian society can be secured to freshly argue for pluralism, for stasis, for congruence than obliteration, with legitimacy and authority. State and society are not dichotomous organisational entities, as they may appear to be in a specific argument for a political State, such as in ancient Greece, if the theory of State admits its social contractuality. In that case, the State ceases to be unnecessarily patriarchal; its intentionality, even if it is conducted by enlightenment, can

be more participatory for the convergence of state and society at the level of their respective doctrines, the State being taken for the extension of the social logic, rather than one posited against the other to contest for power and authority. Tagore's theory of shared-history commands – in spite of the invalidity of his inference of collectivism in it – a specific use of liberty. It may furnish a theoretical respectivity to the argument for pluralism. Social stasis is largely grounded on the realisation of cultural aggregation, and there is no better argument to refute the argument of cultural isolationism than the concept of shared-history. Further, why is it not possible to continue the debate, as had been done for four hundred years or so by Nanak, Dadu, Kabir, Tukaram, Chaitanya etc., to indicate the cultural pores through the so-called solidity of the theological and social fences. They were the metonymy of the neutral space between the fences, no man's land in the combat zones of rejection and anti-dialogism. If the State cannot enter into this dialogue it does not logically matter, but if the society refuses to do so then fences keep on acquiring moral credence to become irremovable. Hence, a strong argument is needed that history cannot be appropriated by any theology, by any cartography, by any *ism*. Tagore had initiated the movement that historicism could not be taken for the essential epistemic property to understand humanism. History had always been exchangeist, very reciprocal, totally withdrawn, like Lalan Fakir of Bengal, than very loudly presentational of its very significant under currents. No State, not to speak of the Indian State, can achieve, by trumpeting its secularist credential, to instal a sense of boundedness in culture, the originary truce that vowed for civilisation to keep away the falsehood of predatory possessiveness. It is in this liberation of the cultural space that the arrogance of superiority – falsely engendered by both patriotism and theologism – will be defeated by the stronger argument that civilisation is a participatory enterprise. It transcends all acts of labelling by the contingencies of history.

REASON, DEMOCRACY AND LIVING TOGETHER

Pabitrakumar Roy

Sigmund Freud, in his book *Civilisation and its Discontents* has noted that of the various sources of human suffering one arises from the inadequacy of the regulations which adjust the mutual relationships of human beings in the family, the State and society. The problem of secularism touches both the State and society. Is there a way out? In a telling short poem by Robert Frost, we learn that if the world were to end in fire, anger would suffice, and if it were meet its doom in ice, hate would be enough. Anger and hate are the two enemies of the culture of secularism. I view secularism as matter of culture, and not as a constitutional declaration or political party slogan. These could be there but unless the individual attunes himself to what Asoka declared in one of his rock-edicts, concord is virtue, no external pious arrangement can bring it about.

Can reason help us in the matter? Let us see. We are said to live in a democracy. It is a fact of some significance that philosophical reasoning was born in Greece at the same time as the political

institutions of democracy. No one can argue with Genghis Khan, Greece was not fully a egalitarian society. Has there ever been one, or will there ever be one? Women and slaves did not have the same citizens' rights as free males. But Diotima, a woman, is one of the participants in Plato's *Symposium*, and in the *Meno* Socrates helps a slave to make use of his reasoning capacity. Reason in Greece was one step ahead of the social system, and it is always one step ahead of the inequitable social systems that we know. Reason points the way towards a true community of thinking beings. Reasoning requires the human universality of reason; it demands that nobody should be excluded from dialogue, from argument.

But what is the relationship between the capacity for argument and democratic equality? Democracy is based on the principle that no one is born to rule and no one is born to obey. We are all born with the capacity to think and, therefore, with the political right to participate in the way the community of which we are part is governed. But, if all citizens are to be politically equal it is necessary, however, that their opinions should not be so. There must be a way of establishing a hierarchy of ideas in this non-hierarchical society, promoting the most adequate ones and discarding those that are either harmful or false. This is precisely the mission of reason, of the reason we share. In a democratic society each person's opinions are not fortresses inside which each one can retreat as a way of personal self-affirmation. We offer our opinions to be debated, to be accepted or refuted as the case may be. We have to subject ourselves as a way towards attaining truth. Reason works *within* us and *among* us. Not only must we be able to use reason in our arguments, we must also develop the capacity for being *convinced* by the best arguments, wherever they may come from. To deem it humiliating to be persuaded by the opposite ones is not really to accept reason's democratic authority. It is not enough to be *rational*; it is equally important to be *reasonable*, i.e., to leave room in our reasoning for the arguments of others, who also express themselves rationally. From a rational perspective, the truth we seek is

always an *outcome*, and not a starting point. The means to attain an objective reality runs through multiple subjectivities. So much for reason.

II

After all, these talks concern us as human beings. Who are we? What are we capable of? From Sophocles to Kant the question: ‘What is man?’ has been raised more than once. The Chorus in Sophocles’ drama *Antigone* says.

Numberless wonders,
Terrible wonders walk the world
But none the match for man.

The Chorus contemplates what humans are capable of – the mixture of admiration, pride, sense of responsibility and even fear of that the great feats and the mischief of which humanity is capable of. There was another view of the human condition proclaimed by Giovanni Pico Delia Mirandola. His *On the Dignity of Man* is sometimes taken as the humanist manifesto of the Renaissance. This has been acclaimed as the *locus classicus* of the concept of human dignity. The two views are dissimilar. For Sophocles, that which is admirable in man is what man can *do with the world*, either through technical ability, cunning or rational language. Pico emphasises what man can do *with himself* by exercising his free will.

I would now like to use the statements on the human condition from Europe with a view to understanding the problem of secularism.

III

We are what we are because of social communication. *Without* others we could not be what we are, but we find it difficult to be *with* others. Social coexistence is never painless. Contemporary philosophy as well as contemporary literature greatly emphasise

the freedom and frustration that living in society entails and the preventive measures that we can adopt in order to reduce them as much as possible. In his play *No exist*, Jean Paul Sartre coined a phrase that has been quoted thousand of times: 'Hell is other people'. Paradise would, thus, be solitude or isolation. The theme of 'lack of communication' also appears in various guises in essays, novels, poems. But is hell really other people? It is still true that we are shaped as human beings *for* and *by* our fellow citizens. Yet, why should there be discord? Certainly not because human beings are irrational or violent by nature. On the contrary, most of our disagreements stem from the fact that we are decidedly 'rational', i.e., quite capable of calculating what might be of benefit to us, and determined not to accept any agreement that would not be clearly to our advantage. We are sufficiently 'rational' to take advantage of others and to distrust our fellow human beings. We also use reason to realise clearly enough that nothing would be more advantageous to us than to live in a community of loyal people. If the distinction we made between 'rational' and 'reasonable' had been of any worth, then it has to be admitted that we live in an eminently rational but scarcely reasonable world.

We are not spontaneously violent, far from it. In all societies, there exist individuals who suffer from psychological disorders, or have been so badly treated that they behave towards others accordingly. We cannot legitimately expect that those who have been treated like animals, have been used as beasts of burden by a community that has not cared in the least about their fate, should then behave like model citizens. But these instances are not as numerous as might be expected. The extent to which those that derive the least benefit from society insist on behaving like sociable beings is actually quite surprising. Nor do these individuals disrupt human coexistence as much as other, quite different cases. In fact, the main protagonists in great collective confrontations are not usually violent people but groups of disciplined and obedient individuals, who have been led to believe that their common interest lies in fighting against some 'alien'

enemy and destroying him. They are not violent for ‘anti-social’ reasons but through an excess of sociability they are so keen to be ‘normal’, to resemble as much as possible the other members of the group, to ‘identify’ with it at all costs, that they are prepared to exterminate anybody that might be different or foreign, who might have different beliefs or different customs, who might threaten the legitimate (or not so legitimate) interests of their own particular flock. Big bad wolves do not abound, indeed they do not, nor are these few that are around the greatest threat to human peaceful coexistence. The greatest dangers come more often than not from enraged sheep.

For a very long time, attempts have been made to organize the human society in such a way that would guarantee a maximum of harmony. In order to achieve this we cannot, of course, rely solely on the social instinct of our species. It is true that because of it we need the company of our fellow human beings, but it also sets us against them. The same reasons that drew us towards others can turn them into our enemies. How does this happen? We are sociable beings because we very much resemble each other, much more than the diversity of cultures and ways of life might lead us to suppose; and we all tend to desire more or less the same basic things: acknowledgement, company, protection, prosperity, security, entertainment and so on. But we are so much alike that we frequently desire the same things – be they material or symbolic – at the same time, and we fight for them. It can even be these cases that we desire certain things simply because we see that others also desire them – for we are gregarious and conformist to a degree.

Thus, that which binds us together, i.e., our interests, also pulls us apart. The word ‘interest’ derives from the Latin *inter esse*, that which is *in between* two persons or two groups. But what lies between two persons or two groups may, in some cases, unite them and, in others, separate them and generate hostility. Sometimes it brings together those who are apart. The undeniable ‘Sociability’ of human beings makes it *necessary* that we should live in a society, but on far too many occasions social harmony turns out to be *impossible*.

How can we manage to organise what Kant, quite appropriately but not without a touch of irony, called ‘our antisocial sociability’?

IV

The totalitarian politicians have claimed to have in view a ‘new man’ who would be the raw material with which to build their projects. But man, fortunately, cannot become ‘new’ without ceasing to be human. His nature involves acquired knowledge, historical experience, societal achievements, memories and legends. It is not feasible to extirpate from human beings their rational attachment to their own interests – even if they collide with those of others – in order to subject them to a general interest or a common good determined by a wisdom that is above their heads. It is necessary, on the basis of human beings as they actually are, with their disagreements and their tendency to predatory selfishness, but also with their need to be acknowledged and accepted by others. As far as we know, this harmony will always be fragile. Many things will threaten it; its own achievements may turn out to be poisonous. How are we to orient our thoughts on this collective *drama* that is our life in society in the midst of so many paradoxes?

It is not easy to answer in terms of theories which reify people. Perhaps one could venture some suggestions in terms of the concept of human dignity. What does human dignity imply? It is the recognition that human beings are inviolable, that they cannot be used or misused by others simply as a means to achieve certain general ends.

There are no collective human rights, for there are no collective human beings. A human being cannot exist outside the society, but his or her life cannot be totally devoted to serving it. Another characteristic of human dignity is the autonomy that each person should possess to plan his or her own life and determine his or her own measure of excellence, limited only by the rights of others to claim a similar autonomy. Moreover, it has to be recognised that society must treat all persons in accordance with their

behaviour and their personal merits or demerits, and not according to accidental factors that have nothing to do with their essence as human beings, such as race, religion, nationality, sex, social class, etc. And lastly, one will have to show solidarity with those suffering from misfortunes and actively, so in order to foster true human fellowship. A society in which human rights are respected should be a society in which nobody is *abandoned*.

Nothing leaves us more defenceless, more helpless, more *threatened*, than loss of love. The Greeks called it by the name *philia*, the freely chosen friendship between two persons who complement each other. There is also room for civil sympathy. Those who live in a society must daily show it to each other if they are to live pleasantly together. Without love or *philia*, humanity becomes atrophied and we are at the mercy of the implacable law of the jungle. Goethe was right in saying that knowing we are loved gives us greater strength than knowing we are strong.

The most characteristic human actions can only be understood within a social context: there are things that we do because we are thinking of others and *calling out* to them. Even within the context of secularism, this cannot be excepted. Saint John wrote in one of his epistles: the man who says that he loves God but hates his brother is a liar. For how can he love God whom he has not seen, and hate his brother whom he has seen? Let us not be liars. Let us forget not Asoka's great declaration: *samavāya eva sādhu*, Concord is virtuous.

SECTION - III

SECULARISM, NATIONAL INTEGRATION, PANDIT NILAKANTHA AND BAIRAGI MISRA

Gouranga Charan Nayak

SECULARISM AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

'Secularism' is a term which has aroused a lot of controversy and confusion among scholars because of the diverse implications and different meanings attached to the term in different contexts. The term 'secular' has been used primarily in a sense opposed 'religious', 'other worldly', 'spiritual' and 'sacred'. It has been taken to mean not only something 'non-spiritual, having no concern with religious or spiritual matter',¹ but also 'movement, intentionally ethical, negatively religious with political and philosophical antecedents'.² It has also been taken to be 'an attempt to establish an autonomous sphere of knowledge purged of supernatural, fideistic presuppositions'.³ From this point of view, a certain point of contact between secularism and scientific temper is quite discernible, 'The true secularism has been taken to refer to a system of belief or an attitude which in principle,

denies the existence or the significance of realities other than those, which can be measured by the methods of natural science'.⁴ Scientific temper stands for an attitude of mind that does not take into account anything other than that which is conducive to the search of knowledge. As early as 1933, Jawaharlal Nehru had spoken of his preference for scientific approach in these words: '*Personally* I have no faith in or use for the ways of magic and religion. I can only consider the question on scientific grounds'.⁵ In a letter to his daughter in the same year, he wrote 'science has a very different way of looking at things. It takes nothing for granted and has, or ought to have, no dogmas. It seeks to encourage open mind to reach truth by repeated experiment. This outlook is obviously very different from the religious outlook, and it is not surprising that there was a frequent conflict between the two'.⁶ In *Mysticism and Logic*, Russell remarked, 'The scientific attitude of mind involves a sweeping away of all other desires in the interests of the 'desires to know''.⁷ 'The kernel of the scientific outlook', according to him, is 'the refusal to regard our own desires, tastes and interests as affording a key to the understanding of the world'.⁸ Religion, in so far as it promotes an anthropomorphic way of looking at things and in so far as it takes into account the longings and the yearnings of our heart, seems to be unscientific, at least non-scientific, and secularism, in so far as it revolts against or deliberately dissociates itself from religion, may be regarded as scientific in its temper. Religion and secularism, if not antagonistic to each other, would in that case be regarded as two different approaches in no way concerned with each other.

But this is not all that is there to it. Secularism has also been taken as 'a materialistic and rationalistic movement'⁹ and as Pan atheistic and materialistic movement'.¹⁰ This approach towards secularism may be taken in a crude, unsophisticated sense and secularism, in that case, may also be deemed unscientific. Materialism, atheism, or even rationalism in its crude variety could be unscientific to the extent to which they lay stress on metaphysical dogma at the cost of genuine search for knowledge or truth, and if secularism identifies itself with any such outlook, it

can also be an unscientific in its temper. I do not think, however, that one with a secular outlook must be an atheist or materialist in this crude sense; one may simply have no concern for religion or spiritual matters, or one may perhaps give religion its due in its own sphere as a matter of private concern.

Secularism, unless it also is bogged down to some sort of fad and dogma, thustands for open-mindedness, and open-endedness in discussions which are the very essence of scientific temper, where the opposite viewpoint is not simply ruled out of court as an anathema and is given its due place in arriving at any conclusion. Naturally, this can be positively conducive to national integration, specially when we come face to face with a nation of uniquely varied cultures, religions and languages, as India is. In a multidimensional and multi religious culture like that of India, one particular fad or dogma taken to its logical end as against another can only lead to clashes, ultimately ending in disintegration and confusion. Integration is obviously a question of bringing together different varieties of culture, religion, language, etc., into a single harmonious framework, where all the different components thrive without coming into clash with each other and where the different components taken together enhance the beauty and the elegance as well as the efficacy of the whole. And this is possible only through a genuine form of secularism which takes note of varieties with an openmindedness without being bogged down to a sort of dogma or fad in favour of one or the other. That is why secularism is so very important for national integration, specially in the context of a multilingual, multicultural, and multi religious country like India.

