

**DEMYSTIFYING SECULARISM IN INDIA: A STUDY OF
SECULARISM IN MIZORAM**

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IN MIZORAM**

BY

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Submitted

**in partial fulfillment of the requirement of Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**DEMYSTIFYING SECULARISM IN INDIA: A STUDY OF SECULARISM IN MIZORAM,**” submitted by **ROBERT SANGLORA KHAWBUNG** for the award of the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY, is a research work, done under my supervision and guidance. The thesis, submitted by him has not formed the basis for the award to the scholar for any degree or any other similar title and it has not yet been submitted as a dissertation or thesis in any university. I also certify that the thesis represents objective study and independent work of the scholar.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AIMPLB	: All India Muslim Personal Law Board
BCM	: Baptist Church of Mizoram
BJP	: Bharatya Janata Party
BMS	: Baptist Mission Society
CA	: Constituent Assembly
CAD	: Constituent Assembly Debate
CAB	: Citizen Amendment Bill
CAA	: Citizen Amendment Act
HIV	: Human Immune Virus
ILP	: Inner Line Permti
MHIP	: Mizo Hmeichhia Insuikhawm Pawl
MHTP	: Mizo Hmeichche Tangrual pawl
MKHC	: Mizoram Kohran Hruaitute Committee.
MLPC	: Mizoram Liquor Prohibition and Control
MNF	: Mizo National Front
MPC	: Mizo Peoples Conference

MPF	: Mizoram People Forum
MU	: Mizo Union
MZP	: Mizo Zirlai Pawl
MSU	: Mizo Students' Union
NCERT	: National Council for Educational Research and Training
NEDA	: North East Democratic Alliance
PCI	: Presbyterian Church of India
PGC	: Public Grievance Cell
PRC	: Public Relief Committee
USCIRF	: US Commission for International Religious Freedom
YMA	: Young Mizo Association
ZDF	: Zoram Democratic Front,
ZEM	: Zoram Exodus Movement
ZNP	: Zoram Nationalist Party
ZPM	: Zoram People's Movement

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CHAPTER - 1
INTRODUCTION

This chapter broadly explores the concepts, practices and implications of secularism in a contemporary multi-cultural society. It attempts at critically understanding a complex relationship between religion and politics, its undercurrent debates, problems and challenges confronted by the normative theory and practice of secularism in general and particularly in a pervasive multi-religious Indian society. It also briefly analyses the nature of secularisation process and secularism in the Christian majority state of Mizoram¹. Further, the study offers a contextual analysis of the secular-religious relationship in contemporary Mizo society² and attempts at conceptualizing secularism from a wider dimension and indigenous socio-cultural context.

Concepts such as secularisation and secularism are products of Western civilization that was developed as a result of religious wars, Enlightenment and Reformation movements during the medieval period. It emerged as a modern path to simplify freedom from religious persecution, conflicts and wars. Gradually, within social sciences, a general theory of secularisation was developed and associated with modernization. Eventually, it implied a tendency to build a wall of separation between the sacred and the temporal realms, wherein objectivity dominated and became the dominant factor in analyzing and elaborating every aspect of society and politics.

Since the early history of Western society, eminent social and political thinkers, such as Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud,

¹ According to Census of India, (2011) Christianity constitutes 87.16 percent of total population, whereas other religious groups such as, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, others and non-stated constitutes respectively, 2.27, 1.35, 0.03, 8.51, 0.03, 0.07 and 0.09 percent of the total population in Mizoram.

² The term Mizo society denotes a tribe of various clans inhabited in the state of Mizoram

amongst others believed that religion would gradually lost its importance and cease to be significant with the advent of modern society.³ This led to the development of universal narrative distinctive of the sacred-secular aspects that became to constitute the dominant structure of modern society and politics. The sacred refers to a realm of subjective and transcendental; the realm of God and religion. The secular or profane, on the other hand, refers to a realm of worldly activity and objectivity without any reference transcendent attitude and experience. Secularisation is identified as the process attached to scientific temper, professionalization, rationalization, urbanization, functional differentiation, bureaucratization and so on,⁴ as the key principles of modernity. Gradually it became a normative pattern that structured and differentiated the secular and religious spheres in modern society.

In the Western society secular and its related terms, such as secularisation and secularism broadly refers to the separation of religion from politics, the separation of public and private realms, the privatization of religion and finally the exclusion of religion from the public realm. One way of understanding normative secularism is that it emerged as a normative principle aimed at establishing a common ground of existence within diverse religious groups based on the principle of rational ethics rather than on transcendental or religious values. In other words, secularism seeks rationality and objectivity as the principal norms for common social and political existence.

³ Cliteur, Paul. (2010). *The Secular Outlook, In Defence of Moral and Political Secularism*, John Wiley & Sons Ltd, United Kingdom. P. 2.

⁴ McClay, Wilfred M. (2000). "Two Concepts of Secularism." *The Wilson Quarterly*, 1976, Vol. 24. No. 3, Summer. P. 54

Contemporary understanding of secularism claims that the state should be secular or religiously neutral. The state policies and legal system cannot be based on any religious doctrine. Generally, religious authorities should stay away from political authority and vice versa. Under this model, the state is restricted from endorsing the doctrine of any religion and from using its powers to enforce adherence to some religion. On the other hand, the liberal model insists that the right to religious freedom should be granted to all citizens. Each citizen ought to be free to believe and worship as he or she pleases and all should respect this freedom and tolerate each other's forms of religious belief or unbelief. In this way, the model divides plural societies into two-sphere; a political or public sphere, where citizenships are subjected to the laws and coercive power of the secular state and another sphere, where it ought to be free to live according to their religious values or conception of the good life.⁵ However, all these secular principles are an ideal concept that hardly can be realized and actualized in society and politics.

Secularism is a multifaceted contested concepts,⁶ various secular credentials such as freedom of religion, equality, tolerance, state neutrality and the bifurcation of public and private realms have been interpreted and understood within different cultural contexts. The existence of a varied relationship between state and religion around different cultural settings indicated that there were varieties of secularism ranging from strict to moderate secularism.

⁵ Roover, Jakob De. (2015). *Europe, India and the Limit of Secularism*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi. P. 2.

⁶ Multiple concept of secularisms refer to the different versions of secularism with its varying degrees of separation between state and religion.

The American version of secularism advocates freedom of religion in the form of non-establishment and protection of the free exercise of religion. The French version of secularism accentuated on the strict separation between religion and state, while at the same time allowing the state to retain its power to determine what constitutes a secular or religious realm. European model advocates moderate secularism where cooperation and accommodation of religion is prevalent. In the Indian context, secularism is a complex issue and defined in a multiple perspective. It does not refer to anti-religion or irreligious, but equal respect to every religion. Indian secularism does imply a relative separation of religion and politics, where the State maintains principle distance depending on the socio-political context.⁷

Furthermore, in context of Mizo social and political contexts, secularism hardly reflects a bifurcation of secular and religion but rather the interface or interlink of both religion and politics. Therefore, secularism can hardly be imagined as the uniform structured way of life. Various secular credentials are interpreted under different contexts and values within one society to another, thereby making the concept of secularisation and secularism more or less cultural oriented, rather than a normative practice.

The concept and practice of secularism have been polarized to such an extent that it became difficult to understand as to what constitutes a secular or religious realm. In a contemporary diverse religious society, secularism had been an ambiguous and blurred concept, particularly in the midst of changing demographic profile and increasing diversity within society. Secularism therefore, as understood within its limited notion of separation of religion from politics, equal freedom of

⁷ Bhargava, Rajeev. (2013). "Reimagine Secularism, Respect, Domination and Principled Distance," *Economic and Political Weekly*, December 14, Vol XIVIII, No. 50. Pp. 82-85.

religion and the bifurcation between public (secular) and private (religious) realms has remained a practical problem and limited notion to address the growing diversity of society. Idealized Western secular states are not exempted from dilemmas, to some extent, they have failed to accommodate religious aspiration and violated the freedom of religion by banning religious practices. In other words, the intervention of modern state within the religious spheres of some community has violated the principle of neutrality of the state. The separation of public and private spheres is a problematic issue in a plural religious society.

Several social theorists both in the non-Western and Western have emerged and debated the concepts and practices of secularism and secularisation. Mainstream secularists continued to defend secularism especially in the face of threats posed by the ever-increasing intensity of religious tension and strife. On the other hand, some scholars have rethought about the dichotomy between religion and politics and argued that religious values, norms, sentiment and articulation still play a salient role.⁸ Therefore, to separate religious from non-religious realm in a contemporary society and politics is an issue of practical problem.

Contemporary secularism cannot be understood within its limited notion of state-church separation, secularism is a multivalued concept that deal with various aspect of society and politics. Furthermore, the resurgence of religious-based movements and increasing intensity role of religion in the society and politics around the globe clearly indicated that religion by no means was going to wither away and become irrelevant in the modern society. This posed a challenge to normative concept and practice of secularism, assumed as a common ground of existence and

⁸ Sharma, Chetna. (2015-2016). "Understanding Indian Secularism Debates," *Akadosmos, An Annual Peer-Reviewed Research Journal*, Kamala Nehru College, New Delhi, P.143

independent ethic. Therefore, rather than understanding secularism within its restricted concept of separation of religion and politics, exclusion of religion and the privatization of religion, the inclusion of positive aspect religion within a public realm could provide a new dimension for inclusive and comprehensive platform for public debate and justification of contemporary controversial issues revolving around society and politics. In brief, secularism cannot be understood as a straight forward notion of separation of religion and politics in a contemporary multicultural society but can be better understood within its wider meaning and commitment it made towards promoting democratic values, norms, harmony and social justice. Thus, there is a need for re-evaluation of the normative concept and implications of secularism from wider epistemological and empirical perspective so as to address the crisis and flaws within the contemporary theory and practice of secularism.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It is essential to understand the existing and the limited data available on the subject so that critical evaluation of such literature could provide an insight on the subject and enhance one's understanding of the under-current issues, problems and challenges. In other words, a comprehensive review of literature provides an impetus, insights and helps the acquisition of relevant knowledge on the subject, as to draw valid, supportable and concrete research-based conclusion. A brief review of existing literature on theory and practice of secularism and secularisation is presented here to explore the current issues, problems and challenges confronted by contemporary society.

Graeme Smith's book, 'A Short History of Secularism,' (2008),⁹ briefly traces the history of secularism in the West. The book provides a glimpse of how various factors, such as Enlightenment, Reformation, intellectual and science and technology development, were accountable for the development of secular outlook in Western society. The author argued that secularism was not an end to Christianity, nor an absence of godless nature of Western society. He also discussed the secularisation process assumed as a decline of religious activities that cannot be generalized around the globe.

However, the book is limited to the notion and practice of secularism in Western society and failed to produce the implication of secularism of contemporary western society and politics.

George Jacob Holyoake's 'Principles of Secularism Illustrated,' (1871),¹⁰ dealt with the early period of the secular movement in Europe and how the word secularism came into existence and implied in the European context. The book provides a philosophical and political backdrop for the development of secularism in mid 19th century Europe. The author illustrated that secularism was designed to express the general agreements of free thought party, an alternative to atheism. He further argued that secularism was not an anti-religion ideology but rather a philosophy that promoted good faith and good temper, the immediate and material welfare of humanity, as per the law of nature. According to Holyoake, this

⁹ Smith, Graeme. (2008). *A Short History of Secularism*, Published by I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, New York.

¹⁰ Holyoake, George Jacob. (1871). *Principles of Secularism Illustrated*, (3rd Edition, Revised) Austin & Co, London.

constitutes the unity of principles which prevails amid whatever diversity of opinion that might subsist in a secular society.

The book is significant as it shows the genealogy of modern secularism that emerged on account of a self-conscious movement rather than the separation of religion from politics. The author considered that concepts such as secularism and positivism were inextricably linked to each other.

Talal Asad's book's 'The Formation of Secular; Christianity, Islam and Modernity,' (2003),¹¹ critically traced the historical evolution of secularism in Western society and how the secular dominated upon religion. The book provides critical insights into the theory and nature of secularism from a wide range of perspectives such as history, literature, moral philosophy, politics, psychology, religious studies and sociology.

A major section of the book argued that concepts of the religious and secular are constructed and reconstructed within different histories and junctures. The book attempts at understanding secularism as a political doctrine from various socio-cultural, human rights and in conceptions of the modern nation-state. Asad argued that secularism was an issue of problem particularly in a non-Western society and should not be considered as in a modern realm. Religious deprivation should not be seen as a realm of empowerment and a threat to modernity, rather it depends on how religion becomes public. He argued that the distinctiveness about secularism was that it reproduced a new concept of religion from a secular perspective.

¹¹ Asad, Talal. (2003). *Formation of Secular; Christianity, Islam and Modernity*, Stanford University Press, Stanford.

Craig Calhoun, et. al., 'Rethinking Secularism,' (2011),¹² is an interdisciplinary approach and collective of essays that offer a comprehensive concept and practice of a variety of secularisms around the globe. In this book, contemporary philosopher, Charles Taylor locates and describes Western secularism from its historical perspective. Sociologist Casanova distinguished the concept of secularisation and secularism and shows how this package had a deep implication on social processes. Calhoun critically elaborated on the relations between secularism and political citizenship and thereby argues that the exclusion of religion from public was the misguided secularism. He proposed an interface of religion and secular in the context of multiple social solidarities.

Moreover, the book also provides how secularism is viewed from Asian perspectives. Peter van der Veer similarly contrasts Chinese with Indian secularism, showing how both the religious heritage and imperialism shaped the political secularism that each regime embraced. Other scholars such as Rajeev Bhargava argued that in contrast to normative Western secularism, secularism in the Indian politics and society implies relative secularism, Bhargava argument is that secularism is not anti-religious traits, but rather an intervention within the religious realm which is justified based on eradicating the social evils sanctioned by religion to modernize religion. In brief, the book adds a new dimension to understand secularism from different dimensions and perspectives.

¹² Calhoun, Craig. Juergensmeyer, Mark and VanAntwerpen. Jonathan. Eds, (2011). *Rethinking Secularism*, Oxford University Press, New York.

Charles Taylor's book 'A Secular Age' (2007),¹³ mostly deals with the historical development of secularism and highlighted the distinctive path that conditioned the contemporary Western secularism. He acknowledged that the term secular was both complex and ambiguous and subject to alterations and distortions as it travels from one context to another, that is one culture to another. Taylor nonetheless argued that Western secularity should be understood as a result of fundamental change in human reason that marked towards disenchantment or the systematic repression of the magical elements of religion, as well as by associated historical movement toward personal commitment with true religion.

The broader historical context for these shifts was a great dis-embedding social and collective life and a movement toward reform within Christianity, which, along with other historical developments, led not only to the rise of modern individualism but also to the possibility of conceiving of the world in purely immanent term, distanced from all reference to the transcendent. Separation of the immanent from the transcendent, traced from the latin Christendom itself, thus laid the groundwork for an assertion of a self-sufficient secular order. In Taylor's account, it was the development of this immanent frame that led to the condition he closely associates with modern secularity, namely the contemporary reality that belief in God or any transcendent reality, is considered just one option among many and therefore represents a fragile-and in some cases even difficult and embattled form of commitment. Taylor argues that the shared condition of belief and commitment defined in the term of an immanent frame that made the current age a secular one. Taylor provides a long historical development of secular, secularity and secularism.

¹³ Taylor, Charles. (2007). *A Secular Age*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England.

His view is confined with the notion and practice of secularism in a Western context alone.

Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, Eds. 'Sacred and Secular, Religion and Politics Worldwide,' (2004),¹⁴ critically analyses the secularisation processes around the globe. The book highlighted the crisis within the traditional secularisation perspective and provides an alternative way to view secularisation processes. Various contemporary scholars argued that the concept of secularisation had to be reformulated, as it has failed to explain the thesis of withering away of religion in contemporary society. Further, the book provides an important alternative view on secularisation and argued that religiosity persisted mainly due to socio-economic conditions. By examining the prevailing religiosity across the globe, the book argued that religiosity prevailed more strongly among vulnerable or unsecured society rather than in advanced society.

Paul Cliteur's book, 'The Secular Outlook, In Defence of Moral and Political Secularism,' (2010),¹⁵ discusses some secular related topics such as atheism, religious criticism, freedom of speech, ethical and political secularism. The book argued how people with different religious beliefs could constitute a secular platform and live together, to overcome the challenge of religious sectarianism by adopting a secular outlook in society and politics. The book also attempts at providing a solution for the contemporary problems of religious-based terrorism and discusses a perspective on how religious minorities could be integrated into liberal democracies.

¹⁴ Norris, Pippa and Inglehart, Ronald. Eds. (2004). *Sacred and Secular, Religion and Politics Worldwide*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK.

¹⁵ Cliteur, Paul. (2010). *The Secular Outlook, In Defence of Moral and Political Secularism*, Wiley-Blackwell, UK.

The primary objective of the book is an attempt at providing a solution for how religious believers and unbelievers can live together peacefully and by what principles the state should try to stimulate its citizens to achieve social harmony and social cohesion. However, despite its richness, in theory, the persistence, revival and emergence of religious-based movements and conflict have exhausted the practical implication of this book, particularly in a pervasive and multi-religious society and politics.

Eduardo Mendieta & Jonathan Vanantwerpen. Edited volume. 'The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere,' Judith Butler, Jurgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, Cornel West, (2011),¹⁶ is a collection of essays that deals with contemporary debates on secularism and secularisation process around the world. The book provides valuable insight on how secularisation has failed as was projected by secularisation theories. The book argues that people were living in a post-secular world, where religion and secular could interact, dialogue and learn from each other. Recognizing that religion had not withered away under the pressures of modernization, the book is useful for studying contemporary socio-political theorists.

Judith Butler, Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor and Cornel West begin the debates on what constitutes a religious and public reason. Acknowledging the failure of secularisation in explaining contemporary relevance of religion in society, Habermas proposed to develop the post-secular realm, in which concepts such as private/religion or public/secular could interlace and develop into a new perspective of understanding the public realm.

¹⁶ Mendieta, Eduardo & Vanantwerpen, Jonathan. Eds. (2011). *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, Judith Butler, Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, Cornel West, Columbia University Press, New York.

While underscoring the crucial difference between faith and knowledge, he further argued that the post-secular focus on the religious sources of meaning and motivation, which would be helpful and even indispensable in the reconceptualization of the normative concept and practice of secularism. Contrary to Habermas understanding of secularism, Charles Taylor argued that secularism was not just a mere separation of religion from state, but must be seen to respond to the diversity of not just religious positions but non-religious positions as well. Taylor offers an alternative conception understood in terms of the balancing or coordinating of the claims of different goods that democratic societies took to be fundamental.

In brief, the book provides some valuable insights on what could constitute a public sphere in a contemporary multicultural society and further explores the alternative conception of secularism where both secular and religion can interface.

The Hedgehog Review, “A Critical Reflections on Contemporary Culture, After Secularisation,” (2006),¹⁷ is a collective of essays, that provided a comparative study of the secularisation process around the globe. The book also elaborated on the crisis and flaws within normative secularisation theory in explaining the resurgence of religion. Moreover, it highlighted some alternative theories, insights and factors for the sustenance of religion in contemporary society. Religious market theory, which claims to be a universal generalization, applicable to all faith provides an alternative concept to understand the undercurrent failure of secularisation theory in explaining the increasing intensity of religious movements and issues in various parts of the world.

¹⁷ The Hedgehog Review. (2006). Critical Reflection on Contemporary Culture, Institute for Advanced Study in Culture, University of Virginia, Charlottesville. Spring & Summer, Vol. 8 No. 1 & 2.

In brief, the book argued that rather than secularisation theory, various factors such as economic, religious regulation and market provide an alternative insight to understand the dimensions of religiosity around the globe.

The Holy Bible (2007)¹⁸ provide the historical account of genesis and history of Christianity. The book consists various chapters and is divided into two section that deals with old testament and new testament. It is the most important book for Christian. The book also provides chronological development of ancient world, social, religious and ethical norms and values. The book also teaches to face human life and overcome evil and troubles by leading us to discover the real meaning about life and death and the eternal life. The book is also important as it provide a significant insight on the relationship of religion and politics from Christian perspective.

David Scott and Charles Hirsckind. Eds, ‘Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and His Interlocutors,’ (2006),¹⁹ provides a critical perspective of understanding contemporary Western concept and practice of secularism. In the book, various secular credentials were debated from various socio-cultural and political dimensions. Talal Asad questioned the governing assumptions of western “knowledge” of secularism and secularisation process and challenged it from a non-western context. The book emphasizes on how religion could be consistent in modern society.

Donald E Smith’s book ‘India a Secular State.’ (1963),²⁰ gave a brief

¹⁸ The Holy Bible. (2007). Bible Society of India, Bangalore.

¹⁹ Scott, David & Hirsckind, Charles. Eds. (2006). *Powers of the Secular Modern; Talal Asad and his Interlocutors*, Stanford University Press, Stanford.

²⁰ Smith, Donald E. (1963). *India as a Secular State*, Princeton University Press, USA.

theoretical outline of secularism from three secular principles and analyzes a secular state. In his book, Smith described the nature and structure of secularism and argued that secularism was based on three interrelated sets of the relationship between individual, religion and state. First, a relationship between individual and religion from which the state is excluded. Second, a relationship between state and individual from which the religion is excluded. According to Smith, a secular state must view the individual as a citizen independent of membership of any particular religious group. However, he also emphasized that a mere separation did not guarantee any religious liberty. Therefore, the church-state separation for Smith implies an institutional embodiment of the principle of religious liberty and the neutrality of the state in religious issues.

In the context of Indian secularism, Smith argues that an extensive interference of the State in religious issues, in the form of socio-religious reforms and for the protection of religious minorities under the framework of equal citizenship could undermine secularism in India. However, Smith's analysis of the Indian secularism is based on the idealized American model that failed to understand the nature of the Indian socio-religious perspective.

Rajeev Bhargava's book 'The Theme in Politics Series: Secularism and its Critics,' (2004),²¹ put together scholarly debates on secularism. It addresses the most urgent questions, including the relevance of secularism to non-Western societies, particularly in the dynamic context of a multi-religious and minority rights in South Asia.

²¹ Bhargava, Rajeev. Ed. (2004). *Secularism and its Critics*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

The book brings together significant articles and debates on important secular concepts, its crisis and flaws within the normative concept and practice of secularism. The collection of essays deals with the concept of secularism and attempts at providing answers to the challenges posed to it by the recent resurgence in the organized religion and religious faiths. The book dwells on the need for a separation between religion and politics and examines the question of whether modern secularism has any culture and philosophical resources to enable people with different faiths to live together. Bhargava's book also discussed an Indian version of contextual secularism within a Western normative oriented concept of secularism.

The book provides an epistemology of secularism from normative to contextual secularism. It also provides a new course in understanding and critically evaluates the contemporary issues and challenges confronted by secularism.

Ahmed T Kuru's book, 'Secularism and State Policies toward Religion: The United State, France and Turkey,' (2009),²² portrays an overview insights of various models of secularism practices in the United States, France and Turkey. The book traced the genealogy of ideological dominance of secularism through historical variation of regimes and a comparative review of secularism based on current ideological conflicts. Moreover, the comparative study of secularism in these states provides immense insights into problems and challenges confronted by secularism. Furthermore, the book examines various policies pursued by the States about religious issues and its influences in public policymaking.

By comparing the various models of secularism, he argued that passive and

²² Kuru, Ahmed T. (2009). *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion: The United State, France and Turkey*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

assertive secularisms are two dominant ideologies pursued by states towards religion. For instance, the US policy was largely based on religious tolerance, whereas, France and Turkey generally prohibit public visibility of religion. In other words, the author made an inference, that the dominant ideology of passive secularism required the state to play a passive role by allowing the public visibility of religion. Whereas in contrast, assertive secularism in France and Turkey demands that the state would play an assertive role in excluding religion from the public sphere.

Rajeev Bhargava's work, "What is Political Theory and Why do we need it? (2010),²³ enquires the conceptual structure of various ideologies ranging from traditional to modernity, both from the perspective of Western and non-western philosophy. Bhargava argues that politico-moral reasoning emerged from the practices that had paramount potential as well as relevance in addressing the problems faced by contemporary society, to stabilize, endorse or challenge them.