In the indigenous traditions of Orissa, we come face to face in twentieth century with two great sons of the soil, Pandit Nilakantha Das and Bairagi Misra who promoted the cause of secularism through their undaunted pursuit of objectivity and truth and, through secularism, that of national integration, in their respective ways. Both of them were contemporary thinkers/philosophers of the twentieth century, the former being well-known on account of his socio-political activities, while the latter is known only as a social reformer of those days. However, it

has to be acknowledged that both these great sons of Orissa have brought about revolution not only in the social framework but also in the world of thought through their most original writings and further promoting the cause of secularism, as against dogmas of religion and superstitions.

PANDIT NILAKANTHA

Pandit Nilakantha Das was born on August 5, 1884 in a Brahmin family at Saksi Gopal of Puri District in Orissa. His father's name was Ananda Das. He pursued his early education in Puri Jilla School, then subsequently he completed his higher education in Ravenshaw College, Cuttack and then Scottish Church College, Calcutta. After getting his Master's degree in Philosophy from Calcutta, he joined Pandit Gopabandhu Das in establishing a residential high school at Satyabadi and became the Head Master in 1911. This Satyabadi school became the national centre for culture for two decades. Pandit Nilakantha had also taught the post-graduate classes of Calcutta University as a lecturer in the year 1920 and joined the *Satyāgraha* movement subsequently in 1921. He became the Puri Congress Secretary and, in 1922, he was the President of the Orissa Pradesh Congress Committee. He was elected as the fourth speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Orissa on May 1 1957.

Apart from his socio-political activities, Pandit Nilkantha Das was also a great literateur of the State. His *Koṅārka* and *Māyādevī* testify to his indisputable creative genius. Apart from *Koṅārka* and *Māyādevī*, he had also written *Pranayinī*, *Khāravala*, *Das Naik*, *Āryajīvana*, *Bāḷa Rāmāyaṇa* and *Bāḷa Mahābhārata*. He was also the editor of *Naba Bhārata*.

Pandit Nilakantha Das, Pandit Gopabandhu Das, Acarya Harihar Das, Pandit Godavarish Misra and Pandit Krupasindhu Misra – these five patriots of Orissa who were at the same time great educationists and writers of eminence and constitute the well-known *Pañcha Sakhās* (Five Associates) of Satyabādī, who were responsible for bringing about renaissance in the State of Orissa.

Pandit Nilakantha was an eminent thinker and philosopher. As a matter of fact, he was a man of versatile aptitudes and talent. The most important aspect of his personality was that he was dead against all sorts of sentimentalism and obscurantism, and always had an independent and a critical, rather an incisive; mind through which he used to analyse everything without caring for the consequences. He was never afraid to express what he considered to be the truth. He was so very independent in his outlook that he had argued with Mahātmā Gandhi during their meeting at Satyabadi and pointed out to the Mahātmā that there was little chance of getting freedom through the spinning wheel when it could not even solve the economic problems of the country. Pandit Nilakantha has himself written about this encounter as follows: ‘Gandhiji could not satisfy me with his answers in this regard. In the end, I referred to the following lines from Tennyson’s *In Memorium*, “By faith and faith alone we embrace, believing when we cannot prove’, and Gandhiji, on hearing this, said “Exactly, that is the attitude”. I was not, however in a position to give up logic in favour of belief. I left after paying my respects to him’.¹¹ This incident shows that Pandit Nilakantha possessed a fiercely independent and critical mind which was not prepared to accept anything on mere belief unless it was supported by adequate logic.

Amongst Pandit Nilakantha’s philosophical writings, his commentary on the *Bhagavad Gītā* would take a place of pride, of course. Pandit Nilakantha has pointed out in his *Gītā* that a non-aryan Kṛṣṇa who had become famous in our tradition for his philosophy was really the Kṛṣṇa of the *Mahābhārata* and the teacher of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. According to Nilakantha, Kṛṣṇa of the *Bhāgavata* is not the same as the Kṛṣṇa of our tradition. The Bhāgavata Kṛṣṇa Rādhā cult has emerged from the festival dances that were prevalent amongst the Tamilian cowherd girls during the spring season; the Kṛṣṇa of the *Mahābhārata* and that of the *Gītā* who is Yogeśwara Kṛṣṇa has nothing to do with this Tamil Kṛṣṇa.

Pandit Nilakantha’s views on Jagannātha and Jainism, however, are not only novel but also most interesting and full of

great insight. We get a detailed picture of his unique philosophy of Jagannātha in his ‘Hints on the Significance and History of Jagannātha’, published in the *Orissa Historical Research Journal* (Vol.VIII, Part-I, April, 1958), although there certainly are references to Jagannātha in his other articles such as ‘Oriya language and Culture’ published in *Orissa Historical Research Journal* (Vol.VIII, Part-I, April, 1959).

‘Orissa’ according to Pandit Nilakantha, is ‘the holiest of lands in the Hindu world for its Jagannatha, whose history and significance as the Puruṣa, representing the entire universe both noumenal and phenomenal has no parallel in the religious conception of humanity’. He also says that Jagannātha is primarily a Jaina institution’. Jainism is not only very old, but is also the only religion – according to him – in which man looked within to his self for salvation instead of looking for mercy as a result of devotion, self-surrender or prayer to one or more outside gods. ‘Jagannātha means *jagat* or Universe which is a *nātha* or a *puruṣa* (person) to be worshipped. Here, worship is not to supplicate or to pray but to keep constantly in mind for realization, and *puruṣa* means a phenomenal entity with the living principal which animates it’.¹²

As a matter of fact, any devotion or worship of a deity in any form out there is not acceptable to Pandit Das, and any kind of sentimentality assorted with such devotional worship, according to him, is fraught with the grave danger of creating sheer falsehood in the process. Pandit Das has coined a term *Bhāktika mithyā* or ‘devotional lies’ to refer to a number of fabricated anecdotes, myths, or stories that are built to give support to the Bhakti cult which, therefore, is not acceptable to him. ‘Bhakti cult’, according to him, ‘is a dangerous phenomenon of the human society. A devotee or a bhakta is extremely intolerant and a veteran liar’.¹³ That is why, Pandit Nilakantha goes to the extent of conceiving of two Kṛṣṇas even, as mentioned earlier, the Kṛṣṇa of the *Bhagavadgītā* as distinguished from the Kṛṣṇa of *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*. Kṛṣṇa of the *Bhagavadgītā* being a *jñānī*, who is engaged in teaching *jñāna* to Arjuna, cannot be the same as the

Kṛṣṇa, the cowherd boy, of *Śrīmad Bhāgavata* who is engaged in dalliance with the Gopīs.

One may or may not agree with what Pandit Nilakantha has to say on all the different aspects of our culture, but one thing is clear from the above; his was a free spirit which refused to make any compromises with intolerance and falsehood. His *jñāna* or knowledge could not leave any room for falsity in the name of bhakti or devotion which he designated as '*Bhāktika mithyā*'. This undoubtedly speaks of his secular trend in matters of religious belief and practices, and promotes an atmosphere conducive to dialogue between opposing views.

Now coming to Bairagi Misra, a contemporary thinker of Pandit Nilakantha in the twentieth century, we find that his undaunted spirit was no less uncompromising when it came to deal with truth and objectivity in matters of knowledge.

BAIRAGI MISRA

Bairagi Charan Misra was born in a joint Brahmin family in Mulabasanta village of Salepur in the Cuttack District of Orissa in 1885. He was the eldest son of Pandit Padmalochan Misra. As he had not only no faith in horoscope reading but also considered it positively harmful, he had torn his own horoscope to pieces and, therefore, his exact date of birth is not available. Only on the basis of the date of birth of his cousin brother, who was 3 to 4 months older, could it be ascertained that he was born in November/December, 1885.

As child marriages were the usual practice in those days, Misra was married when 14 years old, 1899. He passed his entrance examination from Baripada H.E. school in the year 1906 at the age of 21 and executed higher studies for two years in the Cuttack College. But on account of financial problems, he could not continue further and entered into the government service as a clerk.

Bairagi Misra will be long remembered at least on two counts: first, for the drastic measures taken by him in reforming the

society with a view to eradicating all sorts of blind beliefs and superstitions; and secondly; for his highly original interpretation of teachings of the *Gītā*. He was vehemently opposed to the pompous, expensive, yet meaningless practices followed in marriage functions and sacred-thread ceremonies. In order to eradicate, blind, superstitions from the mind of the people by educating them properly, he founded the *Viśva Kalyāṇa Samiti* in 1949, and a quarterly journal, *Viśva Kalyāṇa*. He also founded an institution called *Nāri Maṅgala Samiti* for the upliftment of the women folk too. Child-widows were rampant in the society in those days on account of the custom of child-marriage and these widows were subjected to endless, unspeakable torture throughout the rest of their life. Bairagi Misra fought against this inhuman custom of the society with great vigour and unprecedented firmness of will amidst vehement opposition from the conservative and orthodox society, and introduced the remarriage system for these unfortunate child-widows. He also fought against the dowry system in those days and was himself successful in organising a number of such marriages without dowry.

Bairagi Misra's day-to-day life was full of suffering and torture on account of his rigid adherence to truth and vehement opposition from the society almost all fronts due to the drastic reformative measures taken by him for curing the society of its deep-rooted malaise, but his was undoubtedly a wonderful life. One who has studied with some care, the life and work of another highly original and serious thinker of the twentieth century, Ludwig Wittgenstein, would be reminded here of Wittgenstein's remarks about his own life at the time of death and Norman Malcolm's assessment of the same. 'Before losing consciousness he said to Mrs. Bevan' we are told by Malcolm, 'Tell them I've had a wonderful life', 'By "then", he undoubtedly meant his close friends. When I think of his profound pessimism, the intensity of his mental and moral suffering, the relentless way in which he drove his intellect, his need for love together with harshness that repelled love, I am inclined to believe that his life was fiercely unhappy'.¹⁴

Bairagi Misra passed away at a ripe old age of 80, in 1966. Before his death, he had instructed his son meticulously to abstain from the blind practices sanctioned for such occasions:

‘After my expiry, take my body in the vehicle of Dr Bibhuti Tripathy and cremate it at Sati Chaura. Do not observe any formalities or customs such as *Ardhapatha Srdha*. On your return from the cremation ground, you must do the cooking and take your food as usual. Do not invite any Brahmin on the 10th or the 11th day for *Sraddha* ceremony, etc. You know that I have observed no such custom or formality on the death of your grand mother, mother or your elder brother. This is the final instruction of a father to his son, and it must be carried out by all means’.¹⁵

It is certainly not an exaggeration when Chakradhara Mohapatra in his preface to the collection of the works of Bairagi Misra *Bairagi Misra Granthāvalī*, describes him as a ‘wonderful creature’ who can be compared only to such wonderful personalities as Buddha, Socrates and Tailanga Swāmi.¹⁶ For my part, I can say without hesitation that any nation would be proud of having given birth to a genius of his stature and India is indeed fortunate to be in a position to claim him as one of its illustrious sons of the twentieth century.

Bairagi Misra’s most important and lasting contribution to the world of thought is his unique and novel insight into the teachings of the *Gītā*. He was no respect of persons; his one and only concern was truth, and nothing but truth, as it is revealed to the pure discriminative understanding (*Pavitra viveka- buddhi*). For the first time in the history of thought, Bairagi Misra pointed out that the *Gītā* advocates search for truth through pure reason, not by absolute surrender of human will to a higher, a Divine, Will. In this regard, Misra differed from almost all the great commentators of the *Gītā* such as Ācārya Śāṅkara, Śrīdhara Swāmi, Mahātmā Gandhi, etc., The *Gītā*, for Misra, is a treatise advocating the cause of pure reason, and, as we will see in the sequel, he lays maximum emphasis on the *Gītā* passage, *Buddhau śaraṇamanviccha* (Take resort to reason), which, according to him, constitutes the key to the understanding of the *Gītā*. This is, thus, a novel and unique interpretation of *Gītā* along secular lines.

Bairagi Misra’s interpretation of the *Gītā* is novel and unique in a number of ways. He made a persistent effort to understand the teaching of the *Gītā* with a free and unbiased mind, and he pleaded that others also should arrive at an understanding and evaluation of

the *Gītā* through independent thinking of their own. *Gītā*, according to Bairagi Misra, teaches us to have independent and free thinking in all matters of conduct and life. The pernicious habit of depending on the greatness of the great and a blind following of innumerable faith and dogma need to be forshaken forthwith and one should change the course of one's life by taking recourse to free and independent thinking. This is the main teaching of the *Gita*, according to Bairagi Misra. So, in his view, the real and the novel teaching of the *Gītā* can be grasped only when we learn how to think independently. We are long habituated to think either as a Hindu, a Muslim, a Vaiṣṇava or a Śākta, but if the course of free thinking is to be adopted, we must first of all get rid of such sectarian and parochial considerations. Then only we will be able to grasp this novel teaching, and at that time, it may perhaps be no longer necessary to learn the eachings of the *Gītā*.¹⁷

What exactly is this novel and unique teaching of the *Gītā*? The *Gītā* has been regarded as the most abstruse, esoteric, treatise, and 'Take resort to me (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) alone (*Māmekam śaraṇam braja*) is the most esoteric teaching, of this treatise. According to Bairagi Misra, this only means that one should take resort to Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the form of pure discriminative understanding. Misra refers in this connection to the following well-known mantra of the *Kaṭhapaniṣad* and affirms that Śrī Kṛṣṇa of the *Gītā* is the charioteer in the form of *Buddhi* of every human being who is constantly engaged in the battle of life. *Ātmānam rathinam viddhi, śarīram rathamevatu, Buddhiṃ tu sārathim viddhi.*

The fact that the dictates of pure reason are supreme for the *Gītā* will be clear from another oft-neglected line, *Buddhau śaraṇamanviccha*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa's exhortation to Arjuna for *Buddhi śaraṇagati* or 'taking resort to reason' in 2.49 is either lost sight of or undermined in the study of the *Gītā* by all those who regard it as a holy treatise. Even Sankara speaks of his favourite *paramārtha jñāna* here, and the typical form of rationalism advocated by the *Gītā* is thus lost sight of in the bush of Advaita. Other learned commentators like Rāmānuja also do not give adequate attention to this facet of the *Gītā*'s teachings. Of all the commentators of

the *Gītā*, only Bairagi Misra, a rare genius in the field, regards *Buddhiśaraṇāgati* as the key concept for an adequate understanding of the *Gītā*.¹⁸ This raises certain interesting issues.

Statements of the *Gītā* such as *Buddhau śaraṇamanvichha* (Take resort to reason) need to be analysed and adjudicated vis-a-vis other statements made in the same treatise such as *Tameva śaraṇam gachha* (Take resort to the ultimate power) and *māmekam śaraṇam braja* (Take resort to Śrī Kṛṣṇa). Bairagi Misra identifies Śrī Kṛṣṇa with *Viveka-buddhi* or discriminative understanding and, consequently, Śrī Kṛṣṇa *saraṇāgati* is the same for him as *Buddhi saraṇāgati*. The *Gītā* has a single objective, i.e., to introduce Śrī Kṛṣṇa as *Buddhi* which alone is the world-teacher (*Jagadguru*). Once a reader of the *Gītā* realises this and knows that Śrī Kṛṣṇa as *Buddhi* (pure reason) is always available to us, if only we choose to take resort to *Buddhi* at the time of crisis, further study of the *Gītā* or any other religious literature for that matter will be simply unnecessary from his point of view.