Further, Bhargava explores the conceptual structure of contemporary ideologies such as secularism, multiculturalism and socialism, which forms of each of these are worth defending and why. He shows how politico-moral reasoning can shape the appropriate responses to the grave injustice of state and communities-colonialism. He opposed naïve articulation of modernity and tradition and claims that some types of deeply religious and secular persons could come together against dangerously simple-minded believers and unbelievers. He also explores the deeper issues of the philosophy of social science, individualism, ethnocentrism, teleology, social ontology and the object-like presence of social meaning.

²³ Bhargava, Rajeev. (2010). *What is Political Theory and Why do we need Political Theory?*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

C S Adcock's book 'The Limit of Tolerance, Indian Secularism and the Politics of Religious Freedom,' (2014),²⁴ explores the political functioning of the secularist ideal of tolerance in India through historical study. It aims to explore religious freedom in context proselytizing and non-proselytizing that formed a critique of secularism. Proponents of the Freedom of Religious acts argue that proselytizing disrupted social harmony and they argue that as a tolerant, "non-proselytizing" religion. Further, the book provides a critical perspective on how tolerance was related to the Indian practice of secularism. In brief, the main objective of the book is to enquiring the controversial concept of tolerance and religious rights. The author argued that several lessons could be drawn from proselytizing religiosity; religious freedom in India feeds interreligious rivalry at the expense of cultural diversity, exacerbating rather than resolving the problem of interreligious violence

Jakob De Roover's book, 'Europe, India and the limit of secularism' (2015),²⁵ describes the crisis and limit of secularism in addressing the contemporary relationship between politics and religion. The book described the crisis within liberal secularism, not only in the context of non-Western society but also in the European society as a result of changing religious demographics. It also analyzes conceptual flaws within liberal secularism in determining what constitutes a religious realm and offers a critical perspective on various liberal principles of secularism, such as freedom of religion, equality, state neutrality, the separation of private and public realms.

²⁴ Adcock, C S. (2014). *The Limit of Tolerance, Indian Secularism and the Politics of Religious Freedom*, Oxford University Press, Newyork.

²⁵ Roover, Jakob De. (2015). *Europe, India and the Limit of Secularism*. Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

Ashok Acharya and Rajeev Bhargava, book 'Political Theory; An Introduction,' (2010),²⁶ is a collection of essays contributed by eminent scholars and authors, dealing with contemporary issues and debates in political theory. The book offers a rare combination of conceptual analysis and a real familiarity with the problems on the ground that political theory was supposed to illuminate. The book brings together the most significant debate of important issues in political theory such as secularism, minority right, social justice, multiculturalism.

The book provides a comprehensive basic theory to understand contemporary issues, problems and challenges of society and politics. It deals with various controversial issues of society and politics and responses them in a simple language. Thereby, the book contributed an important philosophical background to understand the theoretical debates and further explored a social theory to address the contemporary issues, problems and challenges of the society and politics.

Niraja Gopal Jayal and Pratap Bhanu Mehta, Eds, book 'The Oxford Companion to Politics in India,' (2013),²⁷ provides one of the most comprehensive contemporary insights and overview of Indian politics till the early 21st century. Incorporating an indepth social science knowledge available on the developments in Indian politics, the volume has been divided into seven parts.

It begins by examining, the basic institutional framework of politics like the Indian Constitution, Parliament, federalism, local governance and the Indian party system from 1952 to 2009. The essays also examine how non-political institutions

²⁶ Acharya, Ashok and Bhargava, Rajeev. (2011). *Political Theory, An Introduction*, Published by Dorling Kindersley, Pearson Education, New Delhi.

²⁷ Jayal, Niraja Gopal & Mehta, Pratap Bhanu. Eds. (2013). *The Oxford Companion to Politics in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

like the Supreme Court of India and Election Commission have shaped the Indian politics. The book discusses various social cleavages like class, caste and gender as well as regional and religious diversities that created identities and transforms politics in various ways. The book further examines the political processes through the political parties and their performance in the 2009 Lok Sabha elections, political mobilization, alliances and political leadership. Ideological contestations like nationalism, secularism, political representation and social justice have also been explored in detail. Moreover, highlighting the linkages between secularism, liberty and equality, Neera Chandhoke's essay on Secularism looks into issues related to critical evaluation of unique Indian secularism and suggest that secularism could not be understood in isolation from its basic attendants such as liberty, equality and minority rights. Despite its comprehensive coverage of major general issues in politics, the book fails to address the issues and challenges at the micro-level and concludes with a general discussion on various ways of looking at Indian politics.

Bidyut Chakrabarty, Ed, 'Secularism and Indian Politics,' (1990),²⁸ briefly outlined the concept of secularism and secularisation. It also critically analyzed the implication of the normative concept of secularism in the Indian context. Moreover, the book traces how religion was articulated in contemporary society and also further discussed a wide range of contemporary issues, problems and challenges of secularism in the Indian multi-religious society. The book also dealt with some case studies which were significant in understanding the theory and practice of secularism in contemporary society and politics.

²⁸ Chakrabarty, Bidyut. Ed. (1990). *Secularism and Indian Politics*, Segment Book Distributors, New Delhi.

Gary Jeffrey Jacobsohn's book, 'The Wheel of Law, India's Secularism in Comparative Constitutional Context,' (2005),²⁹ described the development and nature of India's secularism from Indian Constitutional and legal perspectives. The author argued that a secular constitution signified stress on the commitment to religious freedom, which manifested in the legal and political safeguards put in place to reinforce that commitment. Jacobsohn made an in-depth analysis of Indian secularism and compared it with the secularism of the USA and Israel. The author argued that Indian secularism followed an ameliorative version that seeks to advance social reform in the context of the nation's deeply rooted religious diversity and stratification.

Jacobsohn's comparative study provides a wide variety of valuable information on the nature and practice of secularism in different states and its implications on their politics and society. He argued that albeit the state of India is secular, the majority of society possesses an unsecular outlook and this had led to tension in a pervasive religious society. India's religions can never be truly separated from politics. Rather, the state is charged with the project of guaranteeing freedom of religions, while reforming and weaning the Indian citizenry from religion-based practices that offend liberal sensibilities.

He also highlighted that the tensions inherent in trying to accommodate competing interests have resulted in what he described as an incrementalist approach to ameliorative secularism. The author argued that various issues, like the Uniform Civil Code, Special rights to religious minorities, caste-based discrimination, the

²⁹ Jacobsohn, Gary Jeffrey. (2005). *The Wheel of Law, India's Secularism in Comparative Constitutional Context*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford.

politicization of religion, remain an issue of debate and tension within Indian Secular Constitutional practice.

S K Chaube's book, 'Hills Politics in Northeast India, (1973),³⁰ focus on the socio-political development in the Northeastern states of India. His works broadly discussed the dissolution of the traditional political system amid the emergence of educated tribal elites as a result of the spread of Christian education. The book also provides a political philosophy for the reorganization of states in the post-independence period and its implications among various ethnic groups.

Moreover, the book discussed the emergence of ethnic-based mobilization and political movements as a result of the problem of socio-economic development in Northeast India. Thus, the book apart from providing valuable insight and information about political developments further provides epistemology to understand the perspective of tribal politics in the new socio-political milieu.

A G McCall's book, 'Lushai Chrysalis,' (1977),³¹ primarily provides an anthological account of Northeast India and in particular of Mizo socio-culture. The author as Administrator in Lushai Hills provides a piece of significant information about the Lushais traditional customs, institutions, beliefs and practices.

Apart from this, the book also provides the socio-political change and development brought about by colonialism and Christianity in Lushai Hills. However, the book needs to be critically re-evaluated from indigenous perspectives.

³⁰ Chaube, S.K. (1973). *Hills Politics in North-East India*, Orient Longman, New Delhi.

³¹ McCall, A. G. (1977). *Lushai Chrysalis*, (London: Luzac & Co., 1949; Reprint), Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl.

Frederick S Dawns's book, 'Essay of Christianity in Northeast India,' (1994),³² traced the historical development of Christianity in general and particular among the tribes of Northeast India. The book mainly described the major activities of missionaries and later churches in the transformation of the socio-political system of the tribes. Moreover, the book discussed the implications of these changes within the society and politics of Northeast India.

J Marion Lloyd's book, 'History of the Church in Mizoram; Harvest in the Hills,' (1991),³³ generally explores the historical development of Christianity in Mizoram. The author also presented a view of early Christian missionaries on certain traditional Mizo socio-cultural norms and practices. The author is a Christian missionary, provides valuable insights and events of encounters between the Christian missionaries and Mizos, which could be an important tool in understanding the genealogy of Christianity in Mizo society. Despite, the author provides valuable first-hand information of the Christian missionaries and early churches in Mizoram, the book is limited to the Christian view of the analysis of Mizo socio-culture.

Lal Dena's, book 'Christian Missions and Colonialism: A Study of Christian Missionaries Movement in Northeast India: With Particular Reference to Manipur and Lushai Hills (1894-1947),' (1998),³⁴ describes in detail the historical development of Christian missionaries and its relationship with Colonialism, with particular emphasis on Lushai Hills and Manipur. The book mainly discussed the

³² Dawns, Frederick S. (1994). *Essay on Christianity in North-East India*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi.

³³ Llyod, J Marion. (1991). *History of the Church in Mizoram; Harvest in the Hills*, Synod Publication Board, printed at Swapna Printing work private limited, Calcutta.

³⁴ Dena, Lal (1988). *Christian Missions and Colonialism: A Study of Christian Missionaries Movement in Northeast India: With Particular Reference to Manipur and Lushai Hills (1894-1947)*, Vandrame Institute, Shillong.

contribution of both British colonial and missionaries in the consolidation of their position. In his book, the author observed that "in the nineteenth century Christian missions and colonialism seemed to follow each other in Africa and Asia. It is for that reason in the eyes of many African and Asian peoples, colonialism was assumed to have both the role of a politician and a priest. Thus, Christian missions appeared to be a part and expression of western colonial expression. Some of them even go to the extent of characterizing missions as merely the hunting dog of western imperialism.

Lal Dena, also observed that the relationship between the Cross and the Flag was not as smooth as is usually assumed and cannot be generalized. However, the book is limited to the historical approach and context of the relationship between colonialism and Christian missions. The absence of literature and empirical study on the role of religion in structuring the social-cultural context has been a major research gap in understanding the contemporary notion of the secularisation process and secularism in Mizo society and politics.

Mangkhosat Kipgen's book 'Christianity and Mizo Culture, The Encounter between Christianity and Zo Culture in Mizoram', (1996),³⁵ provides not only the historical insights of the development of Christianity and churches among the Zo people but also made a comparative study of the development of Christianity among various Hills tribes. The author argues that the contact between Zo Culture and new religion in the Northeast regions has brought not only a rapid change in the traditional socio-cultural but also has erased significant traditional values of the Zos.

³⁵ Kipgen, Mankhosat. (1996). *Christianity and Mizo Culture, The Encounter between Christianity and Zo Culture in Mizoram*, Published by Mizo Theological Conference, Mizoram, at Assam Printing Work (P), LTD, Assam.

The book argues that in contrast to other parts of Northeast, a unique interface between Zo Culture and Christianity had played a significant role in the development of indigenous Zo Christianity and this has been the major factor for rapid development and growth of Christianity among the Zos. In brief, the book provides critical insight into the interlace between Christianity and the Zo socio-culture.

Malsawmdawngliana and Rohmingmawii's, edited book 'Mizo Narratives; Account from Mizoram,' (2005),³⁶ is a collection of articles written by Mizo scholars, the first section deals with the myths of Mizo origin and the historical development of Mizos during the pre-colonial period. This section briefly discusses the traditional political, social, cultural and economic systems of the Mizos. It also deals with the traditional institutional arrangement and describes how the traditional Mizo socio-political system revolved around the institution of Chieftainship and *Zawlbuk*.

The second section of the book deals with the historical encounter between the British colonialists and Mizos. This section also briefly explores the Colonialist expedition in Lushai Hills and its policy towards the Mizos.

The third section deals with the annexation and various measures undertaken by the British Colonialist to consolidate their rule in Lushai Hills. The fourth section discusses the impact and changes brought about by Christian missionaries in the acculturation of Mizo society.

The last section discussed the political developments during the post-colonial periods, such as the developments of political consciousness and mobilization of

³⁶ Malsawmdawngliana and Rohminmawii. Eds. (2015). *Mizo Narratives; Account from Mizoram*, (Revised and Enlarged Edition), 2nd Edition, Scientific Book Centre, Guwahati.

ethnic identity during the MNF movement, development of political parties and autonomous district councils in Mizoram.

J V, Hluna, Ed, book, *History and Ethnic Identity Formation in North-East India*, (2013),³⁷ discussed the traditional pre-Christian Mizo belief system and practices. It also discusses in detail the traditional Mizo values, beliefs and its encounter with the new religion that is, Christianity and its implications upon traditional beliefs and values of the Mizo society. The book also focused on the changes brought about by Christianity in various fields such as social, political, cultural, economic life and nation-state formation. Apart from tracing the emergence of Judaism in Manipur and Mizoram, the book also discusses the emergence of ethnic identity and political development among the Mizos.

C. Nunthara's book. 'Mizoram Society and polity,' (1996),³⁸ discusses the socio-political history of Mizo society. The book briefly described various factors such as colonial policy and early Christian missionaries' tremendous impact upon traditional Mizo society. In brief, the author argued that the traditional traits of the Mizo social life rapidly came to an end as a result of restrictions on territorial mobility of the chiefs. b) The external relations of the Mizos with the neighboring people became channelized through the British code of peaceful co-existence. c) The appearance of the monetary economy immediately was giving rise to a small group of the privileged class to the hitherto classless close-knit society.

C.L Hminga's work, 'The Life and Witnessed of Church in Mizoram,'

³⁷ Hluna, J V. Ed. (2013). *History and Ethnic Identity Formation in North-East India*, Concept Publishing Company Pvt. LTD, New Delhi.

³⁸ Nunthara, C. (1996). *Mizoram Society and Polity*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi.

(1987),³⁹ provides a theological insight, with the transformation of the Mizo conception of God, faith and the establishment of the churches and the growth of the church over some time. The book also gave an insight into the historical development of Church and Mizo Church-related activities towards, socio-political development and peace in the State. The book also provided various local primary accounts and sources, which is significant to understand the social, political and religious accounts of Mizo society.

H. Lalringthanga's book, *Church and State Relationship in Mizo Socio-Political life, 1952-2006*, (2013)⁴⁰ briefly discusses the development of Mizo socio-political history. It also deals with the connection of Christianity in the socio-political development of Mizoram. The author also studied the transition period (1946-51) on the development of political consciousness and narrates the relationship of the Church and the state during the transition periods from the Mizo District Council to the early period of the twenty-first century (2000). The book further deals with Church and Mizoram Liquor Total Prohibition Act and the role of the Church in the socio-political reforms in Mizoram, such as the formation of the Mizoram People Forum in facilitating good governance, free and fair elections, just and sustainable socio-economic development of the state.

P. Lalnithanga's book, 'Political Developments in Mizoram,' (2005),⁴¹ provides the narrative of political development in Mizoram from traditional to the modern period. The author being an experienced administrator discusses and

³⁹ Hminga, C. L. (1987). *The Life and Witness of Church in Mizoram*, Serkawn Literature Committee, Baptist Church of Mizoram, Aizawl.

⁴⁰ Lalringthanga, H. (2013). *Church and State Relationship in Mizo Socio-Political life, (1952-2006)*, ISPCK, Delhi.

⁴¹ Lalnithanga, P. (2005). *Emergence of Mizoram*, Lengchhawn Press, Aizawl.

analyzes the transition and changes developed from traditional to the present scenario. The author briefly discusses the development of a modern democratic system, party politics and its impact upon the Mizo socio-political system.

Saiaithanga's book 'Mizo Kohran Chanchin' (1969),⁴² discuss the early activities of Christian missionaries. The author an early Mizo Christian missionary who worked closely with the missionaries, provided an account of his deep experience and knowledge about the growth and development of early churches in Mizoram. His work provides a significant insight into the socio-cultural perspective of Mizos towards a new religion. As a representative of the church, he reflected the mission's ecclesiology in their approach to the revival movement in the Mizo church. The author was not inclined with some elements of the revival, he characterized the revival movement as the cause of division, anarchy and the economic impoverishment of the church. Consequently, a clear dichotomy of the revival movement and the church can be identified in his work.

Lalsangkima Pachuau's book, 'Ethnic Identity and Mizo Christianity,' (2002),⁴³ discusses on ethnic identity and Christianity in Northeast India. It deals with the development and implications of Christianity on Mizo society and identity. The author briefly discusses various impacts brought about by Christianity particularly in respect of the formation of Mizo identity. The author argued that various means of Christian organizations, presbyteries and other Church-related

⁴² Saiaithanga. (1993). *Mizo Kohran Chanchin*, (History of Mizo Church), Printed at Synod Press, Aizawl.

⁴³ Pachuau, Lalsangkima. (2002). *Ethnic Identity and Christianity, A Socio-Historical and Missionological Study of Christianity in Northeast India; with Special Reference to Mizoram*, Publication Franfrutam Main.

gatherings and meetings play a significant role in bringing together various Mizo clans within one entity, which resulted in the integration of Mizo society.

Despite various academic works that had been undertaken in respect of secularisation and secularism in Western society, there has been a lack of serious study on the indigenous perspective on secularism and its related concepts. Thus this study provides an empirical narrative of secularism from an indigenous socio-cultural perspective and also fill the epistemology gap between the normative and indigenous notions and practices of secularism in Mizoram context.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Western normative theory of secularism understood as the differentiation of various institutional spheres, in terms of separation of religion from state, exclusion of religion from politics and the privatization of religion has been an issue of undercurrent debate. The assumption of secular as an independent public domain, free from religious influence had not only contained religious ethic but also failed to address the contemporary aspirations of diverse multi-religious groups.

Lack of substantive definition and gap between the theory and practice of secularism within Constitutional provisions, legal interpretations and mass understanding of Indian secularism has been a major source of ambiguity and hindrance for the development of substantive secularism in India. Despite India claims of secular state, the prevalent of religious-based movements, growing intensity of politicization of religion, caste, communal conflicts, religious atrocities and insecurity, implicitly or explicitly implied that there are crises and flaws within the theory and practice of Indian secularism.

In the context of Mizo society, the socialization process based on Christian principles initiated by Christian missionaries and later on by the Church⁴⁴ had a tremendous impact on the development of the secularisation process and secularism in the Mizo society and politics.

The tremendous and active role of contemporary religious institutions in every aspect of Mizo society has been a major factor for the development of a close relationship between religion and politics. In contrast to the normative concept, secularism hardly implies a separation of religion from politics in Mizo society.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In contemporary multi-religious society, there is a considerable confusion attached to the concepts of secular, secularisation and secularism. The concept of secularism is an ambiguous and debated issue in academic, political and legal–constitutional discourses, which required clarification. Therefore, there is a need for an in-depth study of different communities' history and socio-political culture to understand the nature of inter-relationship between religion, society and polity.

1. The primary purpose of the study is to understand and clarify the contemporary contested concepts and practices of secularisation and secularism, from different cultural contexts and further analyze its implications in a multicultural society.
2. The study aims at re-examining the normative theory and practices of secularism and attempts to verify its sub-theses, as whether, (a) the general

⁴⁴ The word Church (with a Capital) refers either to proper name of established ecclesiastical bodies or a Christian community of Mizoram as a whole. Whereas church (with a lower c) is used it to refers to local congregation or building

assumption of secularism, defined as a separation of State-religion realm, is a viable option in India, (b) Secularism has enforced restricted morality in public realm (c) claims of separation of politics from religious remains paradox within Indian society and politics (d) relative interface between religion and politics is more appropriate in the context of pervasive religious society.

3. The study intends to understand the socialization process from the Mizo socio-religious and cultural perspective.
4. The study aims at assessing the role of Mizo Church in contemporary politics and empirically analyze the relationship between secular, religion and society.
5. Lastly, the study aims to explore whether religious ethics, could be considered as rational democratic values and to examine the role of religion, in defining a new space where both secular and religious notions could coexist in the public realm. In other words, it attempts at establishing a new perspective that could expand the notion of secularism and secularisation from wider context.

In brief, the study aims to, (a) analyze the concepts and practice of normative secularism, (b) examine the crises and flaws within the concept and practice of contemporary secularism from various perspective, (c) aims at conceptualize and re-evaluating the concept and practice of secularism from the context of Mizo culture, belief and practices.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what extent has normative secularism defined as a separation of religion from politics provided a platform for the inclusive public realm, neutrality, equal religious liberty, pluralism and social justice in a multicultural society?
2. Has the constitutional secular objective of securing, liberty, equality and fraternity been realized in a multi-religious society of India?
3. In the context of Christian dominated state of Mizoram, does secularism imply the bifurcation of religion and politics?
4. Could the interface of religion and politics promote an alternative comprehensive and inclusive public domain in a multi-religious society?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Firstly, the study of secularism from different historical, philosophical, ethical and political perspectives provides a diverse theoretical and conceptual understanding of the secularisation process and secularism from both Western and Non-western perspectives.

Secondly, the study is significant as it provides a new perception in understanding secularism and its implications in contemporary society and politics.

Thirdly, the study is essential as it provides a comparative study of the secularisation and secularism. The study further provides critical conceptual insights to understand the flaw and crisis within the theory of the secularisation process and secularism for further research.

Fourth, the study is essential as it contributes some important empirical insights on the concept and practice of secularism from indigenous socio-political culture and religious perspectives.

Lastly, the study is also significant, as it explores whether the interface of religion and politics, could provide a space for more comprehensive and inclusive secularism in a multicultural society.

METHODOLOGY

The study attempts at exploring a multiple contested concepts and practice of secularism. It also attempts to understand the contemporary theory and practice of secularism in a religious pervasive society of India and particularly, in the Christian dominated state of Mizoram. As the subject of the thesis is partly an abstract nature and involves complex nature interlinkage of politics, religion and society, the study employed a mixed-method, both quantitative and qualitative methods.

To have a first-hand insight and analyze the relationship of state, religion and society, both primary and secondary data were collected to understand and study the nature and practice of secularism. The universe of study is an individual adult person confined to Mizoram. Various sections were identified and accordingly as to ensure the representative character of the study, a multistage sampling is used to select districts, localities and respondents.

In the context of Mizoram, the historical development of Christianity could be traced back to the work of early missionaries. Later based on negotiation between the Baptist Mission Society (BMS) and Welsh Mission, in 1903 the mission field was

divided into two fields.⁴⁵ The Northern part with its headquarter at Aizawl was under the hand and control of the Welsh mission and the Southern Mizoram with its headquarter at Lunglei was under the hand by the Baptist Mission Society. This development led to the domination tendency of Presbyterian in the Northern area and the Baptist in Southern part of Mizoram.

Based on this rationality, Aizawl and Lunglei districts were selected on the basis of historical development and concentration of two dominant denominations, the Presbyterian and Baptist churches. In the second stage, both the town areas of Aizawl and Lunglei were selected purposively owing to the presence of a variety of denominations. Six denominations⁴⁶ were selected on the basis of their popularity and higher concentration of members in both these areas. Further, snowball sampling was used to identify the respondents adopting proportionate sampling across the six denominations. Only adult members who are members in the *Puitling* Sunday school⁴⁷ formed the respondents. A sample size of 240 respondents (120 each for Aizawl and Lunglei town areas) were identified across six denominations in the two towns. 20 members each from the six denominations were collected. To have a proportionate representation from both the gender, 10 male and female were selected from each denomination.

⁴⁵ Kipgen, Mankhosat. (1996). *Christianity and Mizo Culture, The Encounter between Christianity and Zo Culture in Mizoram*, Published by Mizo Theological Conference, Mizoram, at Assam Printing Work (P), LTD, Assam. P. 201

⁴⁶ Denomination, a recognized autonomous branch of the Christian Church, for instance, Presbyterian, Baptist, United Pentecostal Church, Salvation Army, Roman Catholic and Seventh Day Adventist.

⁴⁷ *Puitling* Sunday school generally refers to a section of adult church members (youth, middle ages and elder).

Apart from the semi-structured interview schedule administered across the respondents. Primary data, government and Church records were collected and analyzed to understand the traits and perceptions of secularism in Mizoram.

For secondary sources, literature reviews, both electronic and print media on the subject matter were analyzed to understand the concept and practice of secularism in Mizo society.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC COMPOSITION OF RESPONDENTS.

Gender	Male	female
Percentage	50	50

Age Groups	20 – 35 years	36 – 45 years	46 & above
Percentage	42.91	30.83	26.26

Educational Qualification	Under Graduate	Graduate	Post Graduate
Percentage	38.33	32.5	29.17

Occupation	Govt. employee	Farmer	Professional/ Private	Students	Others (housewife,
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			employees		pensioners, unemployed
Percentage	32.5	13.34	24.16	18.34	11.66

Denominations	Presbyterian	Baptist	Salvation Army	UPC (NEI)	Catholic	Seven Day Adventist
Percentage	16.66	16.66	16.66	16.66	16.66	16.66

COLLECTION OF DATA

The method of data collection is based on the semi-structured interview schedule, unstructured interviews and collection of published and unpublished materials.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The semi-structured interview schedule was the main source of primary data collection. Semi-structured interviews containing 20 questions were constructed in both English and Mizo language to ease the respondents in the interview process. The semi-structured interview schedule helps to comprehend the nature and practice of secularism in Mizo society. The interview questions were arranged in such a way that, it started with the questions on the perception of religion, socialization process and the structure of the state-religion relationship. 240 semi-structured interview schedule was conducted among different socio-economic backgrounds in terms of

gender, age, occupation and denomination. The respondents were from various denominations residing in Aizawl and Lunglei town areas.

GENDER COMPOSITION OF THE SAMPLE

The composition of gender was stratified proportionate within two localities and was equally stratified among different denominations, that is 50 percent were male and another 50 percent belongs to the female.

AGE GROUP

The age groups of semi-structure interview schedule respondents were categorized into three levels, 20 to 35, 36-50 and 51 & above. 42.91 percent of the respondents belong to the age group of 20 to 35 years, 30.83 percent of the respondents belong to the age group 36-50 and 26.26 percent of the respondents belong to the age group 51 years and above.

EDUCATIONAL PROFILE

The semi-structured interview schedule was primarily directed to get the perception of the research subject from various educational backgrounds. 38.33 percent of the interviewees were undergraduate, 32.5 percent of the interviewees were graduate and 29.17 percent consisted of postgraduate.

OCCUPATION

A semi-structured interview schedule was conducted among persons with a different socio-economic background. 32.5 percent of the interviewees were government servants who work in various government departments. 13.34 percent of the interviewees consisted of farmers, 24.16 percent of the interviewees are

professional/private employees doing a different type of activities. 18.34 percent of interviewees were students, 11.66 percent of the interviewees consisted of housewives, pensioner and unemployed persons.

DENOMINATION

A control balance Semi-structured interview schedule was conducted among major denominations. Where 16.67 percent of each denomination was represented by Presbyterian, Baptist, United Pentecostal Church, Salvation Army, Roman Catholic and Seventh Day Adventist. Apart from the semi-structured interview schedule., unstructured interviews were conducted among various persons.

Secondary sources of data collection include books, journal articles, government documents and both print and electronic sources.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data collected through field survey is processed, analyzed and cross checked with the help Microsoft Excel and SPSS.

SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF STUDY

India is known for its cultural heterogeneity concerning languages, cultures and religions. Secularism in India is a complex issue that reflected the interplay of religion, caste, demography, history and ideology. As such, to evolve a comprehensive standard notion of secularism is a difficult task. Moreover, religion being partly a subjective nature, pose difficulty in presenting it objectively, the attitude and experience of the subjects. Apart from being a subjective matter,

Mizoram being a Christian dominated state, the study mainly explores secularism from Mizo socio-cultural context and political perspective.

CHAPTERIZATION

The study consists of six chapters, with an introduction and conclusion. The first chapter briefly introduced the theme of the study, an outline of the study and the methodology employed in the study. The second chapter deals with the nature and concept of secular related terms, such as secularism and secularisation process. The third chapter assesses the concept, practice and implications of secularism in the Indian pervasive religious society. The fourth chapter examines the socialization process and its implications on the secularisation process of Mizo society. The chapter mainly focuses on the interaction between Mizo culture and the new religion in restructuring the Mizo society. Chapter five examines the nature and implications of secularism in contemporary Mizo society and politics. Chapter six, sum up the study findings of each chapter with a few suggestions for further study.

CHAPTER-I: INTRODUCTION

The introductory chapter broadly explored the contemporary concepts, practices and implications of secularism in a multi-cultural society and politics. It attempts at understanding the contemporary dynamic and complex relationship between religion and politics, its undercurrent debates, problems and challenges confronted by the normative theory and practice of secularism, particularly in a pervasive multi-religious Indian society. Further, the chapter also briefly analyzed and elaborated on the nature of secularisation and secularism from a wider perspective. The chapter also highlighted the methodology, detailed chapterization and outline of the thesis.

CHAPTER-II: UNDERSTANDING SECULARISM: A CONCEPTUAL VIEW

This chapter deals with the historical development of normative conceptual terms of secular, secularisation and secularism and its implications in contemporary society and politics. Moreover, the chapter examined multiple contested concepts of secular related terms and show a critical perspective on the crisis and flaws of normative secularism and secularisation process within the contemporary diverse religious society. The chapter also focuses on the need to rethink secularism and secularisation theory in the midst of resurfaced of religious identity, movements and increasing intensity of religious issues around the globe. Precisely, the chapter also examines secularisation and secularism from various dimensions and put forwards the need to reconceptualise secularism from wider perspective, where the interface of both the religion and secular could promote a democratic deliberative, accommodative and inclusive notion of secularism.

CHAPTER-III: INDIAN CONSTITUTION AND SECULARISM: SOME CONTESTED DEBATES

Chapter three discusses the nature and practice of secularism from the backdrop of Indian national movement to the present context. It also analyses the Indian constitutional version of secularism in the context of dynamic socio-political and cultural context of India. It also explores the complex relationship of religion, society and politics in the diverse pervasive religious society and its undercurrent debates on secularism. The chapter also deals with changing trends of legal-constitutional dimensions of the demarcation of secular-religion realms. Further, the chapter also highlights the crisis and flaws within Indian secularism and discusses the emergence

of various contemporary issues of debates and challenges confronted by Indian secularism.

CHAPTER-IV: SECULARISATION PROCESS IN THE MIZO SOCIETY IN MIZORAM

Chapter four explores the traditional socio-cultural practice of the Mizo society and also examines the impact of Christian missionaries and later the Mizo Church in imparting the Christian pattern of socialization and its impact on the secularisation process in the Mizo society. The chapter also discusses the tremendous role of religious ethics in determining the sacred and secular aspects of society. Moreover, the chapter also discusses the unique nature of the secularisation process and its impact upon the nature and prospect of secularism in Mizo society and politics.

CHAPTER-V: SECULARISM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON MIZORAM

Chapter five deals with the core issues of this thesis and focuses on various issues relating to secular and its related terms like secularism in Mizoram. It attempts to demystify the secular-religious realm in the context of the fluid nature of inter-linkages between religion, social system and political system. The chapter also highlighted in detail the impact of religion in the Mizo socio-political system and how society perceives socio-political issues from religious and secular perspectives. In brief, the chapter discusses the effective role of the Church, in interpretation and also contextualized the social, political and economic issues from a religious perspective and its implications on state politics. Apart from these above stated, amid fast-changing Mizo society, the chapter discusses the contemporary role of church in

politics and attempts at reimagining the interface of religion and politics from indigenous Mizo socio-cultural and political perspectives.

CHAPTER-VI: CONCLUSION.

The last chapter comprises the summary of this study, concerning the general concept and practice of secularism and in particular to a pervasive religious society of India. Further, it ends with a brief evaluation of each chapter, concluding remarks and provide an epistemological perspective for further research.

To sum up, the study attempts to understand the secularisation process and secularism from various dimensions and its undercurrent crisis and debate in contemporary society and politics. It examines the crisis and flaws within the normative theory of secularism and critically analyse its implications on society and politics. In a modern diverse multicultural society, the study accentuates on understanding secularism from wider perspectives, where both the interface of religion and politics could provide a comprehensive and inclusive public realm. The study also attempts at rethink the concept and practice of secularism from indigenous socio-cultural context and provide an empirical and epistemological perspective for further study.

CHAPTER - 2
UNDERSTANDING SECULARISM: A CONCEPTUAL VIEW

This chapter deals with the historical development of normative conceptual terms of secularisation and secularism in contemporary society and politics. Moreover, the chapter attempts at exploring a multiple contested notion of secularism from different socio-cultural contexts and its implications in multicultural society. It also examines the crisis and flaws of secularism in the midst of prevailing increasing intensity of religious consciousness and emerging religious-based identity movements around the globe. The chapter also focuses on the need to rethink secularism from a wider perspective, where both religion and secular could interface and facilitate an inclusive public realm, that accommodates the aspirations of various religious groups.

Normative concepts of secular, secularisation and secularism are products of Western historical and socio-political developments. One way to understand the development of secularism and secularisation is to see within the historical context of Western European Christian civilization. The term secular emerged as a notion that distinguished the two dimensions of existence that was gradually institutionalized into a category that separated the religious and political realms, as an independent entity and confined functional spheres, exclusion of each other. However, since the 1980s, the dynamic nature of religious demographic and increasing intensity of religious politics around the world have posed a challenge to the normative understanding of secularism. Precisely, the understanding of secularism as separation of state from religion, the assumption of secular as public and the confinement of religion as the private realm has been an issue of recurring debate in modern society and politics.

The terms secular, secularism and secularisation are complex concepts that imply different degrees of separation between religion and politics and has different

connotations and implications from one society to the other. The emergence of variation in concepts and practices of secularism, ranging from absolute-relative to post secularism has indicated that it is problematic to standardize the notion of secularism. The existence of various narratives and practice of secularism in both the Western and non-Western societies have polarized the concept to such an extent that it had become more ambiguous to implicate its true meaning in contemporary society and politics.

As a result of colonialization and globalization, most of the South Asian societies began to imitate Western normative secularism as an ideology of statecraft and became an instrument that restructures a new relationship between religion and politics. However, in most South Asian societies and politics, where there was hardly any proper secular consciousness that differentiated the secular and religious realms, secularism became an issue of debate and controversy.

The emergence of religious-based identities movements, religious intolerance and conflicts around the globe, indicates that the core principles of ideal secularism such as neutrality, religious freedom, equality, tolerance, citizenship rights and the independence of the public realm has been contested and challenged in contemporary multi-cultural politics and society. In the context of South Asian society, if the standard background for the understanding of secularism is the separation of religion from politics, differentiation of public and religious spheres and finally the privatization religion, then obviously, it would mean that the concept and practice of secularism is inappropriate to most of the non-Western (particularly a religious pervasive) societies.

In South Asian societies and politics, secularism hardly implies a bifurcation between religion and politics, but rather the relative penetration of both secular and religion in each other realms. Therefore, critics of traditional secularisation thesis have maintained that with the changing role of religion and politics, the concept and practice of normative secularisation and secularism become less relevant to analyze the present context.

Critics argued that reference to the secular, secularisation and secularism means different things in different historical, cultural and socio-political contexts. What is meant by secularism depends on one's socio-cultural context in which one understood and practice secularism rather than in terms of Western normative straight forward thesis of separation of religion from politics. In some Western societies, for instance, in the United States of America, secularism is referred to as the demystified and disenchanted worldview of an affluent, a post-religious society. But in a non-Western multi-religious society, particularly in India, it means something else. Not as an anti-religious or irreligious worldview imposed by the state, but instead, a notion of relative secularism, which is not theocratic understanding of a secular state and is fully compatible with the protection and promotion of democratic values and religious freedom.¹ Speculation on secularism and secularisation process can be understood and interpreted in various dimensions, negative and positive connotations. Firstly, in its negative perspective, secularism as an absolute separation of state and religion implies the exclusion of religion and state from each other sphere. Secondly, secularism as a positive connotation implies

¹ McClay, Wilfred M. (2000). "Two Concepts of Secularism." *The Wilson Quarterly*, 1976, Vol. 24. No. 3, Summer. P. 63.

a relative separation or an absence of separation of state and religion. Relative secularism here refers to the absence of strict separation between religion and politics. The interlinkages of religion and politics is contextualized and justified on the principle of specific values and norms.

Critics have argued that rather than followed a normative default notion of separation of religion from state, secularism understood within a wider definition and dimension could provide a more comprehensive and intertwined relationship between religion and politics. Secularism is a multi-values concept and to restrict the understanding of secularism within a confined Western normative could lead to misconception and understanding. Thus, contemporary theory and practice of secularism could be understood within the wider context of its multiple attendants and values, such as peace, tolerance, fraternity, religious liberty, human rights, inclusive participation and equality of citizenship.

Concept and practice of secularism implies multiple value doctrines linked with various aspects and dimensions of society and polity. Therefore, normative theory and practice of secularism need a critical rethinking in its philosophical, empirical and contextualization as to understand the relationship between religion and politics. Any attempt to standardize the concept and practice of secularisation and secularism could lead to a crisis within contemporary multi-cultural states. In brief, secularism is a dynamic and multi-dimensional concept that cannot be understood within a restrictive conceptual framework or in isolation of its multiple values. Rather than understanding secularism as a straight forward concept of separation of religion from state, a comprehensive concept

embodying multiple values comprising secular, religion and justice could rather provide a new dimension to normative theory and practice of secularism.

2.1 EVOLUTION OF WESTERN CONCEPT OF SECULARISATION

Historical account of the emergence of secularism begins during the Middle Ages. The Middle Ages were seen as the dominant of religion, where religion and religious person hold a significant position in society and politics. But gradually, after the Middle ages, Church began to decline as a result of Enlightenment. During this period, intellectual, development, social and cultural reformation led to the declined of religion in politics. Further, the advent of rationality and science limited the role of religion in the public space and confined religion into the realm of private path. These developments had tremendously contributed to the development of a secular outlook in European society.

Early development of the secular concept can be credited to Anaxagoras who was born in Ionia around about the year 500 BC. He refuted and replaced supernatural explanations by material and natural causes. He opined that secularism was a way of thinking about worldly life without reference to the transcendental realm. The early development of secularism dates backs to the period of religious wars, followed by Renaissance, Protestant Reformation and prevailing socio-political conditions combined with theological controversy tremendously contributed to the disintegration of a monolithic Western Church. The emergence of humanism which believed that the study of knowledge and the pursuit of wisdom can be attained without reference to transcendental encouraged many sensible people to abandon the divine in favor of the

less bloody pursuit of human knowledge and for the sake of humanity.² Gradually, with the development of intellectual, technological advancement, rationality and scientific revolution in the late 18th century in Europe, substantive concept of secularisation and secularism became to be a dominant norm and structure of European society and polity.

Development of the secularisation and secularism can also be traced and understood from various perspectives such as social, religious and political. One such perspective is to understand secularism as a social movement where secular ideal triumphed over transcendental ideas, modernization process which brought urbanization, rationalization of social phenomenon, religious pluralism and humanism to some extent curbed the dominance of religion. Another such perspective is the Biblical interpretation that distinguished religion and secular aspects of human life. Christ sermon on "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's (Matthew 22:20–21).³ Thus, Christ bifurcates what constitutes a secular realm from that of the realm of God. Gradually, the theoretical delimitation of their respective spheres was later developed by the Christian Theologies, fathers and Popes.

Further, Reformation movements in the Middle Ages led to steadily increasing emphasis on religion of personal commitment and devotion, as opposed to forms centered in a collective ritual. The pressure to adopt a more personal, committed and inward form of religious notion continues through the preaching of mendicant friars and others. The point of declaring that salvation comes through faith was radically to devalue ritual and

² Smith, Graeme. (2008). *A Short History of Secularism*, Published by I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, New York. Pp. 7-22

³ The Holy Bible. (2007). Bible Society of India, Bangalore. P. 885

external practice in favor of the inner acknowledgment of Christ as savior. The reformation also tended to delegitimize the distinction between fully committed believers and other less devoted ones.⁴ In other words, secularism occurred because it was believed to be intellectually and superior to religious ideology in explaining the socio-political and economic phenomenon. The gradual development of science and technology as an alternative explanation and interpretation of natural phenomenon was able to marginalize religious theology more objectively and effectively in various ways.

However, theoretically in political development, it was Nicollo Machiavelli, who suggested in the sixteenth century, first separated politics from religion and asserted the supremacy of political power over religious and emphasized the Prince's duty of independent rule.⁵ Later, in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the emergence of scholars, such as Descartes, Locke, Hobbes, Spinoza, Marx and Leibniz attempted to construct a rationalistic philosophy based on scientifically established observation and knowledge.

The historical process of development of secularism and secularisation needs to be understood as a particular reaction to the prevalent dualism of medieval Christendom. Until about the seventeenth century, western political thought was entangled with Christian theology, but then intellectuals realized that religious conflict was there to stay and that politics need to be separated from religious concerns. Modern political

⁴ Taylor, Charles. (2011). "Western Secularity. Calhoun Craig," in Juergensmeyer, Mark and VanAntwerpen, Jonathan, Eds. *Rethinking Secularism*, Oxford University Press, New York. P. 37.

⁵ Tyagi, Ruth. (2001). *Secularism in Multi-Religious Indian Society*, Deep & Deep Publication, Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi. P. 12.

philosophy came into being as a form of reasoning distinct and independent from political theology.⁶ Secularism as a political ideology was the product of bitter and bloody conflict in Europe. The most well-known was the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). By any measure, the war was extremely destructive. The horror of the war shocked the best minds of Europe, the ruling elites and the new Protestant Christian order. Therefore, the idea of separating the state and religion emerged, severance of the cord between political powers and the church. However, the end of the war did not usher in religious tolerance, as evidenced by the reign of Louis XVI of France, a cruel persecutor of religious minorities.⁷ Later on, gradually most of the European states began to adopt secularism as an ideology of statecraft.

Secularisation is not a uniform, single historical process, but rather the combination of different historical processes leading to a radically altered view of religion. The term 'secularisation' was first used in the context of the allocation of land and estates between religious institutions and the state as a result of Westphalia treaties in 1648. An essential characteristic of these treaties is that they were meant to address the religious conflicts in Europe by ensuring a settlement between Catholic and Protestant politics, in particular within the Holy Roman Empire. The peace of Westphalia was based on the principle of one king and one religion, whereby the religion of the king is the religion of the land. At the same time, provisions were made concerning religious toleration (essentially defined

⁶ Roover, Jakob De. Claerhout, Sarah and Balagangadhara, S.N. (2011). "Liberal Political Theory and the Cultural Migration of Ideas: The Case of Secularism." *India Political Theory*, Vol. 39, No. 5 October, P. 527.

⁷ Heng Siam-Heng, Michael. (2009). "The Secular State and its Challenges," in Heng Siam-Heng, Michael & Ten Chin Liew, Eds. *State and Secularism; Perspective from Asia*, World Scientific Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd. Singapore. P. 25.

as the protection of private worship).⁸ Thus, since the medieval period, there was a move to restructure the ancient political system (where there was hardly any difference between religion and politics) and this led to the exclusion of religion from politics.

At the end of the seventeenth century, century of reformation and wars of religion were succeeded by two centuries of secularisation. As the nineteenth century progressed, leading figures in philosophy, anthropology and psychology have postulated that the religious superstitions, illusion, symbolic rituals and sacred practices are the product of the past that would be demised with the advancement of modernity. The advent of Biblical criticism, development of new modern sciences and intellectual writings of August Comte, Max Weber, Rousseau, Hegel, Karl Marx, Bauer, Feuerbach, had tremendously contributed to the development of the modern idea of secularism.

Pierre Bayle argued that amid an unending conflict within both natural and revealed theology, moral teaching should be made independent of religion. A belief in immortality was not necessary for morality and there was no reason why there could not be a virtuous community of atheists. The writings of Hegel introduced the concept of alienation, the state in which people view themselves as exterior to themselves, something which is truly an intrinsic element of their being. Thereafter, followers of Hegel, Bauer and Feuerbach saw religion as the supreme form of alienation. Humans, who were the highest form of beings, projected their life and consciousness into unreal heaven. Religion, said Feuerbach, is the separation of man from himself; he sets God over against himself as an

⁸ Depaigne, Vincent. (2017). *Legitimacy Gap, Secularism, Religion and Culture in Comparative Constitutional law*. Oxford University Press, U K. P. 23.

opposed being. Moreover, the Hegelian critique of religion was given a new lease of life by Marx, who described religion as the opium of people. There was a widespread belief that religion would gradually fade its importance and cease to be significant with the advent of industrial society. The irrelevancy of religion became the conventional wisdom in social sciences during most of the twentieth century. Within the sociological inquiry, secularisation was ranked with bureaucratization, rationalization and urbanization as the key historical revolutions transforming medieval agrarian societies into modern industrial nations.⁹ Thus, intellectual development, scientific explanation, interpretation of natural phenomenon and society through scientific advancement has degraded the notion of religion to such an extent that it was considered as an illusion, irrational and irrelevant in modern secular society. These developments had weakened religious practices, institutions and organizations led to the development of secular consciousness within Western society.

Furthermore, the development of modern political liberalism and ideologies which accentuate individualism as a master over his body and soul became a dominant ideology in modern philosophy. This development claimed that liberal principles of justice did not depend on any comprehensive metaphysical doctrine and therefore be endorsed by people from different cultural life. It became an ideology that structured dualism and superseded religion to secular ideology in modern society.

⁹ Kenny, Anthony and Smyth, Geraldine. (1997). "Secularism and Secularisation." *An Irish Quarterly Reviews*, Vol.86. No. 344, (Winter). Pp. 318-344.

2.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE OF SECULARISATION AND SECULARISM

Concepts such as secular, secularisation and secularism are very complex that refers to a variety of relationships between religion, politics and society in different cultural contexts. Since, its early development, the concept of secularisation, generally implied that religion is a "traditional" phenomenon which will eventually be withered by the modernization process, including industrialization, urbanization and mass education.¹⁰ In contemporary modern society, secularisation concept broadly implies a descriptive statement, holding that (a) the decline of religious beliefs and practices in modern societies, often postulated as a universal human developmental process. That is considered as the recent most widespread usage of the term in contemporary academic debates on secularisation. (b) the privatization of religion, often understood both as a general modern historical trend and as a normative condition, indeed as a precondition for modern liberal democratic politics. (c) differentiation of the secular spheres (state, economy, science), usually understood as “emancipation” from religious institutions and norms. The core component of the classic theories of secularisation, which is related to the original etymological-historical meaning of the term within medieval Christendom.¹¹ Thus, the normative secularisation process sought to understand society and polity in terms of withering away and demise of religious practices and superstition view by the secular, where religious realm would be confined to the private realm and hardly interfere

¹⁰ Kuru, Ahmet T. (2009). *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion, The United States, France and Turkey*, Cambridge University Press, U K. P. 1.

¹¹ Casanova, Jose. (2006). “Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective,” in *The Hedgehog Review, Critical Reflection on Contemporary Culture*, Institute for Advanced Study in Culture, University of Virginia, Charlottesville. Spring & Summer, Vol. 8 No. 1 & 2. Pp. 7-8.

within the public domain.

In contrast to the secularisation, secularism broadly refers to modern doctrine or a condition, where transcendental or religious values became irrelevant and are superseded by secular rational values. Secularism in this sense is a normative or ethical creed. The secularist contends that the best way to deal with religious differences is a morally neutral vocabulary that is shared and a morality that is not based on religion.¹² A secular state is characterized by institutional differentiation between secular and religion, exclusion of religion from the public realm and finally the confinement of religion into the private sphere.