This facet of the *Gītā's* teaching needs particular mention in view of the widespread misconception that the *Gītā* teaches only a blind and complete self-surrender to some higher power – be it God or Śrī Kṛṣṇa – at the cost of all rational considerations. And what is significant to note in this connection, according to me, is that from the standpoint of the *Gītā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa *śaraṇāgati* is not opposed in the least to *Buddhi śaraṇāgati* in as much as Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself is viewed here, at least in certain characteristic aspects of his, as a world-teacher promoting rational outlook through and through. These findings are what I would call a new dimension in the understanding of the concept of *śaraṇāgati* or surrender in the *Gītā*; a failure to grasp the same has so far proved to be one of the main stumbling blocks to the understanding of the teaching of the *Gītā* in its proper perspective. A high degree of originality in approach and an invigorating freshness in understanding the implications of the *Gītā* are evinced in Bairagi Misra's identification of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with pure discriminative understanding (*pavitra viveka buddhi*), the most esoteric teaching of the *Gītā* according to Misra being the exhortation to take resort to this pure discriminative understanding instead of depending

on hearsay (*anuśuśrūma*). This is undoubtedly conducive to and promotes a novel secular understanding of what has been so far regarded mainly as holy scripture, and that too only of the Hindus.

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18. Cf. Bairagi Misra (1952) *Gitā*, Second Edition.

JÑĀNAMIŚRĀ BHAKTI: THE SECULAR DIMENSIONS

Tandra Patnaik

Bhakti is a very common term, used frequently in different contexts. Today, unfortunately, *bhakti* is seen as a theologically loaded concept, with all the trappings mistakenly associated with religion, i.e., blind acceptance of scriptures, dogmatism and narrow-mindedness, bordering on fanaticism. But during the period fourteenth to nineteenth century India witnessed an upsurge of *bhakti* theories that dared to differ from this theological interpretation of the term. This movement was spearheaded by the *santhas*. Orissa too had its presence registered with the *jñānamiśrā bhakti* theory delineated by the *santhas*. This inique philosophical movement had its beginning some time in the fifteenth century with the composition of Oriya *Mahābhārata* by Santha Sāralā Dāsa, and was given a definite shape by a group of five thinkers popularly known as Pañcasakhā (I), viz., Jagannatha Dāsa, Balarāma Dāsa, Acyutānanda Dāsa, Yaśovanta Dāsa, Śīśu Ananta Dāsa in the during sixteenth century. It was carried forward till the eighteenth century by the *santhas* like Caitanya Dāsa, Divākara Dāsa, Dvāraka Dāsa and many others. The theory is in

every respect indigenous to the Oriya culture that has assimilated the philosophical trends of Advaitism, Buddhism, Yoga and Vaiṣṇavism that held their sway over the land at different stages of its cultural history.

Before I go into the details of this unique theory, I deem it necessary to clarify two fundamental concepts that may apparently seem contradictory, viz., secularism and '*bhakti*'. A look at a standard dictionary shows that the term secular rules out any conceptual link with the ideas of God and the devotion to God. This very traditional meaning of the term refers to its medieval origin. During the rise of Christianity, it was believed that anything dealing with the faith in God was sacred. As opposed to this, secular stood for any activity that has no connection with religion and otherworldliness. But the term acquired an altogether different connotation during renaissance. The term is used to symbolise a reaction against the religious fundamentalism. This form of *secularistic movement exhibited itself in the* development of humanism. In this sense, secularism is opposed to fundamentalism and fanaticism. The founders of the Indian constitution perhaps used the term with this implication. The term in the Indian context means not only the tolerance of other religions but it also demonstrates the lofty ideal of steering clear of all forms of fundamentalism that arise from a narrow and cultic view of religion. In my article, I have used the term secular in this broader context.

The term *bhakti* too is frequently misrepresented. But an objective scanning of the literature on *bhakti* reveals that the term can signify two distinctively different models. The first one is based on the definition *paramānuraktirīśvare* (an intense attachment to God). This definition stated in *Nārada Bhakti Sūtra* forms the basis of the Vaisnava interpretation of the term. The Vaisnava theory rests on three basic metaphysical presuppositions, viz. (i) The highest Reality is a personal God, (ii) He is the repository of divine qualities and powers, and (iii) there is a clear line of distinction between the individual self and the cosmic self/God. In this case, *bhakti* implies an emotion/emotional state (*bhāva*). In this scheme of thought, the concept of *bhakti* is

inoperative without the notion of a personal God. Unconditional faith in God and pining for the grace of God take the centre stage in the analysis of *bhakti*. This model can also be called the *saguṇa bhakti*. The other model known as *nirguṇa bhakti*, in contrast, is based on different philosophical presuppositions, namely: (i) the highest Reality is one and unique, transcending all categorical discriminations, hence not a personal God; (ii) it is non-qualifiable (*nirguṇa*); and (iii) there is no duality between the *jīvātman* and *paramātman*. This model comes closest to Śāṅkarācārya's interpretation of *bhakti* as *svasvarūpānusandhāna* (an investigation into one's own self). In the *nirguṇa* theory, the meaning of the term *bhakti* is not confined to unconditional faith in a personal God. Unfortunately, the second model has not received the attention it deserves by the modern scholars. They often tend to forget that the *bhakti* movement that became the hallmark of medieval *santha* movement was basically a theory based on the *nirguṇa* model. The resultant philosophical fallout of these two distinctively different models of *bhakti* may be noticed in the respective emphasis placed either on *jñāna* or *bhakti* as the true path for *mukti* or *mokṣa*. The former underscores the role of pure and unalloyed *bhakti*, whereas the other accentuates the role of *jñāna*. Here I shall explicate a unique model of *bhakti* propagated by the Oriya *santhas* from fifteenth to nineteenth century. This theory, popularly known as *jñānamiśrā bhakti*, brings about reconciliation between *jñana* and *bhakti*.

To understand the *jñānamiśrā bhakti* of the Oriya *santhas*, we need to dwell in brief on the metaphysical position of a unique form of Vaiṣṇavism that swept the land in the medieval Orissa. That was the period when Vaiṣṇavism of the later Vedāntins had already left their footprints on Oriya culture. The impact of Vaiṣṇavism reached its peak when Śrī Caitanya spread the message of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* during the first part of the sixteenth century in Puri, the land of Jagannātha. This was the period when the indigenous philosophy started taking a definite shape through the prolific writings of the famous Pañcasakhā. They were the contemporaries of Śrī Caitanya. It is no wonder that these *santhas* of Orissa were self-acclaimed Vaiṣṇavas. For them

Jagannātha, who by that time was accepted as the Vaiṣṇavised deity, symbolised the one, unique, ineffable and indescribable *Śūnya Brahman* or *Śūnya Puruṣa*. Yet, unlike Vaiṣṇavas of all other forms, they did not admit *saguṇa Brahman* as the highest Reality. Rather, this Santhic conception of *Śūnya Puruṣa* almost approximates the concept of *Brahman* of the Advaita and the concept of the *śūnyatā* of the Śūnyavādins. The highest Reality for them is non-qualifiable (*nirguṇa*), without form (*nirākāra*), non-scriptable (*anāma*) inconceivable (*nirvikalpa*) *Śūnya* and *Brahman*. Delineating the nature of this Highest Being, Baḷarāma Dāsa says:

He has no form, no outline.

He is *Śūnya Puruṣa*.

He is the Brahman and the *Śūnya*,

How can he have a name?¹

Yet these *santhas* begged to differ from both, the Advaitins and Śūnyavādins, by claiming that the *Śūnya Puruṣa/Brahman*, though ineffable and *nirguṇa*, can as well be an object of devotion. But the introduction of the concept of *bhakti* does not necessarily imply that the Vaiṣṇavas of Orissa were monotheists in the usual sense. Their conception of God as an object of devotion, in a sense, is different from other forms of monotheism. *Śūnya Puruṣa* as an ineffable Reality appears as personal God in the devotee's devotion only, but He continues to be formless. Once the highest Reality is conceived as of the nature of *śūnya* and as an indescribable principle rather than an entity embodied in a form, there is bound to be a difference in the implications of the term *bhakti*. Therefore, they preferred to call their mode of devotion as *nirguṇa upāsanā*² and the mode of worship as *nirākāra mantra*. For these *santhas*, *bhakti* without *jñāna* is incomplete. In such a theory of *bhakti*, the role of emotion is underplayed and, instead, an importance is attached to self-knowledge and *yoga*. As a consequence, we come across a novel theory of *bhakti* that is a juxtaposition of both *bhakti* and *jñāna*. This is a theory that is Vaiṣṇavic in letter but non-Vaiṣṇavic in spirit.

According to the Oriya *Santhas bhakti*, is definitely a very important path of *mukti*, but *bhakti* has to be accentuated by *jñāna*. Accordingly, *bhakti* and *jnana* should not be seen as antithetical concepts;³ rather, *bhakti* and *jñāna* are complementary. In Achyutānanda's words,

By penetrating *jñāna* one gets *bhakti*,
And by penetrating *bhakti* one gets *jñāna*.

Achyutānanda further uses the metaphor of two wings of a flying bird to explain the complementality of both the ideas. But if we probe deeper into their theory, it becomes clear that *jnana* is given a priority over devotion. Here, *jñāna* means *self-knowledge (ātma-jñāna)*, not the scriptural knowledge, i.e., *vidyā*.⁵ Achyutānanda, in his work *Brahma Śaṅkūli*, declares in the context of a dialogue between sage Vaśiṣṭha and the crow named Bhūṣaṅḍa, 'I tell you Vaśiṣṭha, *ātma-jñāna* is the best of all the means available'.⁶ Interestingly the crow is depicted here as the teacher because even if animal, it is a realised soul. So, it is supposed to know best. With this emphasis on *ātma-jñāna*, *bhakti* is redefined as, 'that experience which emerges from the knowledge of nonduality between *jīva* and *Īśvara*'. In other words, it is a form of devotion towards the ultimate Reality or may be towards God, in which case the bliss of devotion is realisable once the identity between the *jīvātman* and the *paramātman* is experienced. For this, the most important step is 'knowing one's own self. To speak in the language of these *santhas*, *bhakti* signifies 'seeing *ātman* in *ātman*'. I have already hinted that any theory rooted in non-dualism cannot subscribe to a theory of pure emotional love without indulging in contradiction. So, the Pañcasakhā as well as the subsequent *santhas* of Orissa do not emphasise the role of emotion – specifically the emotion of erotic love that had gained a very central role in other form of Vaiṣṇavism – in their theory of *bhakti*. Even, *santha* Jagannatha Dasa, while transcreating *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, tries his best to accommodate his own version of *bhakti* by bringing about a broader synthesis between *Kṛṣṇabhakti* as enunciated in the original Sanskrit work and the *jñānabhakti*

of the Orissan tradition. He says, ‘All those who deliberate on the highest truth offer varied interpretation of the same principle. Some call it *Brahman*, while others call it *paramārtha*, and there are still others who call it *Bhagavāna*. But those devoted to Kṛṣṇa see *ātman* in *ātma*’.⁷ Summarizing their stand on the issue another *santha* of post-pañcasakhā period, Dvārakā Dāsa says, ‘There are innumerable paths suggested by different persons. Men fail to realise that there is but one *Brahman*. All these paths are of no avail without realising the *Brahman* in *ātma*’.⁸ It may be a difficult path, but one has a scope to go step by step. As long as one cannot achieve this power, one may worship varied incarnations of God, like Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. But finally one has to strive for the self-knowledge. So Acyutānanda makes the following insightful remark: ‘True knowledge of the *mahāsūnya* (the highest being) may not be accessible to celestial beings and *siddhas*. You need not look up to them for guidance. This knowledge is within your heart. You have to find it there and realise it.’⁹ Again, *Brahmajñāna* and *Jñāna-Brahman* are never far from you, it is inseparably present within your heart’.¹⁰

Elaborating this idea further, Dvārakā Dāsa says, ‘You are unnecessarily wasting your time in searching for *mukti* by different rites and rituals without an inkling of the knowledge that He (God) is very much within you and outside you’.¹¹ These statements may sound more or less Advaitic and also Upaniṣadic. But neither in the Upaniṣads nor in Advaita Vedānta is self-realisation considered to be a part of *bhakti* or mode of worship. However, the influence *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* seems to be palpable here. This is evident from the following stanza mouthed by its protagonist, Lord Kṛṣṇa, ‘Four kinds of virtuous men worship me, oh, Arjuna – the distressed, the seeker, the seeker of knowledge and the wise (*jñāni*). Of them the wise men, ever steadfast, with devotion to the One is dearest to me.’¹² Interestingly, in another stanza of the same treatise Lord Kṛṣṇa states that, since the path of *jñāna* is arduous, it is better to follow the path of pure *bhakti*. ‘Greater is their trouble whose minds are set on the unmanifested (*avyakta*); for the goal of unmanifested is very difficult for the embodied to reach’.¹³ Though the general

spirit of *Gītā* is non-dualistic yet it also admits the difficulties involved in devotion” to a formless impersonal God. In fact, in the *Gītā*, no strict definition of the object of devotion is given. It may be indescribable, formless and impersonal, Supreme Being or else a god who is personal in nature. So, monotheism and even polytheism is given a chance, for it is also stated that whichever God in whichever way is worshipped does not make much difference to the quality of devotion. The treatise, being quite open-ended in nature, accommodates multiple versions of *bhakti* within its framework. Therefore, pell-mell quotation from the *Gītā* will not justify the fact that *jñānamiśrā bhakti* of the Oriya Santhas is entirely inspired by this treatise. However, the concept of yoga as presented in the *Gītā* seems to bear a close affinity to the concept of *jñānamiśrā bhakti* of the Oriya Vaiṣṇavas. Though the term *yoga* has more than one dimension in the *Gītā*, the term ultimately refers to the bonding of *jīvātman* and *paramātman*. That is why *Gītā* again and again emphasises the feeling on oneness with the cosmic whole. Here I quote two such verses.

He whose self is harmonised by *yoga* sees the self-abiding in all beings and all beings in the self, everywhere he sees the same.¹⁴

Again,

Oh, Arjuna, he who sees with equality everything in the image of oneself, in pleasure or in pain, is a true *yogī*.¹⁵

This predominantly Upaniṣadic theory had great impact on Indian philosophical traditions of the both Brāhmanical and Non-Brāhmanical origin. In case of the Oriya *santhas*, devotion to God necessarily implies that there is a unique identity between the God (along with his manifestations) and the self.