Secularism can be interpreted as a radicalization of the secularisation process, which aims to define a comprehensive political doctrine from which religion would be wholly removed. At least in its strictest version, secularism is more than simply a mediation, a negotiation between plural social forces; it is a way to ensure that the state could transcend social oppositions and stand above social groups. Secularism represents an attempt to separate the state from religion through a 'privatization' of religion as a way for the state to deal with religion.¹³ In short, it seeks to understand society and polity purely in the form of objectified rather than transcendental or subjective form.

The Latin word *saeculum*, as in per *saecula saeculorum*, only meant an indefinite period. Eventually, it became one of the terms of a dyad, religious/secular that served to

¹² Cliteur, Paul. (2010). *The Secular Outlook, In Defence of Moral and Political Secularism*, Wiley-Blackwell, UK. P. 3.

¹³ Depaigne, Vincent. (2017). Op., cit., P.27

structure the entire spatial and temporal reality of medieval Christendom into a binary system of classification or separating the two worlds, the religious-spiritual-sacred world of salvation and the secular-temporal-profane world. Hence the distinction between the "religious" or regular clergy, who withdrew from the world into the monasteries to lead a life of Christian perfection and the "secular" clergy, who lived in the world along with the laity.¹⁴

Another way to conceptualize the secularisation process and secularism within medieval Christendom was to understand from the propagation of well-known religious thinkers such as Pope Gelasius I, Saint Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Marsilio de Padua, that distinguished the secular and religious realms. Pope Gelasius I defined the frequently contested relationship between the ecclesiastical power of the Church and secular power of the state in a manner that was to be later described as the two swords formulation. Although Christ is both the prince and the pope, according to Gelasius I, Christ divided these offices to protect humanity from itself, giving to the Church the responsibility of the spiritual welfare of the people and to the state the administration of secular politics. Both rulers derive their authority directly from God, yet according to this model, each office is independent and sovereign in its realm.¹⁵

Likewise, Saint Augustine demonstrated how believers can live with the demands of the state while simultaneously pursuing the requirements of an obedient Christian life.

¹⁴ Rectenwald, Micheal. Almeida, Rochelle and Levine, George. Eds. (2015). *Global Secularism in a Post Secular Age*, Walter de Gruyter Inc, Boston/Berlin., Pp. 2-4.

¹⁵ Ishiyama, John T and Breuning, Marijke. Eds. (2011). *21st Century Political Science, A Reference Book*, Sage Publication, USA, 2011, Pp. 579-580.

He further argued that the state was used by God to aid in the growth and sanctification of the good, punish the evil into reformation or destruction and move the heretical into orthodoxy. Marsilio de Padua's work, *Defensor Pacis* (The Defender of the Peace), in 1324 further advocated the positivistic separation of laws and morals, establish civil power on non-transcendent grounds and assigned political authority in the people as a whole. His work marked the beginning of secularisation of the state, in which citizens and not God are the source of governing legitimacy. This trend of development of modern secular state during the medieval period is often credited to Marsilio. Although all three philosophers concluded that the role of the state was to provide a good life, this "good life" has two components for Marsilio; the use of philosophy via reason to secure a good life temporally and to use revelation via faith to have a good life in the eternal realm.¹⁶ Development of the critical theological perspective within religious thinkers provided a new dimension for understanding the functional differentiation between the secular and religious dimension of medieval statecraft, where power and authority between sacred and secular were initially blurred and fluid. It gradually developed into a more substantive conception of separation between the Church and state.

As a result of the Reformation and Enlightenment movements, two distinctive concepts of secularism emerged. The first concept of secularism also known as the Reformation secularism emerged out of the wars of religion in the 16th century and another concept of secularism also known as Enlightenment secularism emerged throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. At the heart of Reformation secularism lies the

¹⁶ Ibid., Pp.581-582

principle of equal freedom of conscience, which can only be upheld and guaranteed by a state that did not itself appeal to the truth of one religion. The state is agnostic about religion so that citizens could freely practice (or not practice) whatever religion they have. The neutral, secular state is the best way to protect the freedom of conscience of all its religions. The other perspective of secularism, Enlightenment secularism struggled to implement the progressive ideal of equality, democracy and citizenship. Very often, this meant directly confronting the power not only of traditional political and economic elites but also of religious authorities. Enlightenment secularism placed democratic values rather than freedom of conscience at the heart of its project. It aimed to liberate the secular state from the potentially anti-democratic, anti-liberal grip that churches historically had over society.¹⁷ Therefore, as a result of the Reformation and Enlightenment movements in Europe, variety of secularisms emerged as a measure for the reformation of the Western Christendom. On one hand, Reformation secularism emerged as a condition for a way out of religious conflicts and appealed for religious toleration within various Christian sects. On the other hand, the Enlightenment secularism emerged as a search for upholding common political ideals, that appealed on a purely rationalistic public space devoid of religion.

Thus the dynamic perspectives of secularisation established from the historical development of *laicization*, which aimed at the emancipation of all secular spheres from clerical-ecclesiastical control and in this respect, it is marked by a laic/clerical antagonism. Unlike in the Protestant path, here the boundaries between the religious and

¹⁷ Laborde, Cecile. (2010). "In Defence of the Secular State." *RSA Journal*, Vol. 156, No. 5542 (Summer), Published by Royle Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. P. 11.

the secular are rigidly maintained but those boundaries are pushed into the margins aiming to contain, privatize and marginalize everything religious, while excluding it from any visible presence in the secular public sphere. Precisely the realm of *laïcité*, a sociopolitical sphere freed from religious symbols and clerical control. Such a path of laicization, which is paradigmatic of the French-Latin-Catholic cultural area, although it found diverse manifestations throughout continental Europe, could well serve as the basic metaphor of all subtraction narratives of secular modernity, which tend to understand the secular as merely the space left behind when the this-worldly reality is freed from religion.¹⁸ One can observe that the American version of secularism which emphasizes on the dual exclusion of religion and state is more aligned with the Reformation trends of secularism. Whereas, on the contrary, the French version of secularism, which emphasizes a strict regulation of separation of religion from state is more aligned with the Enlightenment tradition of secularism. Albeit, religious ideological and doctrinal differentiation even in Christian Western society does have a tremendous impact on the development of different version of secularisms in the Western state and society. In the Western context, these two major dynamics secularisation processes were considered as factors that led to the existence of secular consciousness and the emergence different version of secularisms in European society and politics.

The presence of a negative perceptive of religion in the minds of European reformers during the period of Enlightenment was one of the major factors for the development of secular thought. Eighteenth-century antagonism against religion was, at

¹⁸ Ibid., P. 56.

the bottom, a profound disdain for the power of church and its clergy, which held vast tracts of land and wielded enormous influence over the affairs of state. According to Casanova, the European path to relatively strong secularism was shaped by struggles against the enforced religious conformities in Europe. The strong French doctrine of *laicite* was the product of un-churching struggles against priestly authority-that continued through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. These gave a more strident form to secularism and positioned itself as a dimension of social struggle and liberation. More generally, such secularizing struggles did not confront ancient state churches but new church-state partnerships forged in the wake of 1648. This, according to Casanova is the central factor that made Europe particularly secular.¹⁹ Thus, it can be observed that the European path for the development of secularisation and secularism as a socio-political movement was mainly driven by religious conflicts, religious illusion, new thinking, the development of science, technology and religious reformation since the late medieval era. In brief, secularity in the Western context developed from the backdrop for a search of a management of religious conflicts, rationalization of the public realm and democratic values.

In a similar way, Charles Taylor's two approaches, that is the common ground and independent political ethic approaches turned out to be ancestral to rather different understandings of secularism, justifying the ground for separation of state and the church. The former common ground strategy, grounded on the version of natural law aims at the establishment of a certain ethic of peaceful coexistence and political order, a set of

¹⁹ Calhoun, Craig. Juergensmeyer, Mark and VanAntwerpen, Jonathan. (2011). Op.cit., Pp. 7-16.

grounds for obedience, which while still theistic was based on those doctrines which were common to all Christian sects or even to all theists. The latter strategy that is an independent ground strategy attempted to define an independent political ethic which allows abstract from our religious beliefs altogether and look at certain features of the human condition which allow a person to deduce certain exceptionalness norms, including those of peace and political obedience. Taylor argued that the difference in strategy had proved to be an important force because it was the basis of two rather different ways of understanding the ground of peaceful and equitable coexistence between people of different faiths or different fundamental commitments. However, he argued that gradually, both these above strategies became limited on the account of widening based on religion and metaphysical commitment in society, the ground originally defined as common becomes that of one party among others. The very diversification that had undergone within the common ground approach challenges the independent ethic.²⁰ Therefore, the conceptual understanding of secularism based on common ground and independent ethic became ambiguous, overlapped and limited to address the problem and complex relationship between politics and religion in a modern multicultural and plural religious society.

Contemporary thinking on the concept of secular and secularism revolved around the existence of three conditions. First, the separation of the jurisdiction of secular authority from that of the power of religion and religious organizations and the neutrality of the state to all religions. Second, the evolution of civil/procedural laws designed to

²⁰ Taylor, Charles. (2004). "Secular Imperative," in Bhargava Rajeev, Ed., *Secularism and its Critics*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi. Pp. 32-38.

ensure the enforcement of neutral applications of rights through secular institutions and especially through the judicial system and orders of the courts.²¹ One way to understand the modern concept of secularism is to distinguish the two basic types of secularist ideologies. The first types are secularist theories of religion grounded in some progressive stadial philosophies of history that relegate religion to a superseded stage. The second type of secularist political theories presupposed that religion was either an irrational force or a non-rational form of discourse that should be banished from the democratic public sphere. They can be respectively called, philosophical-historical and political secularisms.²² Moreover, the third perspective of secularism can be perceived in the form of moderate or post-secularism perception, where both religion and secular interacts to promote a more inclusive and comprehensive public realm. Here, religious value is not devoid but translated into a secular and publicly justifiable values.

Casanova argues that the historical perspective of the secularisation process can be seen as an attempt to bridge, eliminate, or transcend the dualism between religion and the secular realms. In this respect, the very existence of the binary system of classification served to determine the dynamics of the process of secularisation. Even within the Christian West, one dynamic of internal Christian secularisation aimed to spiritualize the temporal and to bring the religious life of perfection out of the monasteries into the secular world so that everybody might become "a secular ascetic monk," a perfect Christian in the *saeculum*. Such dynamic tends to transcend the dualism by blurring the boundaries

²¹ Naidu, Ratna. (2013). "Wither Secularism, Is it a Problem of Definition"? *Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)*, January, 19, Vol. XLVIII, No.3.

²² Casanova, Jose. (2011). *Op.cit*, P. 67.

between the religious and the secular, by making the religious-secular and the secular-religious through a mutual reciprocal infusion. This was the path initiated by various medieval movements of Christian reform of the *saeculum*, which was radicalized by the Protestant Reformation and has attained its paradigmatic expression in the Anglo-Saxon Calvinist cultural area, particularly in the United States.²³

Moreover, modern secularism can be understood in various forms, such as, as an opponent of established belief-including non-religious establishment-and a protector of the rights of free exercise and free association. Second, it can be understood as a proponent of established unbelief and a protector of strictly individual expressive rights. The former view, on the one hand, is a minimal, even a negative understanding of secularism, as freedom from establishmentarian imposition. For it, the secular idiom is merely a provisional lingua franca that serves to facilitate commerce among different kinds of belief, rather than establish some new absolute language, an Esperanto of post-religious truth. The latter view, on the other hand, is the more robust, more assertive, more positive understanding of secularism which affirms secularism as an ultimate faith that rightfully supersedes the tragic blindness and destructive irrationalities of the traditional religions, at least so far as acting in public is concerned. By understanding religious liberty as a subcategory of individual expressive liberty, it confines religion to a strictly private sphere, where it can do little public harm and little public good.²⁴ Therefore, modern secularism which manifested in law, regulation and constitutional legal

²³ Casanova, Jose. (2011). "The Secular, Secularisations and Secularism." in Calhoun, Craig, Juergensmeyer, Mark and VanAntwerpen, Jonathan. Eds. *Rethinking Secularism*, Oxford University Press, New York. P.56

²⁴ McClay, Wilfred M. (2000). Op.cit., P. 63.

frameworks have different meanings and implications within different cultural contexts.

Charles Taylor in his recent book *A Secular Age*, elaborated contemporary secularism by questioning what it means to say that we live in a secular age? He further distinguishes three meanings of secularism. Secular one concerns with the institutional aspect, represented primarily by the state and public spaces. In other words, it refers to the exclusion of religion from public spaces. Taylor asserts that, unlike all pre-modern societies in which the political organization was dependent on adherence to God, in today's secular societies, one can engage fully in politics without ever encountering God and it is not faith in God, but intrinsic rationality to each sphere of activity that governs public spaces. Secular two deals with the "falling off of religious belief and practice," that is people turning away from God and religious practice as revealed through lower church attendance. In short, it refers to the decline of religion.²⁵ Although Taylor's account of these two meanings of secularity has some similarities with the definition of secularisation theory, such as the separation of state and religion and the demising of religion. However, on the contrary Taylor argued, such claims as subtraction stories.²⁶ The central part of his work deals in Secular three, which focuses on a move from a society where belief in God is not impossible and indeed, unproblematic to one in which it is understood to be one option among others. In other words, secularism is not just a net reduction in religious belief or practices, but a change in the very condition of belief. Secularity three, in contrast to secularity one and secularity two, which consisted of a new

²⁵ Taylor, Charles. (2007). *A Secular Age*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England. Pp. 1-2.

²⁶ Ibid., P. 22.

condition of belief, an exclusive humanism as the positive self-sufficient and self-limiting experience where they think entirely within the immanent frame.

Main feature of this new context was that it put an end to the naïve acknowledgment of transcendental claims which go beyond human flourishing. Taylor claims that the coming of secularity had been conterminous with the rise of a society in which for the first time in history a purely self-sufficient humanism came to be a widely available option in contrast to earlier times. He meant by this a humanism accepting no final goals beyond human flourishing, nor any allegiance to anything else beyond this flourishing. According to Taylor, a secular age is one in which the eclipse of all goals beyond human flourishing becomes conceivable or better if falls within the range of an imaginable life for masses of people. According to Taylor, secularity is to be understood in terms of underlying features of human nature which were there all along but had been impeded by what is now set aside. Taylor argues that Western modernity, including its secularity, was the fruit of the new invention, newly constructed self-understanding and related practice and cannot be explained in terms of a perennial feature of human life.²⁷ Thus, according to Taylor's historical narrative of secularity, a secular age developed as a result of the change in religious view and consciousness. It can be viewed as an option to live within the immanent frame, overcome irrational belief and the enchanted world, rather than an absence or devoid of religion.

Casanova also argued that the emergence or the existence of secularist stadiad consciousness was a crucial factor in the widespread secularisation that has accompanied

²⁷ Ibid., Pp. 268.

the modernization of western European societies. Europeans tend to experience their secularisation, that is, the widespread decline of religious beliefs and practices in their midst, as a natural consequence of their modernization. To be secular is to experience not as an existential choice that modern individuals or modern societies made but, rather, as a natural outcome of becoming modern. In this respect, the theory of the secularisation mediated through this historical stadial consciousness tends to function as a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is, in this view, the presence or absence of this secularist historical stadial consciousness that explained when and where processes of modernization were accompanied by radical secularisation.²⁸ Therefore, for both Casanova and Taylor, Western historical narratives and junctures did play a significant role in the development of Western secular outlook.

Concept such as modern secularism also comes in variety of forms and can be understood from various dimensions; in terms of different normative models or different degrees of separation or relationship between religion and politics, Constitutional-legal interpretation of separation of the secular state and religion or in terms of the different ideology, law, morality, religion and so on. Ahmet T. Kuru argued that differences in ideological dimensions do shaped state policies and generally resulted into two different notion of secularisms. Assertive secularism requires the state to play an "assertive" role to exclude religion from the public sphere and confine it to the private domain. Passive secularism demands that the state play a passive role by allowing the public visibility of religion. Assertive secularism is a "comprehensive doctrine, whereas passive secularism

²⁸ Casanova, Jose. (2011). *Op.cit.*, Pp. 59-60.

mainly prioritizes state neutrality toward such doctrines. Passive and assertive secularism became dominant in these cases as a result of particular historical conditions during their secular state-building periods. In France and Turkey, the presence of an ancient régime based on the alliance of monarchy and hegemonic religion was a crucial reason for the emergence of anticlericalism among the republican elite. The antagonistic relations between the republicans and the religious institutions underlay the historical dominance of assertive secularism. America, however, was a relatively new country of immigrants that lacked an ancient régime. Therefore, secular and religious elites sought and achieved an overlapping consensus on the separation of church and state at the federal level. The result was the dominance of passive secularism.²⁹ Thus, for Kuru, apart from normative understanding of secularism, ideological differences and cultural background do play an important role in determining the nature of secularism.

Rajeev Bhargava, an Indian academician who proposed a contextual concept of secularism, distinguished three senses of the term “secularism.” First, it is used as shorthand for secular humanism and more particularly for a de-transcendent version of it, which Taylor calls exclusive humanism. Bhargava further distinguished ethical secularism from political secularism, that stands for a certain kind of polity in which organized religious power or religious institutions are separated from organized political power or political institutions for specific ends. One idea behind this distinction was to argue that both those who believe in ethical secularism and those who believe in or practice various religions can come to agree on the constitutive principles that underlie

²⁹ Kuru, Ahmet T. (2009). *Op.cit.*, Pp. 11-13

political secularism. Political secularism neither entails nor presupposes ethical secularism. He argued that the goals of secularism, is to ensure that the social and political order is free from institutionalized religious domination so that there is religious freedom, freedom to exit from religion, interreligious equality, equality between believers and non-believers and solidarity forged when people are freed from religious sectarianism. us, religion defines the scope of secularism. The very point of secularism is lost either when religion disappears or if it purges itself from its oppressive, tyrannical, in-egalitarian, or exclusionary features. If religion is exhaustively defined in terms of these oppressive features, then the goal of secularism is to eliminate religion altogether.³⁰ Concepts of secularism can be misunderstood if it is understood within its limited concept of Church-state separation rather than understand within its multidimensional values, such as liberty, equality and toleration. Thus, the mere separation of religion from politics does not make a secular state.

According to Bhargava in a secular state, certain features such as, the disestablishment of religion, means the separation of state not merely for one, but from all religions. A secular state is constructively tied to the value of religious liberty that has three dimensions. The first feature refers to the liberty of members of any one religious group. The second aspect of this liberty in a secular state is that it granted non-preferentiality to all members of all religious communities. The third dimension of religious liberty, unthinkable in states with multiple establishments is that individuals are free not only to criticize the religion into which they are born but at the very extreme to

³⁰ Bhargava, Rajeev. (2016). "Is Europe Secular Enough?" in Jean L Cohen & Cecili Laborde, Eds. *Religion, Secularism and Constitutional Democracy*, Columbia University Press, New York. P. 158.

reject it and further, given ideal conditions of deliberation to freely embrace another religion or to remain without it. The fourth is in the form of equal citizenship in the passive form and which is non-sectarianism. The fifth is that since the full exercise of citizenship depends upon education, no one must be denied admission to the educational institution on the ground of religion. Lastly, equality of citizenship to which secularism is tied conveys a community-wide acknowledgment of equal respect for everyone in the political domain in its active form.³¹

Contemporary secularism can also be understood from various legal constitutional backdrop. For instance, the First Amendment to the Constitution of the US provided that Congress shall make no law in respect of establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. The idealist version of American self-understanding interprets separation to mean mutual exclusion. Neither the state nor religion is to interfere in the domain of others. This mutual exclusion is held to be necessary to resolve conflicts between different Christian denominations, to grant a measure of equality between them most crucially to provide individuals the freedom to set up and maintain their religious associations. The protection of religious liberties is more generally viewed as the *raison d'être* of the model. The idealist French version holds that the state must be separated from religion while retaining the power to interfere in it. However, religion is divested of any power to intervene in the matter of state. In other words, separation means one-sided exclusion. Most European states follow neither the French nor the American version of

³¹ Bhargava, Rajeev. (2011). "India's Secular Constitution," in Achin, Vanaik and Rajeev, Bhargava, Eds., *Understanding Contemporary India, Critical Perspectives*, (Reprint), Orient Blackswan Private Limited, New Delhi. P. 23.

secularism. Virtually all European states have a stable regime of the individual right to religious liberty as a long struggle between the state and the church, a stridency that would not have been possible without some degree of state-church separation. However, the Western Europe version of a secular state can be identified as the one in which the state patronizes a particular church and recognizes it as the Church of the state, granting at the same time, freedom to other churches, the degree of which varies from country to country. The established Church enjoys certain privileges and advantages, which are denied to other churches.³² Thus, there are multiple forms of secularism, that depicts a variety of degrees of separation on various aspects such as ethic, laws and principles. The concept and practices of modern secularism can be better understood from different cultural and ideological contexts.

Bhargava further classified secular states on three distinct levels; ends, institutions and law and policy. To understand this difference at a more abstract and general level. The ends of a politically secular state are distinct and freestanding. Salvation, the truth of religious doctrines and the ultimate meaning of life are not political ends and the state is ill-suited to pursue them. The second level of disconnect is institutional; the offices, institutions and structures of the civil state and religious organizations are disaggregated. He means that political secularism required non-establishment; no state privilege, penalties or social status for any religion. The third level pertains to laws and policy. Here, flexibility is advisable, a constitutional democracy based on equal citizenship may require intrusive regulation of religion and indeed of some religions more than others as in the

³² Bhargava, Rajeev. (2013). "Reimagining Secularism, Respect, Domination and Principled Distance," *Economics and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLVIII. No.50, December 14. Pp. 82-84.

Indian case that made suttee (sati) and penalties attached to untouchables illegal. Political secularism requires that political institutions, public spaces and national identity are civic so that every citizen can come to see them as their own and be considered full and equal members of the polity. The close connection of the state to the symbols of one or more religions undermines the inclusive, egalitarian, civic and independent character of the “*res publica*.”³³

Bhargava clarifies that a secular state is both not theocracy and against the establishment of religions. The first order disconnection from religion distinguishes the secular state from both theocracies and state with established religion. A secular state has a secular end. The second-order disconnection, Church-state separation demarcates it from a theocracy. However, the second disconnection, Church-state, is not a feature unique to secular states because this is a feature secular shared with states with an established religion. For a state to be secular, it must go beyond the Church-state separation and have predominantly secular ends. In societies with or without establish religion, the state to become a secular must refrain from establishing any religion or de-establishes religion and withdrew privileges that established religion had previously taken for granted. In short, a secular state must follow a principle of non-establishment.³⁴ In fact, in a dynamic society and politics, a secular state with establishment and support for

³³ Cohen, Jean L. (2016). “Rethinking Political Secularism and the American Model of Constitutional Dualism,” in Cohen, Jean L & Laborde, Cecili, Eds. *Religion, Secularism and Constitutional Democracy*, Columbia University Press, New York. Pp. 118-120.

³⁴ Acharya, Ashok & Bhargava, Rajeev. (2011). *Political Theory; An Introduction*, Published by Dorling Kindersley, Pearson Education, New Delhi. Pp. 276-278.

particular religion group is more prone to disintegration and instability in societies with pluralistic values.

Contrary to Bhargava, Tariq Madood by referring moderate secularism as a particular way of relating religion with state power and politics argued that the establishment of religion is not inconsistent with political secularism or liberal-democratic values. Moderate secularism can take different forms in different times and places and not all forms of the religious establishment should be ruled out without attending to specific cases. State–religion connections take different forms in different western European countries depending on their histories, traditions, political cultures and religious composition, which all may change over time. Indeed, Modood argued that moderate secularism is consistent with some government control of religion, some interference in religion, some support for religion and some cooperation with (selected) religious organizations and religious purposes. He further argued that the state should play an active role in constructing and promoting a multicultural polity and national identity in which minorities are included.³⁵ Madood, by analyzing the concept of state-religion relationship in European society and politics addresses the challenges confronted by normative secularism from multicultural perspective.

Unlike the American or French or Western countries, Indian secularism does not erect a wall of separation between religion and state. There are boundaries of course, but they are porous. This allows the state to intervene in religions in order to help or hinder

³⁵ Madood, Tariq. (2015). “Multiculturalizing Secularism,” in Zuckerman, Phil and Shook, John R. Eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Secularism*, Oxford University Press. New York. Pp. 14-15

them without the impulse to control or destroy them, (e.g., granting aid to educational institution of religious communities on a non-preferential basis and interfering in socio-religious institutions that deny equal dignity and status to members of their own religion or to those of others). In short, Indian secularism interprets separation in a positive sense, not to mean a strict separation, exclusion or strict neutrality of both religion and state. Bhargava terms it as principal distance, that entails a flexible approach to the issue of state's inclusion or exclusion of religion and to the issue of its engagement with or disengagement from religion, which at the level of law and policy depends on the context, nature and current state of relevant religions. Inclusion or engagement can be governed by principles undergirding a secular state, which flow from a commitment to the values mentioned above.³⁶ Despite the flexibility nature of Indian secularism, amid emerging religious-based movements, increasing intensity of communal tension and violence, the politicization of religion and lynching in the name of religion has indicated that secularism to some extent has indeed failed in India's plural society.

2.3 SECULARISATION AND SECULARISM: A CRITIQUE

Western normative concepts of secularisation and secularism broadly understood as a sphere of separation between religion and politics, a realm of religious freedom, a distinctive public realm, neutrality and the confinement of religion to the private sphere had been an issue of debate that attracted the attention of various discourses. Its usages, meanings and implications have a far-reaching impinges upon contemporary multi-

³⁶ Bhargava, Rajeev. (2013), *Op.cit*, Pp. 86-87.

religious society. Till recently, it was commonly assumed that public life was secular. However, in diversified contemporary society, public space is a hotly debated issue.

Since the mid-twentieth century, Political secularism has predominantly been understood, broadly within the French and American traditions, in terms of the separation of Church and State (or wall of separation) and of the neutrality of the State toward religion, both of which presuppose a sharp distinction between the public sphere and the private sphere. These definitions did not withstand the repeated and never falsified empirical demonstrations that a strict separation or neutrality is observed under no regime of secularism, including the French and American ones.³⁷ The increasing diversity of society, as a result of globalization and influx of immigrant with different cultural and religious practices, has upset the nature of secularism among most of the European states. New migrant communities carried with them religious beliefs and practices that had earlier not been present in modern Europe on any large scale, especially various forms of Islam. The attempt to accommodate these groups within liberal secular states uncovered some limitations. In the name of secularism, certain practices of Muslim groups such as wearing headscarves were banned from the public sphere. Such policies had the effect of radicalizing some Muslims and creating antagonism towards the government and the majoritarian population of European nation-states where they lived.³⁸ The assumption of

³⁷ Maclure, Jocelyn. (2013). "Political Secularism; A Sketch," Working Paper No. 16 Publication Date of this Version: August, Webpage: <http://www.recode.fi/ublications>. P. 2. Retrieved on 23 February, 2019

³⁸ Roover, Jakob De. (2015). *Europe, Europe, India and the Limits of Secularism*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi. P.4

secularism as a common ground for existence and independent ethic has been limited to address the concern of a diverse multicultural society.

The major flaws within the secularisation theory were the assumption of secularisation as a process of separation between church-state and finally the decline of religion as a result of the modernization of society. Secularisation was originally meant an extension of the scope of public law, rather than the separation between church and state. As Springborg puts it, the struggle to establish the secular nation-state was fought by rewriting religious doctrine. Secularisation was characterized by the state's control over religion, limiting (in particular in the Holy Roman Empire) the previous role of the 'universal' Catholic church. The link between religion and state established under Westphalia is best seen not as a decline of religion in the state but rather as an inversion of the respective institutional powers of religion and state. Westphalia is not so much about the weakening of religion as about the rise of state power in religious matters. Religion may decline in institutional terms, but this does not mean a similar decline in terms of legitimacy.³⁹

Two impediments that distracted many political scientists from taking religion seriously were; first secularisation theory, which assumed religion as a traditional phenomenon and would wither away as a result of modernization. The second source of distraction was the normative argument that religion should not play a substantial public role in a modern democratic polity. Philosophers such as John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas initially required that public discourse be secular. They argued that people

³⁹ Depaigne, Vincent. (2017). *Op, cit.*, Pp. 23-24.

should participate in democratic deliberation by putting aside their religious doctrines, which impeded consensus due to their dogmatic aspects.⁴⁰ This views on religion as traditional and irrelevant in public discourse has not only confined religion to the private realm but also limited the notion of the inclusive public realm.

Critics of the secularisation theory have emerged and argued that religious belief does not decline as a result of the modernization process. An American sociologist, Peter L Berger once a staunch supporter of secularisation theory observed in 1973, that secularisation generally referred to the process by which sectors of society and culture were removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols.⁴¹ However, after reviewing recent development of religion around the globe, he later reversed his earlier position and argued that the traditional secularists represented the attitudes of the educated elite and ignored the wider social realities that pointed to the continued relevance of religion. The world today with some exceptions is as furiously religious as it ever was and in some places more so than ever.⁴²

In a similar tone, Jose Casanova stresses that the secularisation theory has failed in its predictions of (1) the decline of religion in terms of loss of faith and a decrease in religious participation and (2) the individualization of religion with its waning public importance. The only valid part is its emphasis on the declining dominance of religion

⁴⁰ Kuru, Ahmet T. (2009). Op.cit., pp. 2-3.

⁴¹ Berger, Peter L. (1973). *The Social Reality of Religion*, Allen Lane, London, p. 115.

⁴² Berger, Peter L. (1997). "Secularism in Retreat," *The National Interest*, No. 46 (Winter), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42895127>, p. 4, Retrieved on 06 October, 2016.

over other spheres, such as the political, economic and scientific.⁴³ Thus, the thesis of secularisation has lost its importance as it had failed to explain the social reality and increasing intensity of religion.

Strong contestation of traditional secularisation theory has emerged both in Western and non-Western societies. Scholars asserted that religion would continue to retain an influential position in the society. Critiques of the secularisation thesis argue that, in some modern non-European societies, such as the United States and South Korea, that are fully secular in the sense that they functioned within the same immanent frame. However, their population is also at the same time conspicuously religious or the fact that the modernization of so many non-Western societies is accompanied by processes of religious revival have questioned the premise that the decline of religious beliefs and practices was a quasi-natural consequence of processes of modernization. If modernization per se does not produce necessarily the progressive decline of religious beliefs and practices, then one needs a better explanation for the radical and widespread secularity one finds among the populations of most Western European societies.⁴⁴ The increasing intensity of religious related activities around the globe has refuted and challenged the contemporary assumption that religion withered as a result of modernization.

Critics point to multiple indicators of religious health and vitality today, ranging from the increasing intensity of religious activities to the emergence of New Age

⁴³ Kuru, Ahmet T. (2009). *Op.cit.*, Pp.1-2

⁴⁴ Calhoun, Craig, Juergensmeyer, Mark and VanAntwerpen, Jonathan. Eds. (2011). *Op.cit.*, P. 59.

spirituality,⁴⁵ the growth of religious parties and fundamentalist movements in the Muslim world, the evangelical revival sweeping through Latin America and the upsurge of ethno-religious conflict in international affairs. Amid all these developments, in a fierce and sustained critique, Rodney Stark and Roger Finke suggest that a whole body of literature by historians and social scientists loosely labeled secularisation theory was a mistaken concept and it is time to bury the secularisation thesis.⁴⁶ In the light of changing nature of religion and its role in contemporary society and politics, characteristic of secularisation theory, such as modernization led to the decline of religious belief and practice, rationality of public sphere and withering of religion has failed to explain the dynamic nature of interlinkage of religion-politics in contemporary society.

Exponent of the revised version of secularisation theorists argue that most of the critique on the failure of secularisation theory, relies too heavily on selected anomaly and focuses heavily on the United States (which happens to be a striking deviant case) rather than comparing systematic evidence across a broad range of rich and poor societies. A revised version of secularisation theory emphasizes the extent to which people have a sense of existing security, that is characterized by the sense of security. This version of

⁴⁵ The key words of New Age spirituality are "experience" and "practice. Rather than attaching importance to the beliefs, doctrines and ethical injunctions' of theistic traditions, importance is attached to experiencing the heart of life. Practices are taken to facilitate the inner quest. Drawn from many sources, most especially the spiritual 'traditions of the East, activities range from yoga to spiritual massage, etc. enabling spiritual seekers to make contact with their inner depths, seekers experience spirituality flowing through other aspects of their lives-their bodies, their emotions, their relationships. To draw on a term that has acquired wide currency, namely "mind-body-spirit, this is, therefore, mind-body-spirit spirituality as a part of the secularisation process itself. See, Paul Heelas, *Challenging Secularisation Theory; The Growth of 'New Age' Spiritualities of life in The Hedgehog Review; Critical Reflection on Contemporary Culture*, Institute for Advanced Study in Culture, University of Virginia, Charlottesville. Spring & Summer, 2006, Vol. 8 No. 1 & 2. P. 47.

⁴⁶ Norris, Pippa and Inglehart, Ronald. (2004). *Sacred and Secular, Religion and Politics Worldwide*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. Pp. 3-4.

secularisation theory believed that the importance of religiosity persists strongly among those vulnerable populations, especially those living in poorer nations, facing personal survival-threatening risks.⁴⁷ This version of secularisation thesis argued that rather than modernization, the feelings of vulnerability to physical, societal and personal risks are the key factors for the prevalence of religiosity. This illustrated that secularisation theory more or less depends upon various contexts rather than follows a general normative secularisation that assumed the connection of modernization with the decline of religious beliefs and practices.

Religious market theory posed the most critical challenge to the traditional secularisation thesis. This account suggests that the supply-side factors, notably denominational competition and the state regulation of religious institutions shaped the levels of religious participation in the United States and Europe. Market-based theories in the sociology of religion hold that religious groups compete for congregations with different degrees of vigor. Established churches are thought to be complacent monopolies taking their congregations for granted with a fixed market share due to state regulation and subsidy for one particular faith that enjoyed special status and privileges. By contrast, where a free religious marketplace exists, energetic competition between churches expand the supply of religious products, thereby mobilizing religious activism among the public. The theory claims to be a universal generalization and applicable to all faiths, although the evidence to support this argument is drawn largely from the U.S and Western Europe. Stark and Finke emphasize that most European nations sustained what they term

⁴⁷ Ibid., Pp. 4-5.

a socialized religious economy, with state subsidies for established churches. Religious monopolies are believed to be less innovative, responsive and efficient. Where clergy enjoy secure incomes and tenure regardless of their performance, for instance (Germany and Sweden), Stark and Finke conclude, that the extent where organization work harder, they were more successful.⁴⁸ Unlike the former revised versions of secularisation theory, religious market theory is more relevant in accessing the nature of religiosity, as it accentuates on empirical market-based competition among various denominations rather than the economic security of the nation.

Secularisation and secularism were seen as the product of Enlightenment and rationality; the secularisation of Western society began with the transfer of certain possession of Church to the state but not a decline of religious values and norms. Historical event of a transfer of religious property to state is limited and just depicted one aspect of the secularisation process rather than a secular state. There was a mutual move from both the Church and the state to demarcate their sphere of activity. Thus secularisation originally does not refer to the decline of religious belief and values but rather can be referred to as the decline of the religious institution in state politics. Contrary to secularisation, secularism was seen as a means for a way out of religious wars, intolerances, conflicts and for the formation of universal common ground on the principle of humanism rather than religious lines. Despite the triumph of science and modernization of state and society, on a critical examination of the traditional historical account of the

⁴⁸ Norris, Pippa and Inglehart, Ronald. (2006), "Sellers or Buyers in Religious Markets? Supply and Demand of Religion." *The Hedgehog Review, Critical Reflection on Contemporary Culture*, Institute for Advanced Study in Culture, University of Virginia, Charlottesville. Spring & Summer, Vol. 8 No. 1 & 2, P. 92.

emergence of secularisation and secularism, one can observe that religion had not dimised in modern society and politics.

Today, the term secularism acquired a pejorative meaning as opposed to religion. Certain liberal secular principles such as religious freedom, equality, neutrality and the privatization of religion have been an issue of controversy. Critics have argued that secularism does not follow its ideals. France's *laicite* (secularism) guarantees freedom of religious belief and exercise, but it also involves militant banning of religion from the public sphere. In the United States, the first constitutional amendment bars the establishment of any state religion and protects free exercise to prevent the state from interfering in religion. In contrast, the Church of England remains officially established in the United Kingdom. The monarch is the head of the state and the church, while some bishops hold reserved seats in Parliament as Lords Spiritual. In India, state secularism has involved far-reaching intervention in certain traditions, such as state management of temples and the reform of Hindu law. French *laicite* is so anti-religious that it violates the principles of religious freedom; the Indian state regularly intervenes in religious affairs.⁴⁹ Thus, in a multi-religious state, the mechanism to bifurcate what constitutes a secular and religious sphere had been a major issue of controversy and practical problem.

Secularism is faced with an inherent contradiction between, on the one hand, a strict separation between politics and religion and on the other, a normative view of what religion should (or rather should not) be. This view of secularism explains why the version of secularism (*laïcité*) promoted by the French state. Contrary to the official separation

⁴⁹ Roover, Jakob De. (2015). Op.cit., Pp. 14-15.

between church and state has often in practice, taken the form of control of the state over religion. In the Gallican tradition, state control over religious doctrine is to ensure that it is in line with the values promoted by the state. This paradox can also be explained by the fact that the secular state is continuously struggling to define ‘what religion really is and the space that religion may properly occupy in a secular society, the secular state remains thus entangled with religion.’⁵⁰

Particularly in a non-Western society, the absence of clear-cut bifurcation, the fluid nature of separation and interlinkages between religion, ethic and identity has made it difficult to determine what constitutes an acceptable secular or public space and this became an issue that confronted and challenged the normative theory and practice of secularism. Normative secularisation process and secularism became deeply problematic once it is conceptualized and practiced in other society with different structure of the relationship between religion and politics. Various secular related issues, such as equal religious freedom, the distinction between public and private realms and the confinement of religion to the private sphere has been an issue of controversy in a plural religious state and society. Thus, the understanding of secularism as a concept of church-state separation has been a limited concept to address the contemporary dynamic nature of the relationship between religion and politics in a multicultural society. Therefore, to understand secularism and secularisation in its various dimensions, it is essential to understand one socio-religious culture and examine its implication in politics.

⁵⁰ Depaigne, Vincent. (2017). *Op.cit.*, P. 27.

2.4 RETHINKING SECULARISM IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY.

Modern discourse on secularism can be broadly understood as the separation of state and religion, as a condition of religious liberty, state neutrality and equal respect of all religions, had been a limited notion to address the aspiration of a diversified multicultural society. The emergence of religious movements, politicization of religions and religious violence, has challenged the normative understanding of secularism as a modern structure of bifurcation of religion and politics. Contemporary boundaries between the religious and the secular remains a consistent disputed issue in a multi-religious society and politics. Precisely, the assumption of secularism as a ground for common ground for existence, independent ethic free from religious interference and toleration has been critically re-evaluated and challenged in a contemporary plural society.

Contemporary society considered secular as something that is contrasted with religion, the root notion of the term is something juxtaposed not to religion but eternity. It derives from Latin etymological root-*saeculum*-as the French word *siècle*, meaning "century" or "age". The word *saeculum* first appeared as a unit of the term among the Etruscans and was adopted by Romans after them. By extension, secular referred to the affairs of worldly existence and was used in the Middle Ages especially to distinguish members of the clergy, who were attached to religious orders from those who served worldly local parishes (and who were therefore secular).⁵¹ It is ironic that these early references to a period became an elements for development and structuring an institutional differentiation but also a functional differentiation between the secular and

⁵¹ Calhoun, Craig. Juergensmeyer, Mark and VanAntwerpen, Jonathan. Eds. (2011). *Op.cit.*, Pp. 7-8.

religious realm in modern society.

In the mid-nineteenth century England, George Holyoake referred that the term secularism was designed to express the general agreements of the freethought party as an alternative to atheism. He further argued that the secular principles relate to the present existence of man and methods of the procedure, the issues of which can be tested by the experience of life. Secularism, he wrote, is to promote good faith and good temper the immediate and material welfare of humanity, by the law of nature and this is the unity of principles which prevail amid whatever diversity of opinion that might subsist in a secular society. His principle of secularism was not against or anti-religion but a principle that would bring a new structure of rationality, experience and understanding within modern society.⁵² Gradually, in modern society and politics, it developed into the concept related to the separation of religion from the politics, where religious views were superseded, excluded and finally confined to the private sphere where it could hardly intervene in a public realm. In brief, it can be observed that the meaning of secular transformed as it moved from one juncture to another, at one point the meaning of secularism was neither narrow nor rigid as implied by the Latin or Greek roots.

Talal Asad's account of the genealogy of secular traces it, in part to the Renaissance doctrine of humanism, the Enlightenment concept of nature and in part to Hegel's philosophy of history. Before the Reformation, he points out, the term secularisation denoted a legal transition from monastic life to the life of canons. Later, after the

⁵² Holyoake, George Jacob. (1871). *Principles of Secularism Illustrated*, " (3rd Edition, Revised) Austin & Co, London. Pp. 8-11.

Reformation, it signified the freeing of property from Church hands and its transfer into the hands of private owners and thus into the market for circulation. Asad asserts that secularism as a political doctrine that arose in modern Euro-America is easy to think of it simply as requiring the separation of religion from secular institutions in government. But that is not all. Abstractly stated, examples of this separation can be found in medieval Christendom and in the Islamic empires and no doubt elsewhere too. Asad argues that the distinctiveness about secularism was that it presupposed a new concept of religion, ethics, politics and new imperatives associated with them. Many people have sensed this novelty and reacted to it in a variety of ways. Thus the opponents of secularism in the Middle East and elsewhere have rejected it as specific to the West. Asad concludes, in the discourse of modernity, the secular presents itself as the ground from which theological discourse was generated (as a form of false consciousness) and from which it gradually emancipated itself in the march to freedom. According to Asad, this is one description of the secular. Asad is also cautious in pointing out the inversion and paradoxes entailed in claims that secularism itself generated a new form of religiosity.⁵³ Indeed, even in a secular state, there are various instances where legal interpretations by the court does defined, redefined or reallocated the sphere of religion. Therefore, in contemporary society, a secular institution mostly determines to allocate or relocate religious belief and practice. In other words, from this point of view, one could argue that the secular restructured and redefined and the religious domain.

⁵³ Das, Veena. (2006). "Secularism and the Argument from Nature," *Powers of the Secular Modern; Talal Asad and his Interlocutors*, Scott, David & Hirsckind, Charles. Eds. Stanford University Press, Stanford. P. 101.

Taylor while noting that the term secular was both subject to alterations and distortions as it travels from one context to another. He explicitly pointed out that the grand narrative involving secularism was the spread of modernization in the historical path of Euro-American progress.⁵⁴ Asad in his critique to Charles Taylor's "Secular Imperative" argues that Taylor model of secularism is not only intellectually appealing but that its particular origin did not detract from its contemporary global relevance and it is applicable to non-Christian societies everywhere that had become modern, have emerged as an object of academic argument and practical dispute.⁵⁵ Moreover, considering the dynamic nature of contemporary religion on account of changing pattern of religious demographics, diversity, intensity of religious movements, religious consciousness and activities around the globe, it could be argued that the normative Western notion of secularism that emerged as a response to specific Western socio-cultural context has hardly any meaning and relevance in addressing the problems emerged out of religious diversity and conflict.

Albeit, Western society claims of being a secular state, secularism is a dynamic concept that implies varieties of meanings and implications from one state to another. Contemporary secularism can be viewed from various perspectives, ranging from an ideal strict to moderate secularism. In some states, secularism implies a different connotation as a mutual exclusion of both religion and politics from each other sphere as in the United States. In French, it refers to one-sided exclusion, where state control religion and in some

⁵⁴ Taylor, Charles. (2007). *A Secular Age*, Op.cit., P. 21.

⁵⁵ Asad, Talal. (2003). *Formation of Secular; Christianity, Islam and Modernity*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California. P. 92.

other European states such as Germany and England, secularism refers neither separation nor neutrality.

Despite variety versions of secularism and secularisation concepts, core assumption of the secularisation theory, to name few, such as (a) increasing structural differentiation of social spaces resulting in the separation of religion from politics, economy, science and so forth: (b) the privatization of religion within its sphere; and (c) the declining social significance of religious belief, commitment and institutions had been a central issue of recent debate. Contemporary sociologist Jose Casanova's view, that only elements (a) and (c) are visible in contemporary society. Talal Asad goes beyond the normative theory of secularisation and argues that if a legitimate de-privatization of religion was carried out effectively, the allegedly viable part of the secularisation thesis as stated by Casanova's Elements (a) and (c) would also be undermined. Further, Asad claims that this differentiation of secular from religious spheres does not help us to identify the different kinds of secular life and the political reasoning on which they are based. For example, in the United States, the population is largely religious and the federal government is constitutionally required to be neutral and yet Christian movements have historically been able to mobilize effectively in support of important policies (anti-slavery, Prohibition, anti-abortion, pro-Israel).⁵⁶ Albeit contemporary state and society claim to be secular, further analysis of state and society at different levels, such as ends, institutional, policy and law, in practice indicated the paradox of secularity at both society and state level.

⁵⁶ Ibid., P.182.

Asad further argued that Casanova sensed the paradox here, that is why Casanova says that, in a modern secular world, the boundaries between religious and the secular are so fluid that one ought to be very cautious when drawing such analytical distinctions. He argued that the stress was not merely that religion and the secular interpenetrate, but that (a) both are historically constituted, (b) this happens through accidental processes bringing together a variety of concepts, practices and sensibility and (c) in modern society the law is crucially involved in defining the distinctiveness of social spaces-especially the legitimate space for religion. In the formation of secular, Asad inferred with Casanova's reformulated thesis by saying that in modern society the law finds itself continually having to redefine the space that religion may properly occupy because the reproduction of secular life ceaselessly disturbs the clarity of its boundaries. In the US, the courts tend to define religion in terms of systems of belief to determine whether some local administrative constraints substantially burden the free exercise of religion. In France, it appears that the state was primarily concerned with the ostentatious display of religious symbols in public schools regardless of belief.⁵⁷ Therefore, the very central claim of Western society as a secular state is un-doubtedly an issue of debate. There are various instances, where state patronage in the form of an established church, financial assistance to a particular religion and legal-constitutional nepotism to a particular religion has further questioned the nature and credibility of a secular state.

Another controversial issue within normative secularism is of equality or equal respect of all religions. A secular state seeks to protect the freedom of conscience and

⁵⁷ Asad, Talal. (2006). *Responses*, in Scott, in David & Hirsckind, Charles, Eds. Op.cit., P. 209

religion of all citizens. Ensuring freedom of conscience and religion is not sufficient. A secular state also has to grant equal respect to all citizens. But as the multicultural critique of standard liberalism revealed (although this is contentious), equal treatment as identical treatment can make it more difficult for citizens holding minority beliefs to exercise their freedom of religion. However, if equal respect is understood as compatible with accommodation measures, then it will indeed be more difficult to find cases where granting equal respect will entail encroaching on the freedom of conscience and religion of some citizens.⁵⁸ Secularism, without protection for religious minorities, could lead to majority cultural domination over minority and further threatened minority rights and pluralistic culture.

Tariq Modood, theorized that moderate secularism is a particular way of relating religion with state power and politics. He further argued that Moderate secularism is compatible with political secularism and better than ideologically secular States at recognizing and accommodating minority religious groups.⁵⁹ In contrast to Modood, Bhargava argues that European secularism is in crisis and claims that the crisis is due largely to the failure of Europe to make a conceptual shift from secularism developed in and for single-religion societies to one that is far more sensitive and finely tuned to deep religious diversity. At its root, the crisis of European secularism is conceptual. Bhargava argued that European secularism failed to be sensitive to deep religious diversity and forms of institutionalized religious domination. European nation-states fail to be even

⁵⁸ Maclure, Jocelyn. (2013). *Op.cit.*, P. 4.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, P. 7.

modestly secular. Blind to the dimension of interreligious domination, they do not even see that in this dimension they are not secular. Several phenomena that are seen to be anti-secular, say in India, are not seen to be so in Europe.⁶⁰ Secularism is a dynamic concept that can be understood from various dimensions and ideological contexts, an attempt to standardized its meaning and usage from one cultural context could be inviable to other cultural context with different socio-cultural setting.