But how do we go about with this sort of *bhakti*? How do we attain the self-realisation? For the *santhas* of Orissa, it is through the path of yoga. In this context, a valid question may be raised. In fact, Caitanya Dāsa, a contemporary of Pañcasakhā, himself raises this question. ‘If the Lord Viṣṇu pervades the whole *samsāra* and resides in all beings then why should not a man get *moksa*

(liberation) spontaneously without any aid or effort?’ In other words, if *Brahmajñāna* is very much present within us then what is the need for us to follow the path of either *jñāna* or *bhakti* ? To this quizzical issue, he has a succinct answer ‘Fire is inherently present within dry fuel but it does not automatically produce fire. One has to make certain efforts to produce it. Similarly, *Brahmajñāna* is inherently present within human beings but one has to make sincere efforts to experience it’.¹⁶ So a devotee has to make certain efforts. Herein comes the concept of yoga as a method of *bhakti*. The essence of their *bhakti* theory is summarised in the following lines of Baḷarāma Dasa:

Bhakti arises of self-contemplation,
And from *bhakti* emerges *yoga*.¹⁷

Obviously, these *santhas* were not using the term *yoga* in the sense presented in the *Gītā*. For them, *yoga* is a practical process through which the oneness of the individual self with the cosmic self is realised within the body through *kāyā sādhanā* or the culture of the body. Undoubtedly, the concept of *yoga* signifying an inherent bond between the self and the cosmic consciousness occupies a key position in subsequent philosophical movements of the medieval period. Though the theoretical core of this relation of identity was kept intact but the outward structure was changed beyond recognition under the influence of Tantra (both, Hindu and Buddhist). So *yoga* came to be viewed as a practical method, and sometimes an esoteric method of self-realisation. The meaning of the term *yoga* was extended not only to cover the practical dimension developed by Patanjali’s system, but also the esoteric practices adopted by the Buddhist and Hindu Tantras and the Nātha cult. The Vajrayānis named it *svadhi daivata yoga*, the Sahjayānis called it *sahaja yoga* and the Nātha cult called it *hatha yoga* and the Oriya Vaiṣṇavas following the Nāthas referred to it as *ghaṭa yoga* (the *yoga* of the body). All of them insist on the *kāyā sadhanā* (the culture of body), depicting holy places in different parts of the body. This became almost a common feature of the literature of all these sects. In scheme of *jñānamiśrā bhakti*, *yoga* is meant to realise the *nirākāra* Brahman (the formless Reality)

by transmuting the gross and physical body into the subtle and superconscious one. So, following the principle emphasised in Haṭha yoga, the *santhas* adopted the theory of six plexuses (*sadacakrd*) of which the highest is *sahasrara*. One of noteworthy features of this santhic trend of Orissa is the importance they attach to body. The body itself is considered to be the seat of divinity. Highlighting the importance of this *sāadhanā* of the body (*ghaṭayoga*), Acyutānanda says:

Within your body there is infinite space,
The cosmos is within your body.
The person who has not penetrated
(Who has not understood the secret power) of the body
His wisdom is of no avail.
Those who do not see me in the body
How can they know me (God)?¹⁸

Śiśu Ananta, another member of the Pañcasakhā group says, ‘All these theories about *Brahman* and *Śūnya* can be demonstrated within your body. You must realise that myself (God) is within your body as both are non-different.’¹⁹ Acyutānanda proclaims that ‘whoever knows secret of *ghaṭa yoga* does not bother about the Vedas or Śāstras. For him the so-called gods are nothing but pieces of stone.’²⁰ Thus idolatry is despised. Śiśu Ananta Dāsa, for example, proclaims, ‘Can there be a God outside mind?’ Dvaraka Dasa, however, voices the same thought more explicitly when he says, ‘Ignorant people worship gods and goddesses made of wood or stone without realising that I am nothing but the self! He reiterates: ‘All chantings and rituals are meaningless, all the arrays of gods and goddesses are nothing but illusion’.²¹

Our brief survey of the *jñānamiśrā bhakti* theory, thus, brings into notice the lofty ideas of a form of secularism contained within a concept that properly belongs to the sphere of religion. The theory steers clear of the conditions that lead to a feeling of hatred for others. The realisation of the divinity within and outside leads to treat the humanity as a whole. This highest form of secular feeling is best expressed in the words of Santha Acyutānanda Dāsa:

‘When the One *Brahman* pervades the whole of universe it is disappointing to entertain discrimination on the grounds of race, caste and creed; and on the grounds of high and low.’²²

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2. The Oriya *santhas* draw flak from the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas for their conception of *nirākāra upāsanā*. It is stated in *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, ‘God is the embodiment of six divine qualities and bliss. How can you call him formless?’
3. In the famous Vaiṣṇava work *Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu* it is stated that *jñāna* is an obstacle to *bhakti*. 11.5.21.
4. *Jñāna bhedile bhakti pāi, bhakti bhedile jñāna pāi*. Achyutānanda, *Guru Bhakti Gītā*. III.50.
5. Achyutānanda, *Śabda Samhitā*, I.
6. *Tote kahuchi Vaśiṣṭha sabuhi ātmajñāna śreṣṭha*. Achyutānanda, *Brahma Śaṅkoḷi* I.
7. *Tattva bicāra jñana jete, jñanī kahantijagate*.
Kehu kahanti brahmatattva, kehu vā kahe paramārtha.
Kehu kahanti bhagavāna nirmalaparama je jñāna.
X x x x ...
Karanti Kṛṣṇa ṭhāre bhakti ātmāre ātmāku dekhanti.
Jagannātha Dāsa, *Bhāgavata* (Oriya) 1.1.
8. *Emante mārga bhinna bhinna kari bhajanti muḍhajana*.
Eka Brahma boli na jāni aneka mārga bhaje prāṇi
Dvārakā Dāsa, *Trayodaśa Skanda Bhāgavata* VII.
9. *To hruda madhye achhi jñāna*,
Tu tote khoji kara sthāna.
Achyutananda, *Brahma Śaṅkuḷi* I...
10. *Brahmajñāna jñāna Brahma e nuhai dūra*,
Gupata rahichhi hrudamandire tohara
Achyutānanda, *Jñānapradīpa Gītā* VI.
11. *Jāhāku ete bhābe dhāyi, bhitarē bāhāre ṭi sehi*.
Dvārakā Dāsa, *Trayodaśa Skanda Bhāgavata*.
12. *Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā* XII. 16.
13. *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* XII. 5.

14. *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* VI.29.
15. *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* VI.32.
16. *Prāṇīṅka dehe kari sthiti kimpāin na die mokṣa gati?*
x x x
Kāṣṭha bhitare agni thāin kāṣṭhaku napare dahai,
Manthile kari bāhu baḷa takṣaṇe jaḷe anaḷa.
Sehi prakāre deva Hari agni svarūpe bhūte puri,
Jñāna manthana kāḷe nitye prakāśa honti pañcabhūte.
Caitanya Dāsa, *Nirguṇa Māhātmya*, 12-13.
17. *Ātmā cintile bhakti hue,*
Bhaktiru yoga udaye.
Baḷarāma Dāsa, *Vedāntasāra Gupta Gītā*, verse 69-70.
18. Acyutānanda Dāsa, *Caurāśī Yantra*.
19. Śīśu Ananta, *Hetu Udaya Bhāgavata*, III.
20. Acyutānanda, *Brahma Śankuli*, 19.
21. Dvārakā Dāsa, *Chatīśa Gupta Gītā*, XIII.
22. Acyutānanda Dāsa, *Aṅākara Samhitā*, 79.

MADHUSUDAN DAS AND INDIAN SECULARISM

Amarendra Mohanty

In contemporary political theory, secularism has emerged as a key concept. In the tradition of western political thought, secularism had hardly appeared in the writings of philosophers. Political thinkers were more concerned with issues of liberty, property, justice, consent and human will. It is Machiavelli who forcefully demanded for the separation of politics from religion.¹ Machiavelli wrote “we Italians then owe to the Church of Rome and to her priests our having become irreligious and bad, but we owe her a still greater debt and one that will be the cause of our ruin, namely that the church has kept and still keeps our country divided’ (cited by Sabine in 1973:316). Machiavelli was anti Church, anti clergy but not anti-religion. He considered religion as necessary not only for man’s social life but also for the health and prosperity of the state; it was important within a state because of the influence it yielded over political life in general. Though an indispensable part of civic life, it was never an end in itself. As a political tool, princes and rulers were to use religion in their own power struggle effectively but responsibly and cautiously, otherwise it could be

disastrous. Religion was good only if it produced order, for peace brought forth fortune and success. Machiavelli's attitude towards religion was strictly utilitarian. It was a social force and did not have any spiritual connotation.² Since Machiavelli's secularism gradually evolved as a concept and occupied a prominent place in the writings of political philosophers. John Locke, the celebrated English contractualist and the apologist of English Glorious Revolution, advocated for religious toleration and planted the seed of secularism. Sociologists from Max Weber to Peter Burger are of the opinion that secularisation is one of the aspects of modernisation. Secularism can be interpreted both negatively and positively. Negatively speaking, this means a freedom from establishmentarian imposition. For it, the secular idiom is merely a provisional linguafranca that serves to facilitate commerce among different kinds of beliefs rather than establish some new absolute language of post—religious truth. The positive view of secularism is an ultimate faith that rightfully super-secedes the tragic blindness and destructive, irrationalities of the historical religions, at least so far the activities of public is concerned. It confines religion to a strictly private sphere, where it can do little public harm and the public good.³

The Chamber's twentieth Century Dictionary (1984 edition) defines secularism as the belief that the state, moral, education, etc., should be independent of religion. If applied strictly, this concept would seem to indicate that state comprises people who have no religious faith that religion is totally separated from the affairs of the state.

The word secularism, as introduced in India by renaissance leaders, carried connotations beyond a mere emotional significance. In fact, it was ordained to act as an intellectual process aiding their quest for India's entity. The renaissance leaders were successful in clearly demarcating the moral and spiritual values of human life so that the social institution could be secularised, while at the same time, managing to bring out the inherent relationship between the two. Their entire philosophy, including the social and religious aspects, revolved round the upliftment of the individual.

The renaissance leaders were called upon to defend religion of the time from three-pronged attack. On the one side, there was a rapid spread of the western concept of liberalism, coupled with the advancement in science, which tried to prove that religion was nothing but dogmatic rituals and customs. Then there was the phenomenal problem of conversion of Hindus to Islam and Christianity induced by Muslim invasions and the missionaries of Christianity. The stumbling block as far as Hinduism itself was concerned turned out to be its deterioration to a system characterised by rigidity, corruption and dogmatism. The last factor that victimised religion in those times was the changing socio-economic conditions. The widespread destruction of small-scale industries was instrumental in creating circumstances that led to people being dependent on agriculture and the emergence of new feudal lords in the form of zamindars and other intermediaries between the British rulers and the Indian farmer. The excessive burden of the land revenue system was crushing the farmers, with their miseries being compounded by the famines occurring with striking regularity. These conditions, when taken together with the rigidities in the caste system heavily biased against the lower order, facilitated the large-scale conversion to Christians even if it was for the sake of economic aid being doled out by the missionaries. The nineteenth century India, thus, was profoundly shaken up socially, economically and politically largely because of the existing colonial edifice. The renaissance leaders insisted that the salvation for India lay only in its religion. Recognising the significance of the multi religious condition in India, the leaders drew an unambiguous demarcating line between moral and spiritual values and declared the former to be secular. With such an attitude, they set about working for reforms at the individual level in a secular fashion, keeping in focus all the time the common secular values of all religions.⁵

In the midst of bloodshed and common passion, the founders of the Indian State repudiated the false and basically inhuman doctrine of communalism and made secularism the sheer anchor of Indian unity. It was also the evidence of a new outlook, an earthly view which aimed at nurturing the new value of a secular life.⁶

According to Bashiruddin Khan, secularism as the basis of our society makes a demand for: (i) relegation of religious belief patterns to private personal aspects of life; (ii) domination of common civil code; (iii) equality of status and opportunity for men and women, irrespective of caste, colour and creed; (iv) fraternity of the citizens and not as members of primordial ascriptive groups; (v) inclusion of nationalism in the pursuit of civil life; and (vi) acceptance of scientific temper and inquiry. Obviously, secularism is an instrument of social change and political transformation. It involves a change from a traditional to a modern pattern of human relations. It is both an ideal as well as a reality.⁷

The principal advocates of secular ideology in India were Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahātmā Gandhi. Nehru's secularism was based on a commitment to scientific humanism tinged with a progressive view of historical change.

According to Nehru, in the secular state of India, every religion and belief has full freedom and equal honour and every citizen has equal liberty and equal opportunity. The minorities are given fair and just treatment and equitable educational and economic facilities. There is freedom of conscience even for those who have no religion. Free play for all religions is subject only to not interfering with each other or with basic conceptions of our state. Mahatma Gandhi's secularism was based on a commitment to the brotherhood of religious community based on their respect for and pursuit of the truth.⁸

Although the very term secular did not figure in the preamble of our Constitution until the adoption of 42nd Amendment Act to the Constitution in 1976, even then the formal absence of the term secular from the body of the Constitution for about a quarter of century for its inauguration should not be construed to mean that during these years the Indian republic continued to be a non-secular state. For the Constitution contained notable provisions guaranteeing to every citizen the freedom of faith and religious worship, non-discrimination on the grounds of religion and freedom in matters of religious propagation and management of matter of religious institutions.

Our Constitution provides adequate provision relating to equality of religion, religious practices in religious institutions, minorities' right to establish educational institutions of their choice, preventing the state from compelling a state to pay religious taxes. However, the Constitution empowers the state to impose restrictions on this right subject to public order, morality and health. The state is also empowered to legislate in respect to charitable institutions, matters which are included in list of the Constitution.

The directive principle provided under Article 44 of the Constitution provides for the state to secure for its citizen an uniform civil code throughout the territory of India. However, although the Hindu civil code has brought uniformity in respect to marriage, adoption, succession, etc., the Muslim personal law still remains outside the pale of a common civil code.⁹

II

Madhusudan Das was appropriately known as the 'Pride of Utkal' and the Revered Patriarch. He lived a life of 86 years (1848, 1934), a selfless, dedicated life committed to a mission, i.e., integration of Oriya-speaking areas and the formation of a separate Orissa province on a linguistic basis. Madhusudan Das was a famous lawyer, a chief patron of cottage industry in Orissa, a reformer and, above all, a nationalist leader with the highest sense of dedication. The first Oriya graduate, the first Oriya Member of the Vice Regal Council as well as the first Oriya Minister, Madhusudan Das was also the first Oriya Advocate to protect the interest of the Oriyas. His brain child Utkal Sammilani was a socio-cultural association of Oriyas that aimed at: (i) unification of natural Orissa; (ii) bringing about all round development of Orissa; (iii) bringing about all Oriya-speaking tracts under one administration; and (iv) protection of interest of Oriyas in the outlying tracts.¹⁰

Madhusudan Das belonged to the old school of politicians like SN Banerjee, GK Gokhale, Ranade, Dadabhai Naroji who believed that providence linked the fate of India with England with a purpose.

He was proud of English institutions and his English friends but stood fearlessly against them when his country's cause required opposition.¹¹

The modern Indian secularism as enshrined in our Constitution is indebted to Madhusudan Das. Though belonging to an aristocratic Oriya Hindu family Das accepted Christianity in pursuit of higher education. In those days in the eyes of the Hindus, Christians were considered to be untouchables. The Choudhury family of Satyabhamapur in Cuttack District was a conservative family. In 1870, even when Madhusudan Das became the first graduate of Orissa, his mother served him food outside his house. But Das, being a Christian, took secularism as his ideal goal and practised it in his practical life. In 1873, he married a Bengali Christian, Soudamini, the daughter of a Christian priest.¹² His Christianity was not a dogmatic or an ecclesiastical faith. It was founded entirely upon his deep admiration for Christ's prayer, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'.¹³ In the words of Mohammed Yunus, Madhusudan Das was a true Christian and religious to a fault.¹⁴ He was inspired by two cardinal virtues of Christianity: humility and forgiveness. Though a Christian, he believed in the essential equality of all religions. Regional loyalty did not stand on his way of his loyalty to the cause of Indian nationalism.¹⁵ As the President of All India Christian conference held at Madras in 1916, Madhusudan boldly said, 'We are Indians first and Christians afterwards. We get inspiration from Indian traditions. The future of India depends upon India's past glory. Narrow mindedness is a kind of cowardishness. Let us include the exploited mass in our community and increase our numbers. Only 40 lakh Christians are now among us. This number can be increased.'¹⁶

Madhusudan was equally friendly towards Muslims. When Badruddin Taybji, a Muslim leader presided over the third session of India National Congress held in Madras, Das congratulated him. On March 24, 1887, he presided over a meeting of Muslim organisation of Cuttack called Fayexeham held at Kadam Rasool. In his presidential address, Das said that unless there was communal harmony, India and Orissa's development

would be impossible. Hindus, Muslim and other communities are like limbs of Mother India. Unless there is cooperation and understanding among them, the Indian body will be destroyed, just like a human body. Madhusudan's definition of 'Oriya' speaks of his secular bent of mind. He said that any person irrespective of his caste language and religion, was an Oriya if he lived in an Oriya speaking region. He said, 'Those who were born in the land of Utkal and after their death want to be buried in the laps of Utkal Mata, let them belong to any community, a Bengali, Muslim, Brahmin, Karan, Kandara, Pana, Punjabi. All of the them are the sons of Utkal. Mother Utkal is not detached from Mother India; neither she is the co-wife or enemy of the latter. If there is pain in any part of the body, that part requires treatment. By virtue of such treatment the entire body will develop. The purpose of treatment, of Utkal is India's development.'¹⁸ Das also successfully persuaded a number of kings and zamindars to join the Utkal Sammilani, as he believed that because of their proximity to the British, their support to the movement for Orissa state would prove to be invaluable. He had reservations about the kings and zamindars, but he sought to build a tactical alliance with them in the larger interest of the Oriyas.