Amid increasing diversity and pluralism, various issues considered partly as a secular and religious issue has intensified the debate on secularism, thereby making it more difficult to build a substantive boundary between the public (secular) and private (religion) spheres. In a dynamic religious plural society, there is a need to rethink secularism in path to address the religious sensitivities of diversified groups. Political theorists, such as, Habermas and Rawls, who have previously argued that the public sphere had to be completely secular and neutrally accessible to all, have reconsidered their views. Rawls initially excluded religious reasons from public debates. However, he later reversed his earlier position and argued that they should be included as long as they could be translated into secular terms.⁶¹

Habermas too recognized the fact that religion has not withered away under the pressures of modernization, he stressed the importance of cultivating a "post-secular" stance, an approach that both reckons with the continuing global vitality of religion and emphasizes the importance of "translating" the ethical insights of religious traditions with

⁶⁰ Bhargava, Rajeev. (2016). *Op.cit.*, P.174

⁶¹ Calhoun, Craig. Juergensmeyer, Mark and VanAntwerpen, Jonathan. (2011). *Op.cit.*, P. 19.

a view to their incorporation into a “post-metaphysical” philosophical perspective. Habermas concludes, that religious practices and perspectives, continue to be key sources of the values that nourish the ethics of multicultural citizenship, commanding both solidarity and equal respect. Yet, in order for the "vital semantic potentials from religious traditions" to be made available for wider political culture (and, in particular, within democratic institutions), they can be translated into a secular idiom and a "universally accessible language,” a task that falls not only to religious citizens but to all citizens, both religious and secular engaged in the public use of reason.⁶²

Similarly, Lorenzo Zucca proposed a new model of “inclusive secularism” that focused on the art of devising institutions for plural societies to maximize religious diversity, while at the same time preserving a unitary legal-political framework. Zucca seeks to mitigate some of the exclusionary tendencies of the secular state, the secular state should not silence religious voices but instead allow for their participation in the public sphere.⁶³ Thus, it indicates that secularism can also be argued not as disengagement of religion from politics. Various forms of religious ethics can also be a part of what hitherto considered as the public realm. The interface between religion and secular could provide an alternative inclusive and comprehensive platform to address the aspiration and diverse

⁶² Habermas, Jürgen. (2011). “The Political; The Rational Meaning of a Questionable Inheritance of Political Theology,” in Mendieta, Eduardo & Vanantwerpen, Jonathan, Eds., *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, Judith Butler, Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, Cornel West, Columbia University Press, New York. P.28

⁶³ Jamal, Arif L & Neo, Jaelyn (2019). “Religious Pluralism and the Challenge for Secularism,” *Journal of Law, Religion and State*, <https://brill.com/view/journals/jlrs/jlrs-overview.xml>. P. 5, retrieved on 21 April, 2019.

multicultural society.

Charles Taylor argues that rather than an understanding of secularism that fixes on religion as the central problem, it offers an alternative conception which is understood in terms of balancing or coordinating of the claims of different goods that democratic societies took to be fundamental. Taylor argues that regimes deserving the label secularist must be conceived not primarily as “bulwarks against religion” but rather as those that respond to the problem of the ever-growing internal diversity of modern societies. Appropriate responses to such diversity, all of which should seek to maximize the basic goals of liberty and equality between basic beliefs, are bound to be context-specific and no algorithm could determine the shape of a particular secular regime. Taylor, in his attempt to redefine secularism, argues that the basic difficulties were the limited notion of understanding secularism within a context of the relationship of the state and religion, rather than the response of the democratic state to diversity. He further argued that the three goals of secularism, such as liberty, equality and fraternity concerned with common goals of 1) protecting people in their belonging to and/or practice of whatever outlook they choose or and themselves in; with 2) treating people equally whatever their choice and 3) giving them all a hearing. There is no reason to single out religion, as against non-religious, secular or atheist viewpoints.⁶⁴ Thus, in a dynamic society and politics, Taylor acknowledged that the confinement of secularism with state-religion separation was not an enough option to address the increasing problem of religious diversity. Therefore, the achievement of secular goals, such as liberty, equality and fraternity are more important

⁶⁴ Taylor, Charles. (2011). “Why do we need a Radical Re-definition of secularism,” in Mendieta, Eduardo & Vanantwerpen, Jonathan, Eds., *Op.cit.*, Pp. 35-37.

than a mere institutional arrangement for separation between the secular and religious.

Generally speaking, religion is a culturally complex, historical institution that cannot be separated easily or radically from other institutions, whether it is moral, aesthetic, economic or political. In other words, religions are dynamic and change in response to and in dialogue with individuals, communities, events and developments both within and outside a given religious tradition. Religion is a pervasive aspect of a person's identity, an aspect that both inform and is informed by other aspects of one's identity, including one's various beliefs, ideals, authorities, attitudes and practices all of which are embedded in and respond to local, national, global and physical circumstances.⁶⁵ In contemporary society, there is an increasing articulation and attachment of religion in every aspect of ethics, identity politics and socio-political movements. Therefore, contemporary concept and practice of secularism can hardly be understood from the perspective of State-Church separation or exclusion of religion from the public domain.

Rather than confined secularism to a limited notion of separation of state and religion and the exclusion of religion from public and social life, secularism can be understood as a comprehensive arena where religious issues are internalized in a public domain and translated into shared language, a 'secular language' for discussing political matters. Commitment to secularism is a political position that is compatible with a wide range of personal views and beliefs. A secular state is not defined by its substantive commitments, institutional settlement or specific policies, rather, it is defined by the type

⁶⁵ Cladis, Mark. (2010). "Religion, Secularism and Democratic Culture," *The Good Society*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 22-29 Published by Penn State University Press. P. 25.

of justification it offers for them. It can be argued that in justifying laws and policies, the state cannot exclusively appeal to comprehensive, substantive views about the truth (or falsity) of religion. Secularism is a meta-theoretical doctrine about justification and reasons, rather than a set of specific normative prescriptions about correct institutions or policies. More precisely, it is an appeal to public justification or public reason, where such reasons are defined as drawing on certain forms of widely accepted epistemic standards. Neither atheism nor theism can be appealed to as a sole reason for epistemological incompetence about the truth of atheism and theism, which is acceptable in public reasoning.⁶⁶ In this backdrop, rather than viewing or exclusion of religion views and values as irrational or unsecular, a religious view can be legitimately appealed to public debate, deliberation and public justification in a democratic society. Thus, rather than excluded religious issue from public domain, the inclusion religious issues in a democratic deliberation could provide a more inclusive comprehensive space for understanding the contemporary controversial issues and the problem of a multicultural society.

To sum up, in contemporary multicultural society, the narrative of secularisation and secularism has been an issue of debate that attracted the attention of social science discourses. The understanding of secularism as a specific set of socio-political behaviors characterized by a bifurcation between the secular and religious realms, the assumption of secular as a common ground of existence and independent ethic, free from the religious influence has been constantly questioned and challenged. Particularly, when evidence

⁶⁶ Laborde, Cecile. (2010). *Op.cit.*, Pp. 12-13.

pointed to not just the prevalent of religiosity but the increasing intensity of interlinkages of religion and politics on a global scale.

In a multicultural society, secularism assumed within a limited concept has failed to explain the contemporary complex relationship between the politics, religion and society. In short, contemporary understanding of secularism as state-religion separation, exclusion of religion from public domain and the supersede of religion by rationality has failed to offer a satisfactory answer to the problem of religious issues, tension and conflict both at local and international levels. On the contrary, the contestation between religion and politics can be speculated, if secularism is understood within its wider dimensions, inclusive and comprehensive domain rather than the exclude religion from public domain. Thus, the misunderstanding of secularism can be devoid if secularism is understood as an inclusive and comprehensive domain where both secular and religious realms interfaced. In other words, although the privatization of religion within its sphere is part of what has been meant by secularisation, it is not essentially necessary for modernity.

The argument whether religious deprivation threatens society depends on how religion and politics interface and interact in respective of certain values. For instance, if religion promotes comprehensive and inclusive liberal values, such as freedom of religion, equality, democratic participation, deliberation, tolerance and social justice then it is consistent with a modern democratic society. Further, secularism and its related concepts are multidimensional rather than a uniform standardized concept. Secularism does not only concern with separation of politics and religion but also concerns the relationship of religion with other dimensions of social, culture, ethnicity and identity politics. Therefore, in a contemporary diverse multicultural society and politics, it is

difficult to demarcate what constituted a religious or secular realm and understand secularism within the limited concept of Church-state separation. In brief, rather than understand secularism as an exclusion and confinement of religion to private sphere, secularism can be seen in a way that are consistent with promoting the basic democratic values and necessity of the diverse pervasive religious society.

Since society and religion are dynamic issue and vary from one society to another, the concepts and practices of secularisms also vary. Therefore, to generalize or standardize the concept and practice of secularism could bring confusion and ambiguity within society and politics. Thus, there is no simple way to standardize the usage of secularism and relate with its clearly defined values in a multicultural society. Therefore, rethinking secularism need to be understood beyond the limited normative Western concept of separation between State and Church. Rather than understanding secularism within its restricted concept of separation of religion and politics, exclusion of religion and the privatization of religion, the inclusion of positive aspect religion within a public realm could provide a new space for inclusive and comprehensive platform for public debate and justification of contemporary controversial issues revolving around society politics. In brief, secularism cannot be understood as a straight forward notion of separation of religion and politics in a contemporary multicultural society but can be better understood within its wider meaning and commitment it made towards promoting democratic values, norms, harmony and social justice.

CHAPTER - 3
INDIAN CONSTITUTION AND SECULARISM: SOME
CONTESTED DEBATE

This chapter briefly discusses the historical development of secularism in the backdrop of the Indian national movement to the present context. It also analyses the Indian Constitutional version of secularism that emerged and evolved as a result of Constituent Assembly debates. The chapter also highlights the crisis and flaws within the Indian secularism amid the increasing intensity of politicization of religion, communal tension and social conflicts. It also critically discusses various traits, trends and debates put forward by various discourses including academicians, political parties, religious groups, jurist and media on the nature and practice of Indian secularism. Moreover, the chapter elaborates the dynamic nature and development of secularism and its implications in the changing socio-political milieu.

In a pervasive multi-religious society like India, the term secularism connotes different understandings and implications. Contrary to Western notion and practice, it does not refer to the separation of politics from religion but rather refers to the interlinkage between religion and politics, where both politics and religion penetrated upon each other realms. In other words, taking into account the pervasive role of religion in the lives of Indian society, the meaning and usages of secularism depicts a different picture, where there is a relative separation between politics and religion. And, to grasp a comprehensive idea of the concept and practice of secularism in India, one needs to view and understand the development of Indian secularism from various social, historical and political developments.

Aftermath the partition, in the midst of resurfaced of communal riots and communalization of politics on the basis of language, religion, caste and ethnicity within Indian society. Apart from establishing a nation based on socialist and democratic ideals, the nationalist leaders set out to build a secular state. In the early

days of independent India, G. B. Pant, the then Home Minister stressed the need to build national unity and economic reconstruction. The gravest danger to unity and integrity of the nation comes from four 'isms'- casteism, communalism, linguism and regionalism/provincialism, all of which can be brought under the umbrella term of communalism. The only antidote to communalism was sought in the idea of secularism. Secularism was also seen as an instrument to assure the minority communities that India would remain just and fair to them and that social and political equality will be duly served.¹ Thus, the concept of secularism was developed in this context, to mediate between the interests of various communities and build a united Indian nation where the followers of any religion would neither be favoured nor discriminated on the ground of religion.² Secularism was considered as a means for bringing or bridging unity within diverse cultures.

Secularism was considered ideal and holds a great importance for de-linking or de-politicization of caste/religion from politics and the formation of a unified nation amid cultural diversity. Based on this ideal, secularism was accepted as the mainstay of the Constitution. Thereby, unlike the Western notion of secularism, Indian secularism was not seen as an antipathy to religion. It was developed during the national movement, as against communalization of politics and integration of diverse religious society into one entity. Apart from the delinking of religion from politics, secularism in the Indian context can also be viewed as a secularisation of religious and social norms for attainment of democratic values.

¹ Noor Ameena, Secularism in Indian Context: A Close Reading, <https://www.countercurrents.org/ameena29115.htm>, Retrieved on 2 May 2017

² Chakrabarty, Bidyut., Ed., (1990), *Secularism and Indian Politics*, Segment Book Distributors, New Delhi. P. 70.

Secularism since its inception, remains as one of the controversial issues in Indian society and politics. The Constituent Assembly debated on various versions of secularisms, ranging from strict separation to equal respect. In spite of lack of consensus on the nature of secularism among the members of Constituent Assembly, framers of the Constitution considered that the Western model of secularism was inviable in the Indian socio-religious context and thereby adopted a different version of secularism that does not mean irreligiousness, but rather state neutrality and non-discriminatory towards all religions. The Constituent Assembly opted equal concern and respect form of secularism, which was considered as the product of India's social experience and genius,³ rather than blindly following the Western normative concept and practice of secularism.

In the post-independence India, the Constitution of India made certain provisions concerning secularism. However, certain secular principles, such as religious liberty, equality of status, neutrality, minority rights and social justice, which were issues of constant debates in the Constituent Assembly remained a controversial in contemporary Indian society and politics. One of the major factors for the crisis of Indian secularism was on an account of the prevalent wide-gap of misunderstanding between constitutional objectives of secularism and mass understanding of secularism. Apart from this disjuncture between constitutional secularism and mass understanding, the existence of variation in the reinterpretation of secularism and religion on the part of legislature, courts and religious institutions have made the notion of secularism more ambiguous.

Even Nehru the architect of modern secularism in Indian seem ambivalent

³ Pantham, Thomas. (1997). "Indian Secularism and its Critics; Some Reflections," *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 59. No, 3 Non-western Political Thought (Summer). P. 527.

about the true meaning of secularism. He claimed, perhaps it was not easy to find a good word [presumably in Hindi] for 'secular'. Some people think that it meant something opposed to religion. He refuted this notion of secularism and argued that what it meant was that the state honor all faiths equally and gives them equal opportunities; as a state, it does not allow itself to be attached to one faith or religion alone, which then becomes the state religion. Another definition put forth was that the government should be equidistant from all religions.⁴ This version of secularism accentuated on equal treatment and respect of all religions.

An Indian version of secularism is undoubtedly distinct from the Western secularism, the Western antonym of secular is religious, whereas, in the Indian context, communalism is the antonym of secular.⁵ Secularism evolved as part of the nationalist leaders' struggles against communal forces and communalism. Indian secularism is a dynamic concept that could be interpreted from various junctures and contexts. In some cases, it refers to a notion of strict separation of state and religion in which both the Centre and the states, can be made accountable for implementing it. Whereas on the other hand, it can be broadly understood as relative secularism, as it also advocates state intervention in religious affairs in the form of socio-religious reforms. From this perspective, one could argue that the term secular is closely related to contextual and flexible secularism where it advocates to remain distance and interfered within the religion according to socio-religious context and attainment of democratic ideals. Thus, Indian secularism can be described as relative secularism which has different meanings and implications at various contexts. This sort of

⁴ Gopal, S. (1980). *Jawaharlal Nehru: An Anthology*, Oxford University Press, Delhi. P. 330.

⁵ Pantham, Thomas. (1997). *Op.cit.*, P. 525

relative nature of secularism has become a dominant issue of intense debate and controversy in Indian multi-religious society and politics.

In the late 1980s, various speculation had emerged as to what secularism entails in a pervasive religious society of India. Some sections of people described the Indian secular state as flaw ideology incompatible within the Indian cultural context. Others who considered the dominant role of religion in the lives of people welcome the Western-oriented secular state that would bring with it a drastic reduction in the scope and sphere of religion. For them, India must give the highest priority in secularisation of society and promote a more secular popular culture. On the other hand, some defend constitutional secularism (relative separation of state from religion) as an indispensable mechanism of promoting, social reforms and liberal values. On the other extreme are those critics who viewed and denounced contemporary secularism as pseudo-secularism, that sought to appease the religious minorities and promoting sectarianism within Indian society and politics.⁶ Therefore, the dynamic nature of Indian concept and practice of secularism with its complexity made it exceedingly more difficult to locate the substantive meaning and practice of secularism within normative Western term.

In India, notwithstanding a secular state, secularism in India has acquired different meanings and implications at different junctures, depending upon the dynamic nature of legal-constitutional interpretation and socio-political contexts. The dynamic nature and trends of constitutionalization of religious aspects through the purview of legal and social reform has developed a new trend of redrawing the boundary between religion and secular. The dominant legal-constitutional interpretation of religious aspects from the context of its essentialism and non-

⁶ Indian writers, such as Ashis Nandy, T N Madan, Rajeev Bhargava, Partha Chatterjee's views on Indian secularism, in Bhargava, Rajeev, Ed, (2004), *Secularism and its Critics*, OUP, New Delhi.

essentialism of religion has to some extent brought ambiguity and blurred the concept and practice of secularism, what constitutes a secular and religious aspects can hardly be determined in Indian pervasive multi-religious society. Thus, secularism in India is a multi-dimensional concept that could be perceived and understood from various perspectives, such as historical, socio-religious, political and constitutional-legal contexts.

3.1 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SECULARISM IN INDIA

Narrative on secularism in modern India discourse can be traced back to the nationalist rhetoric during the Indian national movement. Secularism was adopted against the backdrop of communalization of politics, mutual distrust and sectarian violences among various religious communities in India. The movement towards the secularisation of politics has had its roots in the efforts to bridge the gulf among various communities (in particular between the Hindus and the Muslims). Precisely, it was the effort of newly founded nationalist leaders of the Indian Nationalist Congress to secure the participation of the Muslims in various national programs. It was felt that only through secularism India could evolve itself into a meaningful nation and in terms of fighting against the British. Therefore, amid communal politics, mutual distrust and increasing politicization of religious issues, secularism became an article of faith with the national leaders who wanted to shape the destiny of India along secular lines.⁷ Thus, Indian secularism was developed to achieve a communal harmony and integration of diverse religious groups into one entity (nation).

The concept of secularism since its inception was not free from dilemma and had been an issue of debate among the nationalist leaders. Badruddin Tyabji, a

⁷ Hassan, Rajib. (2014). "Secularism: Concept and Application in India with Special Reference to Constituent Assembly Debate". *Voice of Research*, Vol. 3, Issue 1, June. P. 67.

Muslim leader from Bombay in his presidential address to the Congress in 1887, argued that there was nothing in the mutual relations of various religious communities that would make anyone of them refrain from joining the others to obtain freedom from the British general administrative reforms and civil rights for the common benefits of all people. Further, Tyabji argued that community and national interests were both equally legitimate and they were non-antagonistic. However, there were opponents to this point of view, particularly, Sayyid Ahmad Khan, who insisted on the priority of the former and questioned the validity of the later in India where the Hindus outnumbered Muslims three to one. In Tyabji's judgment, the Muslim interests would be best served by linking them to general interests and not by pursuing a separatist strategy.⁸ Thus, the narrative of secularism in India was contested within the purview of national and particular religious community interests. Secularism was hardly seen as a common ethic and common ground of existence for diverse religious groups.

From the nationalist Muslim point of view, secularism could be an encompassing or a residual concept. General interests could be so stated as to include community interest or community interests even when granted primacy still would leave a residual space for common interests. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, a follower of Tyabji and a Congressman who later on also became the Muslim League leader, put the secularist position succinctly when he rebuked one of his proteges (and clients), the Raja of Mahumdabad, who showed increasing consciousness of his Muslim identity, that he was an Indian first and then a Muslim. Madan argued that Jinnah was one of the first public figures of modern India to speak of the affairs of common

⁸ Madan, T N. (2010). "Secularism revisited: Doctrine of Destiny or Political Ideology," in Singh, Akash and Mohapatra, Silika. Eds, *Indian Political Thought, A Reader*, Routledge, London and New York. P. 89.

secular existence in his presidential address to the Indian Muslim League in 1916 when he was also one of the leading lights of the Congress.⁹ Secularism was seen as an ideal instrument for promoting communal harmony, fraternity and integration of diverse religious groups into one entity.

Even before the framing of the Indian Constitution, various proceedings and documents had indicated that the national leaders during India's national movement were committed towards the establishment of a secular state. The Constitution drafted by Pandit Moti Lal Nehru as the chairman of the historic Nehru Committee in 1928, laid special emphasis on securing fundamental principles of secularism. This included the right to “dominion Status” as the form of government desired by India. It also rejected the principle of separate communal electorates on which previous constitutional reforms had been based. Seats would be reserved for Muslims at the Centre and in provinces in which they were in a minority, but not in those where they had a numerical majority. The Report also recommended universal adult suffrage, equal rights for women, freedom to form unions and dissociation of the state from religion in any form.¹⁰ Thus, the Report not only seek to provide cultural rights to minorities but also ensure democratic rights to its citizens irrespective of religion.

Another instance of the nationalist leaders commitment to secularism could be seen as a counter against communalism was the adoption of Karachi Resolution of 1931, which declared that in free India every citizen shall enjoy freedom of conscience, the right to freely profess and practice his religion, that all citizens would be equal before the law, irrespective of caste, creed or sex, that no disability would be attached to any citizen because of caste, creed or sex in regard to public

⁹ Ibid., P. 89.

¹⁰ Chandra, Bipan. Mukherjee, Mridula & Mukherjee Aditya. *India's Struggle for Independence, 1857-1947*, Penguin Book. Pp. 533-534.

employment, office of power or honor and in the exercise of any trade or calling and that ‘the State shall observe neutrality in regard to all religions.’¹¹ Interestingly, the secular character of the state developed not merely as a reaction against communal but an attempt to delink religion from politics and to secure liberal democratic rights within newly independent diverse and pervasive religious state.

Despite several controversial arguments in regards of secularism and its related concepts during the early period of Indian national movement, the principal proponent of secular ideology in modern India was Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Gandhi in his early years of the national movement was deeply a religious person, who emphasized the close connection between religion and politics. Some people even referred to Gandhi as an anti-secularist. Gandhi believed that politics had to be based on morality and to him, all religions were the source of morality. He believed that religion was itself morality in the Indian sense of *Dharma*. In 1929, he said, his devotion to truth has drawn me into the field of politics. Those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics, do not know what religion means. He said that politics separated from religion and religion detached from politics is meaningless.¹² Gandhi supported the Khilafat movement and justified his decision in terms of his moral obligation (Dharma) to forge bonds of friendship between Hindus and Muslims and thereby promote internal peace in the country. Albeit his critics considered it a policy of appeasement, Gandhi firmly denied that there was any element of bargaining in his politics, if secularism in the context of the support for the Kalifat movement was the cultivation of common interests, even when these interests were not secular. Madan argued that the Gandhian version of

¹¹ Chandra, Bipan. Mukherjee Mridula & Mukherjee Aditya. *India after Independence 1947-2000*, Penguin Book. Pp. 75-76.

¹² Gandhi Mahatma (1929), *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. P 591.

secularism was a morally grounded social contract of mutual benefit, which also served higher national interests through a reconciliation of the two communities.¹³ In the early period of the national movement, Gandhiji's idea of secularism was based on a commitment towards brotherhood of religious communities, respect and pursuit of truth. The detachment of religion from politics seems to be incompatible with Gandhi's moral philosophy of state and society.