Though a pious Christian, Madhusudan Das paid high respect to Hinduism because the vast majority of Oriyas were Hindus. In order to reach these people, he used idioms and symbols of Hinduism to attract them to the movement of the Orissa state. In his speeches and writings – including poems – he repeatedly talked of Jagannatha, Visnu, Durga, the Hindu deities. He expressed his confidence that with the support of these deities Oriya nationalism would eventually triumph. In this respect, he was apparently influenced by nineteenth-century Bengali nationalists like Bankim Chandra who invoked Hindu icons like Krsna, Kāli and Durgā to inspire the people of India to fight for India's liberation from colonial rule.¹⁹

Madhusudan was the founding father of the Utkal Sammilani. Regarding this organisation he mentioned in 1912, 'I have not understood the meaning of conference. It is not a meeting like Insurance Company (Life Insurance Company), Karan *Sabha*

or Brahmin *Sabha*. Some businessmen organised a meeting for safeguarding their interests. The membership of this meeting is not fixed. It is unlimited. The entire Oriya nation is its member. It is neither a meeting nor a company. It belongs to the Nation.' In 1913, Das also said, 'This organisation is not meant for any community. It is dedicated to the cause of national interest. It is a democratic organisation where people coming from lower strata of the society can participate and discuss.' Madhubabu discarded religious matters for discussion from the agenda of the conference as he did not want to mingle religion with politics, as the case today.²⁰

Madhusudan was regarded as the saviour of the great temple of Lord Jagannātha. When the British Government attempted to take over the management of Jagannātha temple, there was commotion throughout the country. Madhusudan espoused the cause of the Hindu community. In Calcutta High Court, he urged that the Raja who performed the worship was the Pope of the Hindu world whose name and the year of reign were borne on the horoscope of every Oriya child and he could not be deprived of his rights. Jagannātha religion is a liberal religion. Narrowism has no place in it. There is no casteism inside the temple. Everybody takes Jagannātha's *Prasād*. He is the king of Orissa, because in the twelfth century, Gangabansī king, Ananga Bhīma Deva authorised Jagannātha, surrendered his kingdom to the lord and ruled as the representative of Jagannātha. The king of Puri is similar to the Archbishop of England and is equally honoured. Das won the case and the British government gave up the attempt. The press and the public paid great tribute to Madhusudan Das.²¹

Madhusudan Das died in 1934, two years before Orissa could become separate province on a linguistic basis. But his secular ideas have not lost their relevance even today in our country. Secularism has survived in India because, at the end of the day, there is no alternative to living, working and adjusting together. India's secularism has no western parallel nor any eastern counterpart. The important thing is not to preach secularism as a dogma but accept ordinary decencies as a national imperative.²² The state, the civil society, the media and the common man should render consensual support for its success.

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CASTEISM AND SECULAR TREND IN THE MAHIMĀ MOVEMENT

Namita Kar

It is commonly held that Hinduism as a religion is caste based. In the Ṛg Veda, there is the reference about four classes of human-beings, viz., Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra. It has been stated that the Brahmins have originated from the mouth, the Rājan (Kṣatriyas) from the arms, the Vaiśyas from the thighs and the Śūdras from the feet of Visva Puruṣa (*Ṛg Veda, X.12*). There is also reference to these classes (*varṇa*) in the *Bh. Gītā*. It is held that the four *varṇas* are founded on *guṇa* (quality) and *karma* (action) (*Gītā, IV. 13*). This classification is explained in terms of the saying that a man can change his status by means of modifying his quality and action. He can change his position as per his interest and ability. There is no indication either in the Vedic expression or in the source of *Bh. Gītā* that a Brāhmaṇa/ Kṣatriya/ Vaiśya/ Śūdra is so by birth. If a person does certain type of work and maintains his livelihood as per certain norms and practices, he is classified as belonging to one of these four classes. But, at the same time, it is held that the classification is quite flexible and not rigid.

Hence, the Vedic reference about such classification need not necessarily suggest that one class is higher and the other class is lower. Each class has different roles to play and if the person belonging to any of the four classes performs his role efficiently as well as judiciously with a moral foundation, then he is supposed to be an ideal and is adored or respected in the religio-social order as divine. Kṛṣṇa, even if he is supposed to have been born as a Yādava (Vaiśya), he is revered in the tradition as an incarnation of the Lord. So also Buddha, being born in a Kṣatriya family, is adored in certain dominant circles, as the ninth *avatāra* (incarnation) of Lord.

Hence, it is fairly clear that the Vedic dharmic tradition does not treat the *varṇa-vyavasthā* as rigid and non-interchangeable. But it is also a fact that, in due course, the classification of human beings on the basis of certain principles or criteria have been found to have degenerated to unhealthy social taboos and immoral blind superstitions. Classification on the basis of *guṇa* and *karma* has been reduced to pernicious caste discrimination. It has become so acute and radical that it does not follow the four *varṇas* in its contextual refined meaning as narrated in the scriptural sources. Paying lip-service to such a broad division of human being based on certain principles of the then socio-moral foundation, in the later period there has been tremendous pleading for a totally obnoxious social ruling with a spurious religio-spiritual coating, giving rise to a conventional set up that is found to be grossly immoral and irrational too. For instance, even among one of the classes, say, Brāhmaṇa or Kṣatriya or Vaiśya or Śūdra, there are multiple sub-divisions and certain qualitative discriminations imposed therein. Consequently, one sub-groups of people belonging to one broad class even considers itself as higher in contrast to other sub-groups that class. Then there is the discriminative practice of either looking down on others in the same class or feeling inflated as belonging to a higher category of another class. As a matter of fact, caste-discrimination, so far as this setup is concerned, is found to be not due to the original dharmic scriptural basis but rather due to several other factors such as political and economic sources.

Being politically subjugated, economically oppressed and academically neglected, the people at the common level have preferred to confine themselves to a small group/community belonging to a specific area. Thereby they have mostly remained in a mini world of their own family, relatives, kith and kin without caring to know about the world outside of theirs. This has given rise to serious ignorance and has tragically paved the way for imbibing various sorts of dogmas, prejudices and superstitions. The rational and scientific quest has been most curtailed. The people belonging to this social strata have been persuaded, rather indoctrinated – by the pseudo-authoritative leaders and the so-called well-wishers that such conditions and restrictions concerning their living as well as thinking have the dharmic sanction and religious or divine approval. An extensive purāṇic literature was composed in which maximum emphasis was laid upon dreadful and bitter consequences of violation of so-called spiritual rules and conditions. The restrictions that were imposed were found to be grossly inhuman, immoral and socially most undynamic. An element of fear-psychosis was injected upon the common mass, resulting thereby in serious obstacle for free thinking and openness. But, as has been already hinted, that does not have any form of dharmic authenticity so far as the message is concerned, imparted by the original scriptural sources are taken into account. The core point of such a message has been to inculcate and invigorate the sense of peaceful coexistence of individuals in the social framework with a moral foundation. Divinity is never conceived in a super-moral plane but is given a moral shape with a human touch. In other words, the consideration of socio-human morality is ever at the apex and the sense of divine spiritualisation is accommodated as only one optional means. That is the reason as to why there is the approval of a non-theistic world-view like Sāṅkhya, Vaiśeṣika and even Pūrva Mīmāṃsā within the Vedic (the so-called *āstika*) formulation. It is good that recent scholars (indologists, lexicographers and other intellectuals) have acknowledged the subtle but important distinction between dharma and religion on one hand and so between *varṇa* and *jāti*, on the other. This point clearly suggests

the view that caste (*jati*) means nothing but a social class or division found in this tradition, not necessarily referring to any dharma or having any particular religious root. In this connection, it is interesting to note that the stigma of casteism continues even today in India among the converted people from one religion to another.

In the later part of the eighteenth century, there was a definite feeling of turmoil in different spheres of social life throughout the country. Orissa was no exception to that. It, being predominantly composed of hills and mountains, was inhabited by the aboriginals and tribals. A very thin line of coastal plane area was inhabited by some advanced, refined people, having scope for some formal education. Politically, the state was not stable and had no mark of solidarity. It had lost its special identity from the political point of view. Economically, the condition of the general public was definitely at the lower ebb and more so among the rural and tribal mass. The people, by and large, were greatly subjugated under political and economic pressures. This had given rise to numerous social/communal disparity and discrimination. The evils of caste discrimination were rampant throughout the country. Orissa was one among the worst affected states. The general mass was also in contact with other religious faiths of foreign origin like Islam and Christianity. As a result, there was the cross-cultural contact and which had given rise to some form of assimilation and renovation.

Mahimā movement started during that period and later on it became designated as Mahimā dharma (or Satya Mahimā dharma). It can trace its originals as a strong reaction to certain evil forms of social practices and dogmatic rituals. The essence of Veda and Vedānta, according to Mahimā, is Śūnya Brahman which is non-dual and formless (*arūpa*). It is not viewed as any particular dazzling one (*deva* or *devī*) having certain limited form of description. It is not even the highest Lord (*parameśvara*), having the aggregation of all good qualifications of all devas (dazzling beings), since all descriptions, as descriptions, cannot be ascribed to the non-dual Brahman which is viewed as devoid of all qualities. The view that reality is a whole, a full totality

does not appeal to the Mahimā Advaitin, because the whole (*pūrṇa*) connotes in the usual sense limitation or finitude. It is full and complete description. The Vedic expression ‘pūrṇa’ is usually interpreted as an absolutely self-complete and closed unit by itself. But, from the philosophical point of view of Mahimā (i.e., Viśuddhādvaita as coined by Bisvanatha Bābā, the foremost Mahimāite of the twentieth century), Brahman is interpreted as *nirguṇa* as well as Īśvara in the sense of source of all manifestations. It comes to mean that Brahman is not viewed here as something of a closed static unit of abstraction but it absorbs within itself certain dynamic possibilities. It is treated as limitless and infinite in the sense that no possible description can exhaust it. It is indescribable, indeterminable and infinite in the sense that it is exposed to unlimited possibilities. In that way, it is open-textured, thus, the Advaita point of view, so far as this rendering is taken into account, seems to be liberal and catholic. It is not limited to any particular cult or group or community. And, in this sense, it is universal in its perspective and is in accord with the Vedic expression *sarve bhavantu sukhinaḥ* (let all be happy) without any discrimination and distinction.

Advaita in its purest form cannot accommodate caste rigidity. Also, it cannot be limited to any type of theistic or atheistic form. It does not entertain any belief which would limit the unlimited. In this sense, Mahimā Advaita keeps itself aloof from any idol worship, as that leads to some form of superiority as well as inferiority complexes. It is opposed to caste discrimination but not necessarily opposed to qualitative distinction on the basis of bodily as well as mental performances. The customary convention of caste is purely due to social perversion and it is unnecessarily linked with dharma because of the unfounded misrendering of the sense of dharma.

The Mahimāites have well realised that Brāhmin, as a class, is not to support caste rigidity. Moreover, it has been advanced in the society by some so-called Brāhmins as well as non-Brāhmins because of their vested interests. Consequently, one now comes across the caste-division in multifarious categories. There is, thus, the unhealthy and unwarranted form of numerous

caste-discriminations among the Śūdras, the Vaiśyas and the Kṣatriyas too. It is one pernicious social consequence which is neither moral nor legal.

By openly advocating the equality of men and keeping itself away from the inhuman and immoral casteism, the Mahimā movement has definite leaning for a secular approach. It is clearly against all sorts of social discrimination of high and low in the name of religion. This has put the movement not in the closed but an open setting. At least, in this respect, it seems to be amenable to both humanism and secularism.

SECULAR TRENDS IN *PŪJĀ* AND *YĀTRĀ* FESTIVALS OF ORISSA

Madhumita Dash

The concept of secularism is in vogue for some centuries (in the western hemisphere). In India there is no trace of the concept being used in the traditional source. Only after independence have secular thoughts been crept into the Indian polity. Though in the original frame of the Indian Constitution there is no mention of the concept of a secular, the ideas acceptable to a secular frame are clearly placed therein. It was in 1976, at the inclusion of 42nd amendment, that the term secular was explicitly incorporated in the Constitution. What is important to note is that the term secular has been basically a political concept. It has its legitimate use and application in the state's political functioning at the social level. It points to the governance of the political state. The Indian state, being a democratic republic, is committed to adopt such a policy of governance in which its citizens must have freedom of thought, belief and expressions. They have the freedom to follow any religion or none. There shall not be any form of religious discrimination. All religions are to be dealt with on an equal footing. The only stipulation is that there should not be any sort

of religious interference so far as the decision at the political level of operating the state rules and laws are concerned. State-politics must be kept away from religious or theological pressures. India is thus declared as a secular and not a theocratic state.

Of course, this does not suggest that all sorts of religious activities done or to be done by the citizens are to be banned. Rites and rituals observed by different religious groups and communities are not to be prohibited. An individual's freedom to adopt a religious mode of life is never denied in a secular government. Only, such activities do not create any social discord/disturbance/turmoil. The social solidarity must be in order and kept in balance. Religious ceremonies can be observed without creating any law and order problem. Religious authority over state functioning is, of course, inadmissible, but religious belief or faith is not thereby interfered or any kind of hindrance is imposed on account of the same.

Against this background of the Indian version of secularism (which is in currency today at the socio-political level), an attempt is made here to study some prominent local festivals and mode of paying homage to superiors that are prevalent in the Oriya social structure. Orissa is housed with people of diverse faith and belief, belonging to different racial and cultural groups. Though Oriya is the mother-tongue of the majority, there are Bengalis, Telugus, etc. Even if the majority among the Oriya belong to the Hindu community, there are some Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Jainas and Sikhs as well. But the notable feature is that the people, though belonging to different religions and of diverse linguistic, racial and cultural sources, remain in a harmonious setting without any serious conflict and disruption. Orissa has never witnessed any major large-scale violence caused due to communal, racial and linguistic conflict. On the contrary, there are clear instances in which one comes across instances of mutual participation of different sets of people in certain important religious functions, festivals and other related customs.

For instance, a typical festival called *yātrā* (festival/feast for a sort of dramatic entertainment)¹ can be spotted here. *Ratha yātrā* (car festival) is jointly shared by the Hindus, the Muslims

and other communities. Regional functions like *Bāli yātrā* (sand festival), *Melaṇa* (a public congregation on some festive occasion) are celebrated by all groups of people. *Tarpaṇa-vidhi Pūjā* (paying homage to superiors and/or adoration to good and evil powers as well) is another public function that is attended and participated without any bar and restriction. Some prominent *pūjās*, however, belong to the Śakti cult originally such as Durgā, Lakṣmi and Kāli. In due course they have been adopted and shared by other groups.

The people of Orissa, through the religious mode, continue to remain in peace and harmony. This give-and-take relationship continues to thrive without any serious impediment. Some prominent Muslim festivals are also celebrated by Hindus. A shrine situated near Khurda is jointly adored and revered by both Hindus and Muslims.

II

Here, in this brief discussion, some typical *pūjā* and *yātrā* rituals peculiar to Orissa will be touched upon with the purpose of indicating the secular element that is consistently present in the observance of all such semi-religious functions and festivals.

Pūjā

(a) The *Raja* Festival

The *Raja* festival refers to a particular period of the year when it is supposed that the Mother Earth has attained her puberty (*bhūrajasvāḷā*). The festival has its origin in an agricultural custom. After the yield of the major crop in this eastern part of the country, i.e., paddy, the farmers prefer to keep the land disengaged for a short span and rest a little. So a period of three days have been fixed for the purpose. During that period no cultivation is carried out; the farmers have their holidays and all the members in the family enjoy in their respective ways. The festival is mainly of a secular nature and there is no religious root

like any scriptural authoritative sanction for the observance of such a festival. For the purpose maintaining order and discipline, a definite period has been fixed and that begins on the *pratipad tithi* of bright fortnight of the month (*māsa*) of Caitra and it continues for three days. Cultivation and other agricultural activities start after the first day of the month of Āṣāḍha. During the three days of the festival, everybody is in festive mood and they all enjoy and relax, Participation in this festival is not restricted to the farmers and their relations, but is lovingly shared by the people at large, irrespective of caste, colour creed and religious denominations. A notable feature of the festival is that it gives due importance to the women folk. They are also supposed to take rest and enjoy in their own ways.

This belief shows that the *Raja* festival is celebrated for worldly (*laukika*) happiness and prosperity. It is a common man's festival for enjoyment and merry making. Along with the Hindus, the Muslims also participate in different localities, both in towns as well as villages. The *Raja* festival is a typical Oriya festival. The secular print is clearly traceable in this festive occasion. It has a clear social dimension that is free from any distinct religio-theological stamp.

(b) The *Kārtika Pūrṇimā* Festival

Kārtika Pūrṇimā is observed in the month of *Kārtika* during the winter season. On this day, people pay respect/homage to their ancestors by floating small toy-boats in water. Paying homage to ancestors and superiors means remembering their ways of living in a loving and affectionate manner, and teaching the next generation their noble thoughts and deeds which give people inspiration and moral support to face the challenges of living.³ A special *śrādhā* ceremony called *Tarpaṇa* (i.e., paying respect to the departed ancestors) is held during the month of *Kārtika*. Such functions are not confined to worship of any deity, but are mainly an act of self-reflection in which one takes the oath to control oneself both in mind and spirit so that he becomes free from anxieties and psychological turpitudes.

On the day of *Kārtika pūrṇimā*, the famous *Bāli Yātrā*, is commenced which continues for several days. In such a *yātrā*, persons of different categories take part, irrespective of being high or low born, rich or poor and so-called higher or lower castes. The *Bāli yātrā* festival is observed in different parts of Orissa, but it is mainly famous in Cuttack city, on the bank of the River Mahanadi. This practice has been continuing since several centuries with a different purpose in addition to what has already been hinted before. *Bāli yātrā* is reminiscent of Orissa's rich tradition of cultural exchange to Southeast Asian countries like Burma (now Myanmar), Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, etc. The journey through the sea was in vogue in past, both for cultural goodwill and also for effective trade and commerce. The same festival is now held in a grand scale at Paradip, a big sea port in eastern India, to commemorate this glorious tradition. At Paradip port, a special *Boita Bandāṇa* (adoring and greeting the ship and its passengers) is observed in a spectacular manner. It is exciting to find that on the same day of the year at Bangkok (Thailand), people float big toy-boats with lights inside, both in rivers and seas. The *Boita bandāṇa* is specially done by the ladies. It is a typical mode of paying reverence and adoration by the women folk to the ship and also to its passengers in memory of India's golden past when the ladies used to see off their husbands, friends and well wishers.

If one carefully observes this *yātrā* – its style of operation and purpose – then one can notice that this is not a religious festival of the usual theistic manner. It is not for praying or worshipping any deity or god. The festival is primarily for the people and unfolds the spirit of secularism. It is a festival of the common people and is aimed at man's fame, prosperity and happiness. This festival contributes to good adventure, rich experience of distant lands, their people and way of life. It has a clear cultural significance with material gain and mental satisfaction. There is distinctly no religio-theological underpinning involved. It is observed commonly without any class/caste/cult/communal rigidity or demarcation. It has a clear secular appeal.

Some other festivals are also observed in Orissa: *Akṣaya Tṛtīyā* (in *Baiśākha māsa*), *Gahmā Pūrṇimā* (in *Śrāvaṇa māsa*), *Māgha Saptamī* (in *Māgha māsa*) and *Prathamāṣṭamī* (in *Mārgaśīra māsa*) (in Sanskrit, it is *Mārgaśīrṣa*). The deeper message of all such festivals and other similar ones are found to be centred around celebrating human welfare in the worldly plane. The secular human touch needs to be properly exposed and highlighted.

Yātrā

Out of several *yātrās*, only two *yātrās* will be briefly discussed here, namely, *Aśokāṣṭamī yātrā* at Bhubaneswar and *Guṇḍica yātrā* at Puri.

(a) *Aśokāṣṭami Yātrā*

This *yātrā* commences on the eighth day of the bright period (*śukla aṣṭamī*) of the month of *Caitra* and it centres around the main presiding deity of Bhubaneswar, i.e., Liṅgarāja, who is worshipped both as Hara (Mahādeva/Maheśwar) and Hari (Viṣṇu). It is a splendid syncretism of both Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism, most possibly out of the social demand to maintain peace and harmony at the practical front, set asiding theological rigidity at the theoretical level. The *yātrās* at Liṅgarāja *kṣetra* are observed on the śāstric (scriptural) foundation of *Liṅga Purāṇa*, *Ekāmra Purāṇa* and *Swarṇādri Mahodaya*.⁴ The festival reflects that there is no absolute irreducible dichotomous cleavage between the Lord and man as devotee. The Lord belongs to him and is never transcendent. The humanisation of the sense of divinity is a unique conception of Hinduism and its best testimony is the *avatāra* conception. This has more secular than sacerdotal tendency, pointing to the conception of basic identity of every body from the moral point of view. Here, the worship or prayer is to gracefully acknowledge the greatness and nobility, not to make an absolute surrender to a transcendent Lord of divinity. Rather, it is to awaken and enliven that spirit of nobility and greatness

in man. The act of paying homage is for the welfare of both the individual who performs that act and also his fellow men, i.e., wishing well for all (*sarve bhavantu sukhinah*).

(b) *Guṇḍicā Yātrās*

Guṇḍicā yātrā is also called as *Ratha yātrā* or car festival, associated with Lord Jagannātha at Puri. Incidentally, it has become a well-known festival of worldwide fame. This actually is followed by twelve yātrās centring around Lord Jagannatha, commencing from *Candana yātrā* which falls on the full-moon day of the month of Baiśākha and culminating with, the *Canadana yātrā* (sandal-sport festival) *Snāna yātrā* (bath festival), which falls on the full-moon day of the month of Jyeṣṭha.

After the completion of *Snāna yātrā*, there is the period of *anavasara*, during which, Jagannātha is specially adored and homage is paid to Him in primarily by the tribal manner. Puri is famous in the Hindu world where the deity is both adored by the Aryans and also by the non-Aryans without any conflict and animosity. After the period of *anavasara*, there is the well-known *Ratha-yātrā*.

Puri is one of the four major pilgrim-centres and monastic places of significance of the Hindus of all sections. Various customs and traditions are found to have been assimilated in the Jagannātha cult. This is a unique dharmic centre where one finds the integration of the non-Aryan and the Aryan, the Śaivas and the Śāktas, the Vaiṣṇavas and the Gāṇapatyas. The mode of worship is also a composite form of Vedic, Tāntric, Purāṇic and also of secular practices. In this cult, there is the presence of integration of so many varieties of faiths. The cult of Jagannātha is the unique centre of harmony, by way of uniting people belonging to divergent theological and non-theological setting under one common platform.

The *prasāda* or the food that is offered to the Lord is known as *mahāprasāda* and is acceptable to all without any sense of discrimination. Within the temple-campus and also outside,

there is the practice of taking *mahāprasāda* together without any cast/creed/colour discrimination. During the time of the car festival, the image of the Lord is brought out and taken to another temple (*Guṇḍicā*), where the Daitāpatis become the custodian of all the four images (Jagannātha, Balbhadrā, Subhadrā and Sudarśana). The Daitāpatis are the descendants of the happy marriage between a Brahmin priest (Vidyāpati) and a Śabara (tribal) chieftain's daughter (Laṭitā). This point clearly vindicates social integration between *savr̥ṇas* and *asavar̥ṇas* and has full dharmic sanction of endorsing both the elements of humanisation and secularisation.

Not only the tribals, but even the Śūdra lady (caṇḍāluṇī): Śrīyā has been acknowledged and respected as a great devotee of the Lord. A Muslim individual, Salbeg is well known as a great devotee of Lord Jagannātha. During the car festival, the Gajapati king of Orissa works as a sweeper and cleans the chariots in which the deities are placed. This indicates that no work by itself is either socially respectable or humiliating; rather, it is the man who, from his own selfish and egoistic angle, regards a piece of work as either respectful or not.⁵ Jagannātha stands as the great symbol for equality, fraternity and progress of the whole mankind. The car festival reflects that the belief in divinity is not antagonistic but complementary to the cause of humanity.

Secularism stands for openness. It reflects a liberal, Catholic and human attitude. All these beliefs clearly anticipate affirmation and not denial of the socio-empiric plane of existence. Having an undertonal significance of morality, it is directed towards a higher value of life and a good social living. As a social concept, it unfolds the fabric and character of a concordant order, in which people are to live in at atmosphere of mutual concern, friendship and trust.

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SECULARISM AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION: CONTRIBUTIONS OF ORIYA CULTURAL TRADITIONS

Durga Madhav Praharaj

The background assertions before proceeding to the thought to be presented are as follows:

1. In the framework of historical religions, strict secularism cannot be accommodated.
2. Giving up religion is not possible for the majority of the people who have been born and brought up against a religious background.
3. National integration is only an ideal that can never be actualised. So also is the case with secularism.
4. Since Hindus constitute the majority, the proposal of becoming secular is only applicable to them, and can never be demanded for all.
5. Here and there many examples – sometimes significant examples – can be witnessed or known to justify that attempts have been taken to make the society secular. It also establishes the fact that trial has been taken to explore national integration. But it has only become successful in influencing a very small section of the people.

6. It is equally significant to note that there are hundreds of examples available in support of the opposite stand, indicating that the more we try to make society secular, the more people become conscious of their own self-interest and divisionism grows in higher proportion than the patchwork to wipe out the cracks.
7. In spite of the fact that achievement of the idea of secularism and national integration is hope against hope, it is the honest duty of every individual to follow positive thinking to find out the means to achieve such ideals.

NATIONAL INTEGRATION AND SECULARISM

By temperament, in general, we feel that the scientific method is the best possible method to begin with. The scientific method always attaches emphasis on removing the cause to remove the effect. Hence, if dis-integration is the effect, it should be removed, and one has to find out its cause. Unfortunately, dis-integration suffers from the plurality of causes. However, it is noticed that one of the significant causes is the emotional attachment towards religions. So, the question: 'What can be done in this regard?' has baffled political administrators, social reformers, intellectuals and progressive thinkers.

Here, I would like to clarify in what way the caption of the seminar has baffled me. Any intellectual exercise, performed by philosophers or socio-political thinkers, must aim at clarification of thoughts or simplifying complicated matters. This view is in admittance with Wittgensain's great suggestion that philosophy is therapeutic and helps in clearing the knots of our understanding. Applying this technique, and simplifying the complicated issues and not complicating simple issues, I read the caption of this national seminar as 'Contributions of Oriya Indigenous Traditions in Respect of National Integration through Secularism'. Thus, there are specifically two parts, namely: (i) contributions of Oriya traditions; and (ii) secularism and national integration. One part refers to historical evidences and suggests to refer to those

cases where the people of Orissa have tried to achieve national integration through secularism.

The job involved in the other part is rather conceptual in the sense that to what extent can 'secularism' be admitted as a means for national integration? As is obvious, it is taken for granted that national integration is the goal of a nation as also a problem of a nation. It is suggested that the goal can be achieved and the problem solved through secularism. With this presupposition during the last three decades in independent India, maximum attempts have been taken in the political level to popularise the two concepts. In the process, the concepts have gradually become opaque, provocative, confusing and controversial. Hence, there is the necessity of simplifying these two concepts, namely, secularism and national integration.

NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Should national integration be understood as unity among diversity or harmony out of disharmony or to unite the people of nation for peaceful coexistence, transcending caste, creed, religious, regional differences? In a multi-lingual, multi-religious, democracy like India, which has witnessed the bifurcation of Bombay to Gujarat and Maharashtra (1960), the new creation of Nagaland from Assam (1962), Haryana from Punjab (1960), again the creation of Meghalaya, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh (1971), further Chattisgarh, Uttaranchal and Jharkhand being carved out from Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, integration is found to be a bare necessity but proved to be a pseudo-slogan althroughout. History reveals that there can hardly be a principle to unite millions of minds under any kind of ideology. An ideology like communism came up as a panacea to unite the communist states and countries, but it failed utterly in its endeavour. (A burning example is the case of the USSR). Even if the language was the same, integration could not be possible for east Bengal and west Bengal. Religion being the same, Bangladesh (former east Pakistan) could not remain with Pakistan (west), leading to failure

in the efforts towards integration. However, theoretically one reaches at a point that there might be differences, but when the “citizens of a nation stand united for the prosperity of the nation, integration is not considered to be far off.

SECULARISM

Acceptance of a clear cut definition of secularism in the context of Indian politics is never an easy task for the obvious reason that the term has western origin, whereas it is being widely talked about in the modern India. Hence, one has to check whether India has fertilised the egg of western secularism or British secularism in its soil or there is the variation of meanings as the context differs. Secondly, in order to define secularism, the definition of religion would be of prime necessity as both of them are conceptually near to each other.

To start, it is important to note that the word secularism has Latin origin from *Saecularis* or *Saeculum* to mean ‘an age’ or ‘a generation’ or ‘a century’, etc. With this meaning, the term does not appear to have any connection with religions or religious activities. In mid nineteenth century, in England, there was a movement to keep away the socio-political issue from religious influence and the term secularism came to use, specially by George Jacob Holyoake in 1851.

The sense in which Holyoake used this term was somewhat liberal in that it was used to mean the indifferent attitude towards religious faiths like ‘life after death’, ‘existence of supernatural deity’, etc. Some religious heads were trying to take advantage of diverting the innocent minds through their mystical and obscure ideas. Holyoake did not use the term against theism or religion directly. He tried to maintain that theism and atheism both suffer from the common problem of the attitude of ‘over-belief’. Secularism stands for a balanced attitude to promote human welfare. Thus, for him, a religion can be theistic or atheistic and an extreme form of either one is harmful for human welfare. There is necessity of a balanced one, which is the secular one.

But the secular one which was found out as a golden mean between the extreme attitudes of ‘theism and atheism’ – avoiding their extreme forms – was dragged to its extreme form, i.e., the anti-religion form. In this form there is a total denial of supernatural deity and the religious values with the supposition that religions are only based on superstitions.

Some thinkers like Charles Brad Laugh related this extreme form of secularism with the nation in the following manner.

Religions are based on superstitions.

National progress is not possible with superstitions.

So, secularism is to be followed.

Hackman arrived at a definition in the following words, ‘secularism signifies the kind of life that lived in complete indifference to God and to religious values’.

ES Waterhous’s view, ‘A secularism which does not include a definitely anti-religious theory is bound to fail’, occupied a place in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*.

Further on, secularism came up as ‘an atheistic and materialistic movement’ and as an attitude it emphasised for deliberate dissociation from religion.

Taking this historical background into consideration, secularism can neither be accepted as *Dharma nirapekṣa* nor as *Sarva dharmasama bhāvā*.

While thinking about the place of religion in politics, it is believed that religion, when based on subjective faith, cannot be socialised.