However, as a result of growing intensity of communalization of politics, Gandhi in his later life reversed from his earlier stand on religion and politics and supported the Karachi Resolution in 1931, when he saw that communalists were using religion as a sectarian belief system to divide the people. He overtly preached the separation of religion from politics. Thus, in 1942, Gandhi argued that religion was a personal matter which should have no place in politics. Again in 1947, he equated religion with the personal affair of each individual.¹⁴ Gandhi further argued that the state was bound to be wholly secular and no denominational educational institution should enjoy state patronage. In brief, Gandhi's holistic understanding of secularism is based first, on the principles of separation of religion from politics, economy and education, not from the life or private life of the individual in a secular state and where religion is not discouraged as a way of life. Second, state neutrality to all kinds of religious activities should show equal respect to all. Third, equal citizenship and no discrimination on the grounds of religion. Lastly, secularism should be treated as an ideology of nation-building and oppose the ideology of

¹³ Madan T N, (2010), Op.cit., P. 89.

¹⁴ Chandra, Bipan. Mukherjee, Mridula & Mukherjee, Aditya. *India after Independence, 1947-2000*, Op.cit., P. 125.

communalism.¹⁵ Albeit, Gandhi was a deeply religious person, he was against the use of religion for vested interest and communalization of politics that could bring about the disintegration of plural society.

Another way to understand Indian secularism can be perceived from Jawaharlal Nehru's concept of secularism, which was closely related to the Western concept of secularism. Nehru was more concerned with the building of a united nation-state encompassing diverse religious groups. Keeping in view the India's specific situation, his views on secularism were manifested in the Objectives Resolution, which guaranteed and secured to all the people of India, justice, social, economic and political; equality of status of opportunity and equality before the law, freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, worship, association and action subjects to law and public morality. He argued that India would be the land, as in the past of many faiths equally honored and respected. Nehruvian secularism was not directed against the internal content of religion, it was rather directed towards religious superstition, communalism and fanaticism.¹⁶ Nehruvian secularism was not absolutely against religious values, his idea of secularism was based on scientific rationality and was against communal and undemocratic practices sanctioned by religion.

Nehru's concept of secularism was different from that of M.N. Roy, Bhagat Singh and the Communists of India that favored secularism based on an anti-religious approach. Nehru advocated a secular state which was neither anti-religious nor irreligious but was religious. It meant *Dharma Nirpekshita* (Neutrality toward Religion). It implied keeping an equal distance from all religions as well as equal

¹⁵ Ayub Mallick, Md. (2013). "Contextualizing the Concept of Secularism in India," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, ISSN (Online), 2319-7722, ISSN, www.ijhssi.org. Volume 2, Issue 5, May. Pp. 39-45. Retrieved on 12 August, 2015.

¹⁶ Perumal, C. A. (1987). "Nehru and Secularism," *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (July - Sept.). Pp. 302-305.

treatment to the people belonging to all the religions. Here it is significant to point out that Nehru's Secularism was also different from that of Mahatma Gandhi. While Gandhi favored equal respect to all religions, Nehru despite his scientific temper and rational outlook his agnostic outlook made him favor neutrality towards religions. He viewed secularism as an anti-thesis of communalism, that created hatred and blood shed among religious communities. For Nehru, the former promoted communal harmony. Nehru viewed communalism was based on negative feelings and secularism was based on positive sentiments. He did not want the Indian state to identify itself with any religion, but advocated state interference in religious codes for bringing about social reform and rooting out evil practices. Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, a well-known scholar perceptively observed that Nehru's model of secularism was a quest for ensuring justice and equality to all the citizens of India irrespective of their creed.¹⁷ Thus, Nehru's secularism was closely aligned towards scientific rationality and modern democratic value of equality.

Amid increasing communalization of politics on caste and communal lines during the Indian national movement, Nehru regarded secularism as an essential condition for democracy and argued it most convincingly that secularism was to be the sole basis for national unity in a multi-religious society and that communalism was a danger to national unity. He attempted to delink communalism from politics. In brief, Nehru's secularism was based on a commitment to scientific humanism tinged with a progressive view of historical change. Nehru was especially concerned with transforming India from a 'caste-ridden society' in which communalism constitutes a major threat to all the values that he cherished to a national state, which

¹⁷ Arya, Anupma. (2016). "Contemporary Relevance of Nehru's Model of Secularism," *International Journal of Informative and Futuristic Research*, Vol. 3, Issued 7, March. P. 2573.

includes people of all religions and shades of opinion. He believed that secularism could be achieved only through a socialist democracy that promised every citizen equal opportunities, irrespective of caste, creed and gender. He assured that as long as he was at the helm, the country would never become a Hindu nation. Nehru denounced the mixing of religion and politics, insisted that such a move would silence the very life of secular politics that was based on the principles of freedom and equality for all regardless of one's faith.¹⁸ For Nehru, the word secular does not only merely imply freedom of religion but also focus upon the idea of social and political equality. Nehru's secularism promoted the framework for building a nation on the principle of freedom, equality and social justice to all its citizens and is closely aligned with the Western model of secularism and modernization.

Despite, ideological differences between Gandhi and Nehru on the relationship between religion and politics, one can infer that both had a similar objective but different approaches to secure a unified society within diverse Indian society. For Gandhi, his principle of "*Sarva dharma samabhava*," tried to bring people from different religions together. Whereas Nehru's view on secularism was based on principles of modern democratic freedom and equality. Though, both Gandhi and Nehru had respect for all the religions, Nehru differed from Gandhi, for whom rationality and scientific attitude towards politics was a major objective of political life. In other words, Nehru's understanding of secularism was based on scientific rationality rather than religious morality that formed the basis of secularism for Gandhi.

¹⁸ Doss, M Christhu. (2018). "Sandwiched Nehru, Religious Minorities and Indian Secularism," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. LIII, No. 29, July 21. P. 40.

3.2 CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY DEBATES ON SECULARISM

In the backdrop of communalization of politics during the national movement, the national leaders were eager to set up a nation based on secular principles, that would address the problem of multi-religious state and also the communalization of politics. Therefore, on the eve of India's independence, speculation on the concept and nature of Indian secularism became an issue of intense debate in the Constituent Assembly. A few readings of the Constituent Assembly (CA) debate, reflect that various secular credentials, ranging from rigid to relative separation, restricted to extensive religious liberty, personal law to uniform civil code and minorities right were an issue of intense debate among the members of the CA. Shefali Jha observed that there were three different versions of secularism debated in the Constituent Assembly. The first referred it to 'No concern' theory of secularism, that dictated a clear separation between religion and the state. The second referred to 'No link' between the state and religion, to prevent the demeaning of religion. The third referred to the 'Equal respect' theory of secularism which respects all the religions alike and granted religious liberty to all. Jha further argued that the Constituent Assembly had to choose between freedom of religious worship, or the individual's private right to belief, prayer and freedom of religious practice, which involved the public performance of faith and the right to propagate it, between Uniform Civil Code which erased the personal laws of various faiths and a jurisprudence that allowed for variations in civil law. She argued that the Constituent Assembly settled for equal respect concept of secularism, where the demarcation between secular and religion remained fluid and blurred.¹⁹ Amid intense debate on the nature of secularism, the

¹⁹ Jha, Shefali. (2002). "Secularism in the Constituent Assembly Debates, 1946-1950," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 37, No. 30 (Jul. 27 - Aug. 2). Pp. 3176-3177.

CA members adopted the extensive notion of equal respect secularism, which implies the freedom to worship, practice and profess religion

During the Constituent Assembly Debates (CAD), the national leaders were committed to establish India into a secular state. However, it is ironic that the word secular or secularism was neither defined precisely nor a substantive proper boundary was drawn between the secular and religious realms. Despite various attempts by some members of the Constituent Assembly to insert the word secular in the Constitution during the Constituent Assembly debates, it has failed. The founding fathers of the Constitution could not agree on calling it secular for the fear that it might bring unnecessary implications; of anti-religious or irreligious overtones associated with the doctrine of secularism as it happened in the Christian countries. Perhaps, the Constitution makers felt that it was not necessary to use the word secular or secularism, particularly as it might connote the impression of establishing a state structure inconsistent with the cultural ethos of the Indian people.²⁰ Consequently, the framers of Constitution search for a version of secularism that could suit the condition of Indian pervasive religious society.

KT Shah introduced the word secular, in the form of a new Article that read; the State in India being secular shall have no concern with any religion, creed or profession of faith; and shall observe an attitude of absolute neutrality in all matters relating to the religion of any class of its citizens or other persons in the Union. In contrast to many Western models of secularism, he clarified that by saying that the state should not identify itself with any particular religion, does not imply that the State should be anti-religious or irreligious. He argued that India being a secular

²⁰ Hassan, Rajib (2014), Op.cit., P. 68.

State was neither a God-less State nor an irreligious State. All he wished to say is that with the actual profession of faith or belief, the State should have no concern. Nor should it, by any action give any indication that it was partial to one or the other. All classes of citizens should have the same treatment in matters mundane from the State. And even those who may not be citizens of this State, by living within it, should receive the same treatment.²¹ This version of secularism advocated a notion of negative secularism, which proposed that the state should stay away or refrain from interfering within one's religious sphere.

In a similar way, some Constituent Assembly members, such as, Tajamul Husain and Lokanath Misra, favored for 'No concern' version of secularism and defined the right to religion to mean practice religion privately and religious instructions to be given only at home. They were opposed to the idea of religious instructions imparted through educational institutions.²² This group of CA members favored a limited definition of religion, as they feared that an extensive definition of religious liberty could undermine the integrity and democratic values of the society. This version of No concern secularism was rejected by the majority of CA members on the account that it was seen misnomer in context of Indian pervasive religious culture.

The debate on secularism was intensified, particularly when the Right to Freedom of Religion was considered as a Fundamental Right and Freedom of Religion was defined as the right to freely profess, practice and propagate religion by the Constituent Assembly Minority Sub-committee. Albeit, the terminology was

²¹ Constituent Assembly Debate, (Proceedings), 6 December, 1948.

²² Constituent Assembly Debates (Proceedings) Vol. VII, Tuesday, 7th December, 1948.

formally dissented by some members such as Amrit Kaur, Jagjivan Ram, G B Pant, P.K Salve and B R Ambedkar, owing to the nature of religious belief and practice. The debate was clearly affected by the arguments made against the incidence of conversion during the colonial period, especially by those Christian missionaries in the tribal areas. It was feared that enumerating the 'right to propagate' would allow the unfettered continuance of conversion by inducement or fraud. In addition to this, there were concerns that the 'freedom to propagate' could be used to justify statements denouncing other religions which in turn could provoke communal tensions. B R Ambedkar, the chairman of the drafting committee of the Constitution, argued in the Constituent Assembly debate that they ought to strive to limit the definition of religion to belief and such rituals that may be connected with ceremonies that are only essential to religion.²³ The main line of the argument was, if religion was defined in such broad category it might also mean including anti-social customs like purdah, child marriage, polygamy, unequal laws of inheritance, prevention of inter-caste marriage and dedication of girls to temple.²⁴ This definition of religion was to limit and confined the belief and practice of religion to that of essential nature.

Another perception of secularism debated during the Constituent Assembly debates was, in the form of 'Equal respect' secularism, which was in contrast to the former version of 'No concern' secularism. The majority of the Constituent Assembly members, to name few, such as KM Munshi, Lakshmi Kant Maitra, H V Kamath and L Krishnaswami Bharathi, preferred "Equal respect" secularism as it refers to a more expansive role of religion. They argued that secularism neither

²³ Constituent Assembly Debate, Vol. 7. P. 781

²⁴ Jha, Shefali. (2002), Op.cit., P. 3177

meant a Godless state, nor an irreligious or an anti-religious state. In short, they were not in favor of the idea of confining religion to the private sphere or granting religious freedom in the form of a narrow right to religious worship.²⁵ A majority of members argued about the evolving characteristic of Indian secularism, K.M. Munshi argued that the state could not possibly have a state religion, nor could a rigid line be drawn between the state and church as it was in the United States. According to J.B. Kripalani, equal respect secularism taught respect to each other's faith, as each faith has an element of truth. Since religion was being defined in positive terms, it followed that the right to freedom of religion was to be framed widely as the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion.²⁶ Thus, one could observe that the Constituent Assembly members were deeply influenced by Gandhi and Nehru's views on the relationship between religion and politics. The former group of Constituent Assembly members was aligned towards Nehru and the later were aligned to Gandhi's view on religion and politics.

The extensive definition of religious rights was justified on the ground that since the right to religion had been circumscribed by certain conditions which the State would be free to impose in the interest of public morality, public order, public health and also in so far as the rights conferred does not conflict in any way with the other provisions elaborated under this part of the Constitution. The right to profess, practice and propagate any religion they like, was not a threat to the idea of the integrity of the nation but were the very basic principle of secularism. Similarly, K. Santhanam argued that Article 13 has assured in form of freedom of speech,

²⁵ Jha, Shefali. (2002), Op.cit., P. 3178

²⁶ Jha Shafali, <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/because-the-goal-is-equality-2/>. Retrieved on 5 February 2015.

expression and their right to form associations or unions. He argued that the said Article was not so much an article on religious freedom, but an article on religious tolerance. After all, propagation is merely freedom of expression.²⁷ The objections to exclude the right to propagation was overruled, as the right to the propagation of religion was one of the basic tenets of some particular religion. Thus, religious liberty was defined in such a way as to incorporate the religious aspirations of various religious groups and therefore, the words, right to religious propagation was incorporated as the Fundamental Rights in the Constitution of India.

Apart from debates on 'No concern and Equal concern' versions of secularism, the Constituent Assembly debate was not exempted from various problems related to secular credentials, such as protection of minorities right, Uniform Civil Code, equal religious liberty, respect, tolerance and state neutrality. There was difference of views, on whether these rights should be given to religious minorities or confined to linguistic minorities. Some Constituent Assembly members, such as B.R. Ambedkar, GB Pant, Jagjivan Ram and others opposed this view and favored the right to freely set up their cultural and educational institutions only to linguistic minorities rather than to religious minorities. However, it was recognized that the right to operate educational institutions was inherently linked with the preservation of the cultural identity of a group, irrespective of whether it was of a 'religious' or 'linguistic' nature. Moreover, the framers of the Constitution were also influenced by the empirical reality that the minority-run institutions, especially those run by the Christian groups tended to provide better educational quality to a wider cross-section of students from different religious groups. They were rather compelled to follow this line on the ground that the Indian society was composed of a multiplicity of

²⁷ Constituent Assembly Debate (Proceedings), Vol. VII, 6 December, 1948.

religions. Dr. Ambedkar admitted in the Assembly that the second difficulty was much more real than the first, namely the multiplicity of religions and to provide religious instruction in all the denominations.²⁸ Despite strong contestation against the right of religious minorities to establish and administer educational institutions, this right was given on account of the assumption that there was a close linkage between education and preservation of minorities culture.²⁹ Thus, the incorporation religion into socio-cultural aspects was considered essential for the protection and preservation of minorities' cultural identity.

Another undiscerning issue in the Constituent Assembly debate was the failure to establish a consensus on the Uniform Civil Code (UCC). When the Fundamental Rights Sub-Committee decided to make the UCC as the Directive Principle of State Policy, the Constituent Assembly witnessed a division along communal lines concerning the question of whether the secular state requires the UCC. One section of people demanded to protect religious freedom, especially minority interests and on the other, there was another section of people that demanded the Uniform Civil Code for all, based on a notion of homogenized citizenship. Some Constituent Assembly members, such as Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Hansa Mehta, M R Masani, were among a few who emphasized the importance of implementation of UCC and called it vital for the social process. They demanded it to be included within the Fundamental Rights

²⁸ Rajarajan, R. (2007). "Secularism in Indian Politics: Theory and Practice," *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 68, No. 2 (Apr– June). Pp. 410-411.

²⁹ Balakrishnan, K.G. (2009). "Individual Rights in India: A perspective from the Supreme Court," extracted from the paper presented at the International Roundtable Conference University of Georgia. https://digitalcommons.law.uga.edu/lectures_pre_arch_lectures_other/26/. Retrieved on 12 March 2018.

of the Constitution. However, on the other extreme, some group of Constituent Assembly members such as, Ismail Saheb, B Packer Sahib, Mahboob Ali Baig, were against the introduction of the Uniform Civil Code and wanted to include personal law within the Fundamental Rights to religion. On November 23, 1948, when the Article was being discussed, Mohamad Ismail, a member of the Constituent Assembly from Madras, demanded to include the right to one's personal law in the Fundamental Rights to religion. Failing that, they insisted that at least the directive principle enjoining the state to provide the UCC, should contain the provision, provided any group, section of community of people should not be obliged to give up its law in case it had such a law. Similarly, Mahboob Ali Baig Bahadur had said that in a secular state there must be a common law observed by its citizens in all matters including matters of their daily life, their language, their culture, their laws were not a correct way to look at the secular state. In a secular state, citizens belonging to different communities must have the freedom to practice their religion, observe their own lives and their laws should be applied to them.³⁰ The CA members were sandwiched between majority demands for the Uniform Civil Code and religious minorities' demand for the preservation of their personal laws.

Albeit, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar did not accept the amendments and defended the right of the state to interfere in the matter of personal laws of different communities. But at the same time, he also gave some assurances to the Muslim members, by explaining that it was merely a proposal that the State should endeavour to secure a civil code for the citizens of the country. It does not say that after the Code was framed the State should enforce it upon all citizens merely because they are citizens. The future Parliament might make a provision by way of making a beginning that the

³⁰ Jha, Shefali, (2002), Op.cit., P. 3178.

Code should apply only to those who make a declaration that they were prepared to be bound by it so that in the initial stage the application of the Code might be purely voluntary. Therefore, a clause was adopted only after B R Ambedkar, Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee, assured the minorities that the Article would not be thrust upon them and was added in Part IV of the Directive Principles of State Policy, which are not enforceable in any court, but supposed to play a fundamental role in the governance of country, with the government duty-bound to apply these principles in making laws.³¹ Thus, various personal laws of religious minorities, relating to family, property, marriage, divorce and other customary laws sustained and the issue of UCC became an issue of controversy, as many have questioned the operationalization of personal laws, as an instrument of oppression, disintegration and undermining of the democratic rights of its citizens.

Despite, lack of consensus among the members of the CA on the nature and practice of secularism in India, Marc Galanter, has observed that one of the most striking developments in independent India was the successful emergence of an avowedly secular state encompassing the bulk of the world's Hindus.³² Despite, the word secularism was incorporated in the Constitution of India in 1976, increasing intensity of religious politics, prosecution of religious minorities and polarization of politics on the basis of religion has indicated that secular aspirations and objectives of the Constitution have been undermined to some extent.

³¹ http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/52367/7/07_chapter%203.pdf. P. 60. Retrieved on 18 September, 2017

³² Galanter, Marc. (2004). "Hinduism, Secularism and the Indian Judiciary," in Bhargava, Rajeev., Ed, *Secularism and its Critics*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi. P. 268

3.3 SECULARISM: A LEGAL PERSPECTIVE

In dynamic socio-political scenario, contemporary Indian secularism can be clearly understood from its legal perspective. The Supreme Court of India, being the apex institution to interpret the Constitution, has a tremendous influence upon the structure and function of institutions, as well as on various matters relating to the social and religious lives of the society. In the absence of a clear constitutional definition of secularism in India, the Supreme Court has taken upon itself the task of setting the policy, especially in its activist role in the demarcation of the religion and secular realms. In fact, for over years, albeit, the courts, for the most part, have declared secularism as the fundamental law of the land and sought to delineate boundaries of sacred and the secular. However, the existing lack of uniformity and inconsistency in the interpretation of the nature of secularism in various court verdicts have been detrimental to the development of substantive secularism. In other words, the absence of consistent interpretation on the concept and practice of constitutional secularism on the part of legal-interpretation has further blurred the concept and practice of secularism in a diverse multi-religious Indian society and politics.

The historical legal jurisprudential trends of interlinking between law and religion can be traced from both the British colonial and post-Colonial legal-constitutional discourses. During the British colonial period, the scope and objective of legal jurisprudential was the civilizing mission of reforming the native's customary practices by a way of legislative interference. The legislative intent behind colonial regulations sought to check the prevalence of retrograde practices like child sacrifice, sati, the prohibition on widow-remarriage and child-marriage. Similarly, in the post-independence period, this trend continued with an intention to contain and regulate

certain religious practices, for promotion and achievement of democratic values. These interventions open up questions about the interplay between law and social change, freedom of religious practices, equal protection and state neutrality. This further led to speculate and question, as to whether the legal interpretations of secularism are compatible with the constitutional objectives of promoting 'democratic citizenship', protection of 'minority rights' and the advancement of 'rule of law'.³³ In fact, on one hand, the court plays an important role in examining whether religious liberty advanced or acted as a hindrance for the attainment of constitutional objectives. On the other hand, the court through its power of interpretation the Constitutional provisions, to some extent determined what constitutes the religion or non-religion aspect. This has resulted in re-structuring the religion and secular realms.

The colonial, as well as the post-independence period, judicial activities on religious-related issues were aimed at social reform measures and promote the Constitutional objectives of liberty, equality and fraternity. In various legal dimensions, the court had interpreted a version of positive secularism. Jurists such as Judge Gajendragadkar, Reddy and Ramaswamy, argued that the term positive secularism intended to convey a sense of the constitutional role of the State in confronting religious impediments to social reform. Justice Ramaswamy further indicates that "the State has a missionary role to reform the Hindu society and dilute the beliefs of caste hierarchy."³⁴ Therefore, at various legal junctures, the judgments of court focused on constitutional commitment to social reform, which means that

³³ Roover, Jakob De. (2002). "The Vacuity of Secularism, On the Indian debate and its Western origins," *Economic and Political Weekly*, (September 28). Pp. 4047-4052.

³⁴ Jacobson, Gary Jeffrey. (2005). *The Wheel of Law, India's Secularism in Comparative Constitutional Context*, Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford. P. 151.

government policies should be directed towards the promotion of democratic values, even if these policies were targeted against any religious practice and belief.

Another aspect of legal jurisdiction on matters of religion was the traits of formal courts to enquire into the essential and non-essential practices of religious groups. This tendency has emerged as colonial courts required to inquire into the scriptural authorities and customs of religious groups when confronted with litigation involving questions about proper observance of the practices and the management of property owned by endowments. Therefore, in dealing with disputes relating to religious matter, the higher judiciary has persisted with determining the scope of governmental regulation by demarcating between the 'essential' and 'secular' functions of religious groups and institutions.³⁵ Thus, in the context of Indian society, the judiciary through the judicial purview of essential and non-essential of religious practices to a large extent determined not only what constitutes a religion and religious realms but also refined the religious practice.

Notwithstanding, the Supreme Court in India is the sole legitimate authority to interpret the Constitution. Marc Galanter observed that Indian courts confront many problems in ascertaining religion in general and to a great deal more in the way of fixing particular religious identities on the account that the Indian Constitution and legal system embodied different relations of law to religion. For instance, Indian law permits application of different bodies of family law on religious lines; permits public laws, like those of religious trusts to be differentiated according to religion and permits protective or compensatory discrimination in favor of disadvantaged groups and these might sometimes be determined in part by religion. The penal law

³⁵ Balakrishnan, K.G. (2009). *Op.cit.*, p. 33.

in India is extraordinarily solicitous of religious sensibilities and undertakes to protect them from the offense. The electoral law attempts to abolish religious appeals in campaigning.³⁶ Recently, the existence of various versions and inconsistencies within legal interpretation of constitutional secularity has further added more ambiguity within the concept and practice of secularism. Apart from its tremendous functional role in determining and fixing the boundary and identity of religion, the excessive role of the state in regulating various religious aspects has further questioned the nature of separation principles of the secular state. In other words, it can be argued that the excessive penetration of law in religion aspects had to some extent violated the constitutional objective of securing equal religious right.

Judicial pronouncements are important in determining the essence of the implications of the secular objective of the Constitution. However, in the articulation of secular ideology, court judgments in various cases had reflected inconsistencies and contradictions from time to time. For instance, as early as 1954, in the *State of Bombay vs Narasu Appa Mali*, the Court upheld that personal laws did not fall within the ambit of laws in force and therefore, were not void even if it conflicted with the Fundamental Rights. Religious denominations had autonomy and personal laws were recognized as extra-constitutional laws. The judicial perception was that personal laws did not fall within its purview; scriptures and religious texts were not subject to judicial review. Contrary to above the case, in *Sarla Mudgal, President, Kalyani and others vs Union of India and others*, the court again reiterated the need for the Uniform Civil Code. Justice Kuldip Singh stated that the Uniform Civil Code was required for national integration. It was stated that minorities should give up their commitment to the two-nation theory and similarly accept reforms as the

³⁶ Galanter, Marc. (2004). *Op.cit.*, P. 270.