Hence, it is important to examine how meaningfully we can think of secularism as a means for the end – national integration. The proposal certainly is not meaningless or hopeless. One possible way of finding the linkage between the two may be of this type.

A nation is concerned with the material prosperity and the moral progress of its citizens. In order to achieve such an objective – if the citizens will be free from the influence of religious faith and will use their conscience or rationality – then non-religious

(secular) attitude will help in achieving such objectives of the nation. In respect of the nation and the nation-building affairs, there is no place for any kind of subjective idiosyncrasy. Such a proposal will appear absurd for religious fundamentalists that an ideal-nation is also possible in isolating religions from nation-building affairs. They think in this manner because, for them, the nation is essentially connected with its territory; there is harmony among the people using different languages, people adopting varieties of culture, people belonging to different religions, etc. Hence, the problem is with the essentialistic attitude. With this attitude, it can be thought that if giving up is not possible in respect of religious thoughts, then they need to be rationalised. It only hints at the transformation of 'religious I' to 'social I' through 'moral I' or 'rational I'. At this stage, it is possible to develop respect for another being, as a man. The concept of secularism is to be socialised, i.e., it is to be thought within the man-based framework. It cannot be said that there is no such attempt in history of our Indian cultural traditions. In a similar vein, the contribution of Oriya cultural tradition is equally significant and noteworthy.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF ORIYA TRADITION

So far as the contributions of Oriya tradition is concerned, in respect of national integration through secular dharmas, one can very well see that Orissa's cultural and dharmic tradition cannot be thought of without taking the *Sanātana* dharma of *Jagannātha tattva*. The history unfolds that the soil of Orissa was very congenial for all kinds of dharmic stalwarts to spread their dharma. Prints of Buddhists, Jaina, Sikh, and many other monks are found in Oriya soil here and there, but the essence of their teachings are found to be ultimately merged in the *Puruṣottama tattva* in some form or other. For this reason, scholars have taken the liberty to interpret *ŚrīJagannātha tattva* in various ways. Some have considered it as something related Jīna (trying to find a linkage with Jainism). The purpose of stating such facts about *Jagannātha tattva* is that it can be taken as the most secular form

of dharma that has taken its full growth in the cultural tradition of Orissa. This *Jagannātha dharma* propagates the essence of the dharma that is stated in the *Bhagavad Gītā* also. This dharma has been considered as *Mānava dharma*, A dharma which is meant for man is bound to be humanistic and secular. Such a dharma is the essence of the *Puruṣottama tattva* or *Gītā tattva* which has been very effectively established by one of the most significant statesmen and philosophers of Orissa: Pandit Nilakantha Das. Here I would like to present his thoughts, which can be considered as truly secular.

If we talk of any dharma that has developed in ancient India, then it would be *Ātma dharma* or *Ātmika dharma* only. *Ātmika dharma* stands for *Mānava dharma*. One who has a soul belongs to this dharma. Hence, *Ātmika dharma* cannot either reject or appreciate Christianity or Islamism within its fold, because in *Mānava dharma* there cannot be any difference between man and man. The culture of Jagannātha truly represents the *Mānava dharma*.

The scripture which has got maximum uncontroversial acceptance in Indian soil is the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The 15th chapter of this scripture clearly establishes this above truth. It is quite important to note that there is hardly any difference between *Gītā tattva* and *Śrī Jagannātha tattva* or *Śrī Puruṣottama tattva*. Both stand for *Mānava dharma*, the former in theory and the latter in practice. Man can dispense with any dharma but not *Mānava dharma* or *Ātma dharma*. And the essence of *Mānava dharma* is the oneness of the *Ātman*. If the *Gītā* has touched the hearts of millions of people, then it is because of its *Mānava dharma*. If the Jagannātha culture has attracted millions of people, then it is because of putting *Mānava dharma* into practice within its fold.

The *functional* division of classes is accepted within its fold. But it does not believe in superiority or inferiority in classes. For example, a sub-caste called *Apata* supplies water to temples. But the way water will be utilised inside the temple will not be done by him. This does not mean that *Apata* is inferior. Rather, his works are limited. People very often use the term *Vaḍapaṇḍā* (the higher category of people to serve the Lord) but, surprisingly,

there is no sub class representing *Vaḍapaṇḍā* within this fold. There is strictness, in the observation of the division of labour. There is no compromise to trespass in others' territory. For example, the *pūjāpaṇḍā* (who offers the *pūjā mantra* to Lord and converts the ordinary rice to *Mahāprasāda* is not allowed to touch the offering before *pūjā*. If he does so, then the offering becomes unfit to be offered. There is only another sub-class *Mahaśwara* who is allowed to cook and touch but not anything else. Truly considering, if our society is facing a lot of crisis in political and social front, it is due to our weakness towards compromises. It is only dharma that teaches that compromises cannot be accommodated here, because compromise has no place in moral discourse. The individual is identified with the *Ātmā*. This is how he is considered as *puruṣa*. *Puruṣa* does not stand for individuality but for the identity essence.

It can be seen that in the Indian tradition, the *Ātmā* has been viewed in two ways: it is as *pūrṇa* and as *śūnya*. The *pūrṇa* consideration leads to *puruṣa* that stands for the pervasiveness and the *śūnya* consideration leads to inexpressiveness of the ultimate one. It is not complete negation but stands for what cannot be specified. Both *puruṣa* or *śūnya* are taintless, eternal and they stand for *Ātmā*, but viewed differently. The concept *Puruṣottama* has come from the *pūrṇa* aspect and the concept Jagannātha has come from the *śūnya* aspect.

Pandit Das, while discussing about the notion of *svadharma*, very aptly suggests that just like nature does not deviate from its dharma, man should not deviate from his dharma. Man has to learn this from the manifestation of the universe itself. Man can look to the sun. He can see, the sunrise which shines brightly. Germs die, lotus blossoms, the clothes become dry, etc. Sun has nothing to do with these consequences. As a result of sunshine, it shines as per its dharma. Good effects follow automatically from its *svadharma*. It is equally applicable for man. Man should try to practice and protect the *Mdnava dharma*, which is his *svadharma*.

As the essence of this dharma is to dispel the differences among man and man (the essence of *ātmika* dharma), this secular attitude will certainly promote the national integration which is one of its

obvious consequences like 'shine' as the obvious consequences of the Sun. Hence, one should be optimistic in achieving such a goal of achieving national integration, instead of emphasising or highlighting those factors' which are harmful for such a goal. The contribution of our tradition in this regard is quite remarkable and we should not lag behind.

TRIBAL IDENTITY IN INDIAN NATIONAL SECULAR PERSPECTIVE: CONTRIBUTIONS FROM ORISSA'S INDIGENOUS TRADITIONS

Rabindra K Mohanty

Secularism and national integration in the context of Indian Society are ancient issues but a new challenge. The secular character of the Indian society has gone far beyond what is enshrined in the Constitution of India or what is practised under Indian State-led-secularism. India's diversities have contributed in diverse ways towards the spread of secularism in creating a wider pan-Indian worldview, a cross-sharing of beliefs and practices, spontaneous religious harmony and inter-religious coexistence in the greater national interest.

Secularism is not an a priori denigration of religion but an ethos of pluralism (Giri, 2005: 71), an ideal of unity in diversity. While the growth of separatist fundamental tendencies is fact on record, ethnicities and communities have contributed in their own ways towards growth of secularism and its national character. Tribal contributions to Indian culture, language, customs and civilisations have often gone unrecognised by historians and

social scientists. Tribal customs and traditions have pervaded all aspects of Indian culture and civilisation. The secularism in Oriya tribes is evidenced in the form of tolerance and acceptance of beliefs and practices of other religions and sharing of their own with them.

This essay talks about the tribal identity in Indian national secular contexts by drawing examples from Orissa's indigenous traditions. The database of the work has been gathered through an extensive survey of secondary literature and primary data collected and crossed-checked through personal interview of tribals during the Tribal *Melā* (State-level tribal fair held in Bhubaneswar from January 30 to February 5, 2006). This essay divides itself into four heads. The first section deals with contribution of Oriya tribes to national culture and civilisation. The second section deals with their share in the freedom struggle and national unity and the third section is about secularisation of Oriya tribes. The last section is the concluding part.

CONTRIBUTION OF ORISSAN TRIBES TOWARDS INDIAN CULTURE AND CIVILISATION

Orissa ranks second in the series of 62 tribal groups residing in the state as against Arunachal Pradesh, having 98 tribal groups. As per the 2001 Census, their total number nears one crore, comprising 22.21% of the state population. The names of tribal groups found in Orissa are: (1) Dongria Kond (2) Gond, (3) Santali, (4) Kolh, (5) Sora / Savara, (6) Munda / Lohra, (7) Paraja, (8) Bhatoda, (9) Kisan, (10) Oran (11) Bhuyan, (12) Bhumija, (13) Bathudi, (14) Khaira, (15) Koya, (16) Bimjhal, (17) Bhumiya, (18) Sauti, (19) Gadaba, (20) Ho, (21) Juang, (22) Mundari, (23) Mirdha, (24) Kutia Kond, (25) Amantya, (26) Dal, (27) Konda (Gauda), (28) Kond (Dhora), (29) Holabha, (30) Mahali, (31) Matia, (32) Banjara, (33) Kolha / Lohra, (34) Dharu, (35) Penthia, (36) Bhunjia, (37) Kora, (38) Kawar, (39) Jatapu, (40) Bijia, (41) Lodha, (42) Bond Paraj, (43) Kulis, (44) Parenga, (45) Kol, (46) Didayi, (47) Koli / Malhar, (48) Bagata, (49) Gondia, (50) Kharwar, (51) Rajur, (52) Korua, (53) Desua Bhumaj,

(54) Tharua, (55) Baiga, (56) Ghara, (57) Mankidia, (58) Madia, (59) Mankidi, (60) Birhor, (61) Chenchu, (62) Unspecified. (Source: *The Samaja*, October 31, 2004).

The tribes of Orissa are the indigenous autoethnonymous people of the land. The term Oriya is an anglicised version of Oddia which itself is a modern name for the Odra or Udra tribes that inhabited the central belt of modern Orissa. Ancient and medieval Orissa included parts of Jharkhand, southern Bengal, Chhatisgarh and northern Andhra which were, at various times, integrated into the different kingdoms of Orissa. Orissa has also been the home of the *Kalinga* and *Utkal* tribes that played a particularly prominent role in the region's history, and one of the earliest references to the ancient *Kalingas* appears in the writings of Vedic chroniclers. In the sixth century BC, *Vedic Sūtrakāra* Baudhāyana mentions *Kalinga* as being beyond the *Vedic* fold, indicating that Brahminical influences had not yet touched the land. Unlike some other parts of India, tribal customs and traditions played a significant role in shaping political structures and cultural practices right up to the fifteenth centuries.

There are good grounds to believe that Oriya civilisation has developed in a broader Indian framework and has assimilated folk and tribal cultural elements all along its very long history. India's regional languages such as Oriya, Marathi and Bengali are believed to have been developed as a result of the fusion of tribal languages with Sanskrit or Pali and virtually all the Indian languages have incorporated words from the vocabulary of tribal languages. There were inter-tribal language assimilations and borrowing to and from the language of the mainstream, i.e., Oriya, Telugu, Hindi and Bengali, depending upon the area in which it was spoken. For example, Desia, Bhuyan, Bhatra, Jharia, Matia were influenced by southern Oriya dialects. Kondhan, Laria, Bhulia, Aghria were influenced by western Oriya dialect. Kurmi, Santali, Bathudi were influenced by northern Oriya and south western Bengali dialect. Sadri was influenced by Hindi and Oriya, Binjhia was influenced by Chattisgarhi and Hindi dialects. Tribes in western Orissa prefer Hindi to Oriya or tribal or Sambalpur

language. In India's national context, the tribal languages of Orissa belong to the Indo Aryan, Dravidian and Austric family.

Indo-Aryan family: Among the Indo-Aryan family, languages such as Desia, Bhuyan, Batri, Jharia, Matia, Kondhan, Laria, Bhulia, Aghria, Kurmi, Sounti, Bathudi, Sadri, Binjhia, Banjara, Baiga, Bhunjia, Haibi are found.

Dravidian family: Tribal languages such as Parji (Dharua) Koya, Kui (Kond Kutia / Dongria) Konda, (Kubi), Konda (Dora), Ollari (Gadaba), Kurukh / Oraon, Gondi (Gond), Madia, Kuvi (Kond, Jatapu), Pengu (Pengo, Kond) Kisan form the Dravidian group.

Austric family: Tribal languages such as Gata (Didayi), Gutob (Gdaba), Juang, Koda, Birhor (Mankidia), Mundairi (Mundari / Munda), Santali, Sora (Sora, Lanjia, Juray, Arsi), Gorum (Parenga), Remo (Bonda), Kharia (Kharia/ Mirdha), Korwa, Bhumija, Ho (Ho / Kolha), Mahili (Mahali) form the Munda group.

Most Buddhist and Jain texts were written in Pāli-Prākṛit and the *Prākṛita Sarvasva*, a celebrated Prākṛit grammar text, was authored by Mārkaṇḍeya Das, an Oriya. Kharavela's Hātigumṃhā inscription is in Pāli, leading to the speculation that Pāli may have been the original language of the Oriya people. But even as the Bhauma kings of the sixth-eighth centuries issued edicts in Sanskrit, they patronised numerous Buddhist institutions and the art, architecture and poetry of the period reflected the popularity of Buddhism in the region.

It is to India's ancient tribal society that Gautam Buddha looked for a kind of society he wished to advocate. According to *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (p.484), Orams of southern Orissa were the followers of Dharmesh, along with other members of the tribal community like the Mundas, Bhuyans or Hos. Dharmesh is Lord Dharma or Buddha who revolted against Brahminism and established his own path, known to the world as Buddhism. It was the simplicity, the love of nature, the absence of coveting the goods and wealth of others, and the social harmony of tribal society that attracted Gautam Buddha, and had a profound

impact on the ethical core of his teachings. At the same time, the Buddhist ethos had created an environment where compromise was preferred to confrontation. Such a value-system was sustainable as long as the tribal community was non-acquisitive and all the products of society were shared. Although division of labour did take place, the work of society was performed on a cooperative and co-equal basis - without prejudice or disrespect for any form of work. The extension of commerce, military incursions on tribal land, and the resettling of Brāhmins amidst tribal populations had an impact – as did ideological coercion or persuasion – to attract key members of the tribe into ‘mainstream’ Hindu society. This led to many tribal communities becoming integrated into Hindu society *as jātis* (or castes), while others who resisted were pushed into the hilly or forested areas, or remote tracks that had not yet been settled. In the worst case, defeated Tribal tribes were pushed to the margins of settled society and became discriminated as outcastes and “untouchables”.

Later, Orissa’s Buddhism came to be modulated by strong Tāntric influences, while a more traditional Vedic and Brāhminical version of Hinduism was brought to Orissa by Brahmins from Kannauj. *Śaivism* from the south was institutionalized in Puri. In addition, the majority of Orissa’s tribals continued to practice some form of animism and totem-worship. Unifying all these different traditions was the *Śiva-Śakti* cult which evolved from an amalgamation of *Śaivism* (worship of Śiva), *Śāktism* (worship of the Mother Goddess) and the *Vajrayāna*, or *Tāntric* form of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

What made possible this fusion was that apart from the formal distinctions that separated these different religious and philosophical trends, in practical matters, there was a growing similarity between them. Whereas early Buddhism and the Nyāya school within Hinduism had laid considerable stress on rationalism and scientific investigation of nature, later Buddhism and the Śaivite schools both emphasized philosophical variants of concepts first developed in the Upaniṣads, along with mysticism and devotion. Tāntrism had also developed along a dual track - on the one hand it had laid emphasis on gaining practical knowledge

and a clear understanding of nature - on the other, it too came steeped in mysticism and magic. Subsequently over a period of time tribal Orissa experienced a parallel trend. Tribal secularism has not been anti-Brāhminic rather has been a greater merger or assimilation with the caste society.

Tribals who developed an intimate knowledge of various plants and their medicinal uses played an invaluable role in the development of Ayurvedic medicines. In a recent study, the All India Coordinated Research Project credits Tribal communities with the knowledge of 9000 plant species - 7500 used for human healing and veterinary health care. Dental care products like *datun*, roots and condiments like *turmeric* used in cooking and ointments are also tribal discoveries, as are many fruit trees and vines. Ayurvedic cures for arthritis and night blindness owe their origin to tribal knowledge. Tribals also played an important role in the development of agricultural practices – such as rotational cropping, fertility maintenance through alternating the cultivation of grains with leaving land fallow or using it for pasture. The tribals of Orissa were instrumental in developing a variety of strains of rice. The Central Rice Research Institute located at Cuttack, the old capital city of Orissa, testifies to this fact. Tribes in Orissa, nay, in India perform pertaining to good agricultural yield. Their common cyclic rites revolve around the pragmatic problems of ensuring a stable economic condition, recuperation of the declining fertility of soil, protection of crops from damage, human and livestock welfare, safety against predatory animals and venomous reptiles and to insure a good yield of annual and perennial crops.

The contributions of Oriya tribals toward the spread of national pan Indian secular culture have been immense indeed. Throughout India, tribal deities and customs, creation myths and a variety of religious rites and ceremonies came to have been absorbed into the broad stream of 'Hindu' society. In the Tribal traditions, ancestor worship, worship of fertility gods and goddesses (as well as male and female fertility symbols), totemic worship – all played then individual roles. And they all found their way into the practice of what is now considered Hinduism. The widespread

Indian practice of keeping *vratas* i.e., fasting for wish fulfillment or moral cleansing also has tribal origins.

The totemic cults of tribals and spirit worship are in practice by India's major religions. Some of the commonly worshiped totems are like tree (*Baṭa Brkṣya*), Snakes (*Nāga*) and tortoise (*Kachhapa*). Tribes worship their ancestors; so also is the practice of *piṇḍadāna*. Religious beliefs and practices aim at ensuring personal security and happiness as well as community well-being and group solidarity. Their religious performances include life-crisis rites cyclic community rites, ancestor and totemic rites and observance of taboos. Apart from the tribals also resort to various types of occult practices. In order to tide over either a personal or a group crisis, the tribals begin with occult practices, and if it does not yield any result, the next recourse is supplication of the supernatural force.

Tribal musical instruments such as the *bansuri* (flute) and *dhol* (drum), folktales, dances and seasonal celebrations also found their way into Indian traditions. The nationally and internationally famous Chhau dance of Orissa is of tribal origin, which, unmistakably originated from martial practice. The actual performance takes place on the occasion of *Chaiti Parva* (spring festival). All these rituals have a deep symbolic meaning, according to the Hindu philosophy. From the various rituals interlaced together, it is apparent that Chhau as an institution was meant to achieve religious, social, and cultural integration. Śaivites, persons adhering to Śakti-cult, Sun worshippers, Vaiṣṇavites, all are integrated together admirably in a new festive atmosphere.

The Chhau dance – heroic and histrionic in character – is a way of life with the people living in the princely states of Mayurbhanja and Sareikala. The kings of these states, with their artistic learnings, had participated in dance performance. Chhau in general even today serves a three-fold purpose: (1) It perpetuates an art; (2) maintains the age-old martial customs; and (3) provides an opportunity for the integration of tribal culture with the culture of the sophisticated society. In the process of its evolution and growth, it has also freely imbibed from the prevalent folk and

tribal dances and makes a harmonious blending of classical, traditional, folk and tribal traditions.

TRIBAL MOVEMENT FOR FREEDOM AND NATIONAL UNITY

Oriya tribes revolted and challenged against the alien rule soon after British took over eastern India. In the early years of colonisation, no other community in India offered such heroic resistance to British rule or faced such tragic consequences as did the numerous tribal communities of now Jharkhand, Chhatisgarh, Orissa and Bengal. In 1772, the Paharia revolt broke out, which was followed by a five-year-long uprising led by Tilka Manjhi who was hanged in Bhagalpur in 1785. The Tamar and Munda revolts followed. In the following two decades, revolts took place in Singhbhum, Gumla, Birbhum, Bankura, Manbhum and Palamau, followed by the great Kol risings of 1832 and the Khewar and Bhumij revolts (1832-34). In 1855, the Santhals waged war against the permanent settlement of Lord Cornwalli and, year later, numerous tribal leaders played key roles in the 1857 war of independence.

During British rule, several revolts took place in Orissa which naturally drew participation from the tribals. The significant ones included the Paika rebellion of 1817, the Ghumsar uprisings of 1836-1856, and the Sambalpur revolt of 1857-1864. In the hill tribal tracts of Andhra Pradesh, a revolt broke out in August 1922. Led by Alluri Ramachandra Raju (better known as Sitarama Raju), the tribals of the Andhra hills succeeded in drawing the British into a full-scale guerrilla war. Unable to cope, the British brought in the Malabar Special Force to crush it and were able to prevail only when Alluri Raju passed away.

Other pre-independence reactionary and revisionist movements included the Rampa Future Movement of 1879 and Sardari Movement of 1887. The Rampa Future Movement occurred among the Koyas of Malkangiri against the operation by administration and police. In 1879, there was discontentment in the Taluk which was due to the scandalous conduct of the local police who harassed and insulted the people of the region by violence, extortion and

dissolute behaviour. The Sardari Movement started among the Mundas in the year 1887 against oppressions like compulsory labour, periodical contributions and illegal enhancement of rent by the landlords. The Lieutenant Governor, Sir Stuart Beally held a conference at Ranchi and took measures to stop the people's discontent.

As has been mentioned numerous tribal leaders played key roles in the 1857 war of Independence. But the defeat of 1858 made the British Government impose a series of restrictions and intensify the exploitation of India's natural wealth and resources. A forest regulation passed in 1865 empowered the British government to declare any land covered with trees or brushwood as government forest and to create rules to manage it under terms of its own choosing. The act made no provision regarding the rights of the Adivasi users. A more comprehensive Indian Forest Act was passed in 1878, which imposed severe restrictions upon Adivasi rights over forest land and produce in the protected and reserved forests. The act radically changed the nature of the traditional common property of the Adivasi communities and rendered it state property.

As punishment for Adivasi resistance to British rule, The Criminal Tribes Act was passed by the British Government in 1871, arbitrarily stigmatising groups such as the Adivasis (who were perceived as most hostile to British interests) as congenital criminals.

Adivasi uprisings in the Jharkhand belt were quelled by the British through massive deployment of troops across the region. The Kherwar uprising and the Birsa Munda movement were the most important of the late-eighteenth century struggles against British rule and their local agents. The long struggle led by Birsa Munda was directed at British policies that allowed the *zamindars* (landowners), moneylenders and Christian missionaries to harshly exploit the Adivasis. Under Birsa Munda's influence, the Mundas and Oraons accepted his new religion which was an amalgation of Hinduism and Christianity.

In 1914, Jatra Oraon started what is called the Tana Movement (which drew the participation of over 25,500 Adivasis). The Tana

movement joined the nationwide Satyagrah Movement in 1920 and stopped the payment of land taxes to the colonial government. This movement was both reactionary and reformative. The leaders of the new movement began suspecting the old spirits and witchcraft to whom they had asked for help. This led his tribesmen to give up the traditional beliefs in *bhutas* or spirits, to stop all animal sacrifice, animal food and liquor, etc.

Two of the post-independence emulation are worth mentioning on record here, namely the Kharia movement of 1947 and Saoras movement of 1953. The Kharia social movement was in the nature of a norm-oriented movement to rectify the wrongs of the local landlords and others as to secure the elimination of the stigma as a criminal tribe. In order to boost the social status and economic opportunities of the Kharia as a Hindu Sabara Khariyas, this movement – with the help of Hindu missionaries – led many Kharias ritually initiated as Khatriyas.

The Saoras movement is based on a local cosmogenic myth. In the year 1953, Mongaya Saora of Marichiguda village of Gunupur subdivision saw Lord Jaggannātha in his dream and was gifted with 25 letters for their cultural development with the condition that the Saoras gave up the practice of killing animals and using intoxicants. Since then, he started interpreting those letters into words and published various Saora texts on religion and language. This led the people of some inaccessible villages of the Sabara areas to follow the cult worship of Trinātha. Mongaya Saora composed religious lyrics, set them to tunes and started singing songs in Saora languages. He adopted the Hindu way of worship and used flowers, mango leaves and *tulsi* leaves alongwith paddy, sandal paste, vermilion and other such *pūjā* accessories. Under his patronage, various recreational clubs and institutions started emerging in many of the villages. Thus, Mongaya was able to bring a reformative movement in the Saora area, which put a stop to the traditional religious organisations of the Saora society.

Thus, the analysis of the said movements depicts the contribution of Oriya tribes towards freedom struggle and building a united Indian plural society beyond primitive/ parochial interest.

SECULARISATION OF ORIYA TRIBES

Secularisation among Oriya tribes, nay, in all of India has not been a smooth process. Secularisation of the Oriya tribes has been facilitated through a process of higher order integration where influence has flown in both the ways. Several concepts have been used to designate the process, such as Sanskritisation (Srinibas, 1966), Hinduisation and Aryanisation. Sanskritisation for the purpose of the present work refers to a process of group mobility by which the tribals changed their customs, rituals, ideology, practices and way of life in the direction of high and frequently twice born castes. This process involves the imitations of the customs, rituals and style of the life of upper caste people along with abandoning tribal's own beliefs which are considered to be degrading and defiling. The secular element of such a process is evident in the fact that it involved tradition as an instrument to promote advancement.

Tribals have experienced such processes through several trials and errors. Neither the British policy of isolation nor subsequent efforts towards assimilation has helped the tribals to experience upward mobility in the desired efficient manner. Isolation is related to the British policy of keeping the tribals in isolation in excluded areas so that they could be protected from all sorts of exploitation and thus, live a healthy and happy life. But essentially, it was intended to be the age old policy of divide and rule so that militant tribals were kept away from joining the armory of the Hindu nationalists. So, isolation did not lead to either development or Sanskritisation.

The drawback of isolating the tribals brought in the process of assimilation. The social workers and reformers and the religious machinery largely subscribed to this process. The very idea was to merge the tribals with the mainstream, which could help the former to grow socially and economically, which was otherwise not possible under the condition of the isolation. Although assimilation had a Sanskritising effect, it was found to be harmful in the larger interest of the tribals. Exploitation continued as the assimilated tribals were considered to be a second-rate copy of upper born

Hindus. They became poor converts from poor tribals and had to face more problems than getting relief. Their own valued cultural identity was subsumed. The process of integration subsequently became the right solution and, hence, was adopted as a suitable strategy. The tribals became integrated into the mainstream, especially Hindu tradition, without uprooting them from the best qualities of their life and culture. Any trend which would hurt, their value system and sentiment were avoided. Integration facilitated greater Sanskritisation which was, in fact, no imposition (Desai, 1977: 18-19). The adoption of Hindu culture and practices was the byproduct of tribal's own realisation, will and experience that such a process could be to their advantage.

There have been numerous ways through which the tribals adopted several aspects of Hindu culture like adopting caste names, imitating ritual practices, pursuing caste occupation and merging with caste associations. By adopting Hindu names and establishing linkages with Hindus, the tribals acquired Hindu status. The so-called Chandals and untouchable were India's erstwhile tribes. The Rajgands of Bolangir, Kalahandi and Koraput claimed the status of Rajput as against their other Gond counterparts like Dhuli Gond. The once homogenous social organisation of tribes has experienced stratification and a number of segments have emerged from them. Some of the Saoras or Sabaras claimed Khatriya status. Further interesting is the case that the Sebāyatas of Puri, from the erstwhile Sabara tribes, who claimed the status of Brāhmins.

The Kandhas, Gonds and Mundas have all become oriented to local Hinduism. Pictures of Hindu gods and goddesses are found hanging in the walls of their households which; according to their own belief has minimised the differences between pastoral tribes and Hindus. They worship mainly the Hindu god Mahādeva and goddess Kālī. LK Mohapatra (1993) argues that Paraja, Pauri Bhuyan and Kolha communities worshipped Śiva and Tulsi and fasted on Mondays in the month of *Kārtika*. The Santhals are seen celebrating *Makara Saṅkrānti* and *Dushehrrā*. Fasting as a religious practice is common across all religious boundaries, as the same is observed by tribals, Hindus and Muslims (*Rojā*).

Bhuyan, Munda, Santhals and Kolahs observed the prescribed days of prayers and rituals and visited Hindu pilgrimages. Endogamous marriages have started being practiced in the house of the bride rather than in the house of the groom. Tribal and non-tribal interaction is best seen in the *Karma* festival in western Orissa (Passayat, 1994). It is a tribal ritual festival of tree worship which has entered the local Hindu faith.

By pursuing caste-based occupation, the tribals of Orissa have elevated their status. Having been educated in Oriya, Hindi and English, these tribes have taken up secular occupations unheard of by their ancestors. Agriculture as a means of livelihood has been secular indeed to cut across the caste and religious boundaries. The tribes in Orissa have shifted from shifting cultivation to settled agriculture. Some of the affluent Gonds, Kandhas, Mundas and Santhals are even maintaining creditor and debtor relationship with other tribes and non-tribals. Pauri Bhuyans borrow seeds, cattle, grain and money from Gours, Gonds and Chasas. There is a *Jajmāni* system of fixed patronage for watermen, cowherds, barbers, Brahmins and blacksmith among the Pauri Bhuyans in northern Orissa (Mohapatra, 1993:9).

Some of the tribals, by identifying themselves as Hindus, have entered into the membership of the caste associations. The Gours of Koraput not only considered themselves as milkmen but have also merged with the milkmen federations in the state and *Jadāv Mahāsabhā* at the all India level.

The tribals have abandoned certain practices of their own which are considered impure, defiling and degrading. Juaangas have abandoned the practice of marriage by capture and are going in for arranged marriages. Bride price has been replaced by dowry. Some of the tribals have abandoned wearing beads, necklaces and homespun clothes and have started using jewelry and branded clothes. Mundas, Saoras and Orams have abandoned animal sacrifice in the manner befitting under *Śaraṇa Dharam* (Mohanty and Mohanty, 1996).

The analysis above suggests that the cross-cultural influence has brought a definite secularising effect on the tribals. It is a

matter of empirical curiosity to study such an effect in the context of totality of the Oriya tribes.

AN OVERVIEW

Tribal people have been generally found in a relative isolation in Orissa and elsewhere in India, but they have not been completely shut off from the contact with the larger society or wider culture community like Hindu as also other religious groups. The contribution of tribals in Orissa towards Indian culture and civilisation has been immense indeed. Thus influence has flown in both ways. The tribal religion appears to have gone beyond their local territorial and ethnic boundaries. The religion of tribes like Santhals, Mundas, Oraons, Saoras and Ho have become a judicious intermixture of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and numerous other endogenous and exogenous movements such as Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism, Sheoli Dharma, Brisa, Tana and Alekha Dharma, Kabir Panthī and Satnāmī. Limitations apart, the secularisation of Oriya tribes has been manifest through a higher order integration. Secularism in the context of tribes in Orissa is not an ideology to be preached but an agenda to be implemented. As the study is in progress and most of the aspects covered are in various phases of growth, the present work is in the nature of formulation of the problem to be investigated further rather than a definite statement on the result of the study.

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