Hindus and promote national unity.³⁷ Thus, in the articulation of secularism, the judicial narrative on secularism has been inconsistent and dynamic, as it accentuates on protecting the minority rights in some instances and on the other instances it had the intention of promoting a homogenous culture within a diverse multi-religious society.

Another instance of judicial inconsistency was the landmark judgment in the S.R Bommai vs Union of India case, 1994. In the Bommai verdict, the Court opined that 'secularism' entailed a governmental responsibility to prevent and act against the incitement of religious hatred.³⁸ The Court opined that secularism meant a clear demarcation between the religious and political. At this instance, the court defined the secular and religious realms and maintained that religion was a private affair and any misuse of religion for political purposes is unconstitutional. In another case, Sirur Math Jagannath Temple and the Bombay Trust cases, the court assured all religions protection of their beliefs, practices and management of their religious institutions. Whereas in later cases, such as Ayodhya Reference, Nathdwara temple, Sri Lakshamana Yatendrulu, Vaishnodevi Shrine, Ismail Farugui and M H Querseshi vs the State of Bihar, the judiciary evolved the doctrine of essentiality of religious practices to be the basic criteria for the protection of religious freedom and practice. Religion, as interpreted by judiciary was restricted to that which was essential and non-essential feature were not protected. In Ismail Faruqui vs Union of India case, the majority of the Supreme Court's jurists opined that the court could, in the exercise of sovereign power, acquire places of worship like mosques, churches and

³⁷ Padhy, Sanghamitra. (2004). "Secularism and Justice: A Review of Indian Supreme Court Judgments," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 39, No. 46/47 (Nov. 20-26). P. 5031.

³⁸ Balakrishnan, K.G. (2009). Op.cit., Pp. 34-35.

temples for the maintenance of law and order. It further argued that while the offer of prayer or worship is an essential religious practice, however, the location where such prayers can be offered is not an essential religious practice.³⁹ Therefore, one can observe that the development of essentialism and non-essentialism interpretation of religion became a legitimate mechanism not only to determine what constituted religion but also determined what religious practice were allowed, which has a detrimental effect on the religious practice and identity. Court interpretation in a matter of religious aspects explicitly or implicitly has a detrimental effect on religion and politics.

The Hindutva judgments further added another dimension of contradiction of interface of law and religion. In *Ziyannudin Bukhari vs Mehra* case of 1975, *Ramesh Yashwant Prabhu vs Prabhakar K Khuntes and Suryakant Mahadhik's*, the court upheld that an appeal to promote a candidate on the basis of religion amounted to corrupt practice and was against the secular spirit of Constitution. However, in contradiction to earlier standpoint, in *Manohar Joshi's* case, the Supreme Court (SC) reversed its standpoint and ruled that the promise to establish the first Hindu state in Maharashtra did not amount to appealing for votes in the name of religion.⁴⁰ Further, in the *NCERT (National Council for Educational Research and Training)* text book case, the court seems to have accepted that secularism in India exists because of the tolerance of Hindus who are the majority of religions. The SC decreed that all faiths are equal. The majority view was that the essence of every religion is common; only the practice differs. Thereby, court interpretation of secularism took a new dimension in the form that there is hardly any difference among various religious faiths: what

³⁹ Padhy, Sanghamitra. (2004). *Op.cit*, P. 5030.

⁴⁰ Jacobson, Gary Jeffrey. (2005). *Op. cit.*, P. 194.

differs are practices. So, secularism became a practice-linked concept,⁴¹ rather than faith and belief. Thus, in these judgments, the court deviated from its earlier stand, where it declared that religion was a personal matter and could not be interfered. In later cases, it linked religion with essentiality of majority practice and emphasized on creation of a homogeneous society based on majority culture, rather than the promotion of plural cultures.

In the absence of substantive definition and demarcation between secular and religious realms on the part of the constitutional provisions, a critical analysis of various insights on court judgments indicated the overarching intervention of courts in regulating the religious affairs. Referring to various cases such as the *Hindutva*, the *Ismail Faruqi*, the *Sarla Mudgal* and the *NCERT* cases indicated that there was a move towards defining secularism in a majority culture and intolerance towards difference and pluralism. The court seems to have endorsed a concept of secularism that had its rationale in Hindu scriptures. In these judgments, the Court drew on the Hindu scriptures while defining secularism. J Verma justified a vision of secularism based on '*Sarva dharma sambhava*', that is, tolerance of all religions, that had its roots in the *Yajur Veda*, *Atharva Veda* and *Rig Veda* and Akbar's *Din Ilahi*. The reasoning of the former *Bommai* case was absent in later judgment. The judgment is based on two assumptions that were proved to be false at least in the light of the first assumption that tolerance was linked with ancient Hindu scriptures.⁴² The prevalence of religious violence in a majority Hindu state indicates the secular state has to some

⁴¹ Chakrabarty, Bidyut. (2008). *Indian Politics and Society since Independence, Events, processes and ideology*, Routledge Oxon, Pp. 172-174.

⁴² Padhy, Sanghamitra. (2014)., P. 5028.

extent failed to impart religious tolerance that is assumed as one of the characteristic of Indian secularism.

These assumptions underlines, instinctively appreciative of differences within the cultural resources that Indian civilization had already created. Drawn on the cultural logic, respective of the *Savarkarian pitribhumi–punyabhumi* formula, these assumptions feed the Hindu sectarian claim of accommodating diversity for a Pan-Indian identity. These assumptions also contribute to the view that secularism as tolerance is steadfast with Hindu interests, which subsumes other faiths within its philosophy. This leaves no space for ‘plural values’ as it privileges one set of values over the others. The Court had been insistent on ‘tolerance’, whereas in this judgment it appeared to have endorsed the spirit of assimilation, which stands in contradiction with the basic notion of Indian pluralism. There is an implicit aim of ‘creating oneness’ rather than allowing a definite space for social and political diversity. The problem with such notions is that they sought to create uniformity based on oneness rather than allowing space for diversity.⁴³ Judicial deliberations on the issues of secularism reveal that the court has taken the centre stage in decision-making. Judicial pronouncements on secular issues have thus been marked by contradictions. While in some cases it has promoted majority interests, by eroding the rights of minority groups, in others cases, it has privileged minority groups. This ambiguous trends of secularism defined in the interest of minority-majority context, rather than promoting the constitutional objective of pluralism had been a hindrance for sustaining the diverse cultural fabric of Indian society.

⁴³ Ibid., Pp. 5028-5031.

In the midst of increasing constitutionalization of religion aspects on account of excessive judicial intervention and state regulation of religion on one hand and the crisis of secularism to address the prevalent intensity of communalization of politics on the other hand, has brought the concept and practice of secularism at a risk of superseding the cultural pluralism and consequently demising the space for interreligious trust and dialogues. Therefore, there is a need to rethink secularism both at an institutional and constitutional level. Gary J Jacobsohn has pointed out that unless the attempt was made to isolate the existing dilemmas in what is integral to religion from what is not, social reform efforts would be obliged to carry the extra burden of overcoming religiously grounded practices that not only enjoyed the status of a way of life but also claim to exalt the theological importance. To the extent that judicially sanctioned social transformations were limited to nonessential matters, their legitimacy, as well as that of the Court itself would arguably be enhanced by such classification.⁴⁴

Similarly, Jakob De Roover also argued, Indian Courts are forever grappling with the competing strains of 'No concern secularism' which advocates a strict 'wall of separation' between the functions of State and religious practices and that of 'Equal respect secularism' which is comparable to the idea of '*Sarva Dharma Sambhava*' that mandates due recognition and acceptance of all religious practices. Therefore, at such junctures, it is essential that the judiciary played a balancing game between the competing claims of governmental action and religious liberty (of individuals or groups) by expounding on a fairly complex understanding of 'secularism'.⁴⁵ Particularly, in the midst of increasing intensity of prosecution of

⁴⁴ Jacobson, Gary Jeffrey. (2005). Op.cit., P. 259.

⁴⁵ Balakrishnan, K.G. (2009). Op.cit., P. 2.

religious minorities, honor killing in the name of caste and public lynching in the name of religious issues, the Supreme Court being the legitimate and final legal interpreter of Constitution, holds a significant role in reforming the traits and trends of secularism in a multi-religious society. Judicial activity holds an important place not only in balancing the role between religion and politics but also in facilitating democratic values and plural values of diverse society.

3.4 DEBATE ON INDIAN SECULARISM

Notwithstanding, the Indian State claims of formal secular State, Secularism remains to be an issue of controversy in the contemporary society and politics of India. The prevalence of communal tension, disharmony and religious conflicts clearly indicated that there is a flaw and crisis within the concept and practice of secularism in India. Thus, in this backdrop, various discourses of debate on secularism have recently emerged and questioned the nature of Indian secularism.

The prevalence of communalization of politics on religious lines, the emergence of religious-based nationalism, legal-constitutional inconsistency and variation of interpretation of secular and religion has been mainly due to an internal crisis within the secular state. One group of scholars argued that the policy of secularism was responsible for exacerbating the problem of communal violence and religious fundamentalism. Another group of scholars argued that secularism was indispensable and instead of discussing its alternative, it is important to find an alternative conception of secularism that suited Indian realities. In brief, one group of scholars called for its re-evaluation, arguing that secularism might be the cause and not the solution of religious violence. Another group tried to defend secularism especially in the face of the threat posed by increasing communal politics and

religious strife.⁴⁶

Since the 1980s, critics of Indian secularism argued that the flaws within Indian secularism were first, on account that the secular state had been neither impartial nor detached from religion. It has regularly intervened in the affairs of some religious communities while leaving the others alone. Secondly, on account of the absence of substantive notion and practice of secularism, it is argued that the notion of "secularism" in India is obscure and that it meant different meanings and practices to different people. Thirdly, some argue that secularism was imposed on a deeply religious Indian population by westernized elites. They argued that the idea of secularism may make sense in Western society, but not in a pervasive religious society like India.⁴⁷ Thus, in the Indian context secularism has failed not only to delinked religion and politics but also addressed the prevalence of communal or religious related violence that directly or indirectly contained the exercise of citizenship rights endowed by the Constitution of India.

Indian secularism since its inception has no fixed content, but "multiple interpretations and implications that changed over time. Indian secularism is distinct from western secularism, for it was the product of Indian national movement intending to contain communalization of politics, undemocratic ethics and preservation of the unity of diverse multicultural society.⁴⁸ In the late 1980s, the debate over the terms and implications of secularism in the Indian context has been

⁴⁶ Sharma, Chetna. (2015-2016). "Understanding Indian Secularism Debates," *Akademios, An Annual Peer-Reviewed Research Journal*, Kamala Nehru College, New Delhi, P.143

⁴⁷ Bhargava, Rajeev. Ed. (2004). *Secularism and its Critics*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

⁴⁸ Roover, Jakob De. Claerhout, Sarah & Balagangadhara, S. N. (2011), "Liberal Political Theory and the Cultural Migration of Ideas: The Case of Secularism in India," *Political Theory*, Vol. 39, No. 5 October. Pp. 571-599

so intensified that it became a part of the everyday vocabulary of Indian politics and society. T N Madan argues secularism as a multi-vocal word, what it means depends upon who uses the word and in what context⁴⁹ and culture. Indeed, secularism, as experienced in a pervasive multi-religious state of India, is subtly different. Religion in India is more politicized than politics itself.⁵⁰ Neera Chandhoke an eminent political theorist, argued that the post-partition realities and communal riots "proved that religious prejudices more than religious sensibilities had become a constituent feature of Indian politics and to ignore this would have been bad historical understanding as well as bad politics."⁵¹ Dipankar Gupta, argues that the term secular state was commonly used in present-day India to describe the relationship that exists, or which ought to exist, between state and religion.⁵² In fact, in a multi-religious state of India, albeit secularism is assumed as a relative separation or demarcation of religion and politics. However, in a pervasive religious society, religion, identity and cultural systems were deeply interlinked, where the boundary between religion and politics is blurred and is hardly possible to bifurcate.

Contemporary debates on Indian secularism can be understood from various discourses, one such discourse is a scholarly debate on concepts and practices of secularism. Academicians, such as, Ashis Nandy, Romila Thapar and T N Madan had questioned the concept and practice of secularism and strongly argued that India

⁴⁹ Madan, T N. (1997). *Modern Myths, Locked Minds: Secularism and Fundamentalism in India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press. P. 235.

⁵⁰ Thapar, Romila. (2010). "Is Secularism alien to Indian civilization?" in Singh, Akash & Mohapatra, Silika. Eds, *Indian Political Thought, A Reader*, Routledge, London and New York. P. 75

⁵¹ Chandhoke, Neera (2013), "Secularism," in Jayal, Niraja Gopal & Mehta, Pratap Bhanu, Eds. *The Oxford Companion to Politics in India*, India. P. 335.

⁵² Gupta, Dipankar. (1991). "Communalism and Fundamentalism: Some Notes on the Nature of Ethnic Politics in India," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 11 and 12, March. P. 573.

secularism is an alien, imported and inappropriate to the cultural practices of Indian society. On the other side are scholars such as Rajeev Bhargava, Amartya Sen, Thomas Phatham and Marc Galender defending secularism as a mechanism to address the problem of a multi-religious and religiously divided society. Critics of Indian secularism such as Ashis Nandy, Thapar, T N Madan, Partha Chatterjee, Romila Thapar and Akeel Bilgrami, have called for re-examining the concept and practice of secularism.

Critics opined that the ideology of secularism was not adequate or appropriate political perspective to meet the challenge of the Indian pervasive multi-religious society. Romila Thapar argues, in contemporary society secularism goes beyond just politics, although our political parties have attempted to reduce it to a political slogan. So one party endorses it in theory but hesitates to apply it properly in practice, the other makes fun of it since the party's foundational ideology is anti-secular.⁵³ She further argued that when secularism posited as opposed to religion in India, the discussion was generally limited to only a segment of Hinduism, namely Vedic Brahmanism and Puranic Hinduism, the more extensive articulation of religion in India is not included.⁵⁴ Indeed, in India cultural context, normative secularism understood as a separation of Church-State has hardly any implications in social and political milieu.

Nandy, an anti-secularist, argues that the ideology and politics of secularism have exhausted its possibilities in India. He locates the cause of new religious violence in secularism and modernity. For Nandy, secularism is a 'gift of

⁵³ Romila Thapar breaks down what Secularism is and is not in the Indian context, <https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2015/10/secularism-in-india-romila-thapar/>. Retrieved 21 Sept. 2017

⁵⁴ Thapar, Romila, (2010), Op.Cit., P. 76.

Christianity' and a child of modernity and colonialism. Nandy's rejection of secularism is rooted in a two-fold critique of modern culture, society and critique of the secular state. In contrast to the Western version of secularism, where scientific management of the public sphere side-lined or abolished religion, Nandy proposed a non-Western religion centered on an understanding of secularism that supported equal respect for all religions and suits South Asian realities. The idea of secularism that gave the state the role of ultimate arbiter among different religions and communities was incompatible with the understanding and role of religion in the life of people in South Asia. According to Nandy, secularism is a product of western science and rationality which functioned as the ideology of modern State, which according to Nandy is a source of most contemporary problems. As an alternative to the Western model of secularism, Nandy pleads for the recovery of India's traditional religious tolerance. This version of secularism derives religious tolerance from Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism respectively.⁵⁵ However, considering the increasing intensity of communalization of politics and communal violence. Nandy's perception of tolerance derived from traditional religion is limited, as it has failed to understand the changing role of religion in the communalization of politics.

In a similar tone, T N Madan also criticized the idea of secularism albeit he does not dismiss it. He cautions against unproblematic adaption of secularism in South Asian realities. Quoting Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Madan argues that although the word secularism could be translated it is difficult to translate an idea that the word denotes if that idea does not exist among people whose language translation is required. The idea of secularism as it is transferred to countries of

⁵⁵ Nandy, Ashis. (1995). "An Anti-Secularist Manifesto," *India International Centre Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 1, Secularism in Crisis, (SPRING), Pp. 35-64.

South Asia also poses many difficulties. South Asia is a multi-religious society and the majority of the people living in this region are active adherents of some religious faith. While secularism is impractical for State action because Buddhism and Islam have been declared as State religions by neighbouring states. The policy of equidistance is also difficult to maintain since religious minorities do not share the majority's view of what this entails for the State. It has failed to bring under control divisive forces which resulted in the partition of the subcontinent in 1947 and also failed to counter religious fundamentalism. Madan argued that in Western society, secularisation was facilitated by internal reformation within Christianity.⁵⁶

In contrast to the West, South Asia's major religious traditions do not assume any contradiction between the sacred and the secular. Religion covers all aspects of life, therefore, it is impossible to restrict it to the private domain. Religion as the doctrine of overarching ends is the most important factor in the lives of people of India and South Asia. Religion gives meaning to the lives of most of the people and also determines their place in society. Thus, for Nandy, to impose secularism on believers is an act of moral arrogance and political folly. Religion and the belief of people could be taken seriously and should be given its place in society because the denial of legitimacy to religion in the society of believers provokes fundamentalism on the part of religious zealots. Through religious pluralism and inter-religious harmony could be established. Secularism and religious faith can be recognized to be compatible with each other. The alternative conception in Madan's view is Gandhism because it has the possibility of inter-religious understanding.⁵⁷ Thus, Madan appeal

⁵⁶ Madan, T N, (2004), "Secularism and Its Place," in Bhargava, Rajeev. Ed., *Secularism and its Critics*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, Pp. 297-299

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Pp. 298-319.

for a shared space where both religion and politics could be interfaced and derive tolerance from the inter-religious dialogue. Madan seems to have proposed a post-secular notion of secularism, where religious issues and sentiment could have its proper place in politics.

Akkel Bilgrami criticizes both Nehruvian forms of secularism and Nandy conception of religious tolerance, on the account that the former lacks of internal build democratic processes and platform in articulating the subject and later for practicing both nostalgia and skewed historiography. While Nandy is right in arguing that different religious traditions had their specific source of the realization of a tolerant way of life, his ideas on the rise of Hindu Nationalism is oversimplified. According to Bilgrami, Nandy's anti-secular proposal had its flaws in it because the condition for different religious traditions and communities has changed in modern India. Bilgrami also opined that Nehruvian secularism stands in a conceptual and political space that lies outside the sphere of substantive political commitments as secularism does not emerged as the product of negotiation and dialogue between religious communities. It was adopted from above as an Archimedean point. Bilgrami argued that, if it would have been the result of debate and understanding of different communities, then different groups would have subscribed to it. The presence of different communities in the State is important and these communities could play a very important role in designing secular principles.⁵⁸

In this backdrop, Bilgrami advocates the model of negotiated or emergent secularism which is based on moderate religious persons embracing the principle of secularism not based on universalistic rationality but their internal value system. He

⁵⁸ Bilgrami, Akeel, (2004), "Secularism, Nationalism and Modernity," in Bhargava, Rajeev. Ed., *Secularism and its Critics*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi. Pp. 380-384.

argues that rather than seeking a neutral common agreement, communities should contribute to a secular outcome for different reasons and substantive values. In short, he argued that rather than an imposed secularism, secularism could emerge from the bottom up through the incorporation of moderate political voices and assumptions of different communities.⁵⁹ Thus, Bilgrami argued for a more comprehensive and inclusive structure of secularism, which would be the product of internal deliberation and consensus.

Similarly, Partha Chatterjee like Madan and Nandy opined that the ideology of secularism was not an adequate political perspective for meeting the challenge of Hindu majoritarianism. According to Chatterjee, since its birth, the project of the nation-state in India has been implicated in a contradictory movement about the modernist mission of secularisation. One part of this nationalist-modernist project was an attempt at secularisation of the public-political sphere by separating it from religion, whereas on another part was the reformist intervention of the state in the socio-religious sphere, mostly of the Hindus. Describing the contradiction between these two parts of the project of modernist secularisation, Chatterjee writes that the interventionist violation by the state, of secularism's principle of the separation of state and religion was justified by the desire to secularize, looking at the three principles of secularism, such as religious freedom, equality and neutrality. He argued that the fact that the use of state legislation to bring about reforms in only the religion of the majority was creating a serious anomaly in the very notion of equal

⁵⁹ Ibid., Pp. 410-417.

citizenship. Neutrality or separation of state and religion has been violated as a result of state entangled in various affairs of religion.⁶⁰

According to Chatterjee, the Indian situation calls for a different relationship between the state and civil society than normative secularism. The respect for cultural diversity and different ways of life finds it impossible to articulate itself in unitary rationalism of the language of rights. Chatterjee search for a relatively autonomous sphere that defines the relationship between the domains of state and civil society in term of individual rights. The conflict between the claims of secular-rational universalism and the claims for autonomy and respect for religious or ethnic minorities is not simply a conflict between reason and faith; it is a cognitive-political conflict over issues of identity and difference. Hence, he calls for a conception of tolerance which recognizes that there was a political context where groups could insist on its right not to give reasons for doing things differently provided it explains itself adequately in its chosen forum. In other words, toleration here would be premised on autonomy and respect for persons but would be sensitive to the varying political salience of the institutional contexts in which reasons are debated. Chatterjee goes beyond traditional normative in search of a political conception of tolerance as part of the non-Western form of modernity in India. Finding that the liberal democratic state can only recognize individual rights and not the collective rights of cultural or religious groups. According to him, what is needed in India, is the toleration of religious and cultural rights of different groups.⁶¹ Chatterjee advocates not only protection of minority group right in a secular state, but also

⁶⁰ Chatterjee, Partha. (1994). "Secularism and Tolerance," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 29, No. 8, July 9. Pp. 1769-1772.

⁶¹Ibid, Pp. 1773-1775.

appeal for internal democratization of religious group, where individual rights would not be superseded by group rights.

In brief, Nandy, Madan, Bilgrami and Chatterjee denounced the Indian version of secularism, but each of them differs in their critical perspectives and a search for an alternative notion of secularism. Nandy's anti-secularist manifesto offers a religious tolerance that he assumed can be derived from a non-modern, pre-liberal philosophy, symbolism and theology of tolerance in the everyday faiths of Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Sikhism, as an alternative to the modern notion of secularism. Though Nandy dismisses secularism altogether, Madan suggests that State practices of secularism had to take religion seriously and inculcate religious values within the secular realm. Both Nandy and Madan argued that considering the pervasive religious society of India, the normative notion of separation of state from politics is not only incompatible but also inappropriate in most of the South Asian societies and politics. Both assumed that people could learn tolerance more from religious values and ethics rather than from the modern notion of secularism. Chatterjee explores an alternative normative framework to address the problem of minorities in a diverse religious society. He suggests, rather than any universalist framework of reason, tolerance, respect and internal democratization of religious groups could provide an alternative framework for India's diverse cultural society. Romila Thapar, an eminent historian argues that in Indian socio-religious culture and political context, secularism was an alien culture to Indian civilization and therefore to follow the secularisation of Indian society had no place in contemporary Indian values.

Another way to understand the debate on Indian secularism is to view India's constitutional perspective and its practice. Donald E Smith examines the nature of secularism in India from three secular credentials such as freedom of religion,

citizenship, right to equality and separation of State and religion. According to Smith, while freedom of religion and equal citizenship has been duly incorporated in the Indian Constitution, State's right to intervene in the religious matters importantly compromises these two principles. Thus, India has some but not all features of a secular State. Smith further argued that the consolidation of the secular State was problematic on account of prevalent caste and religious attachment in politics.⁶² Despite these problems in Smith's perspective of secularism in India, one can argue that Smith's analysis of secularism was stressed on normative understanding which had a certain limitation with the Indian socio-cultural milieu.

Galanter criticized Smith for considering American experience based on two conceptions of secularism as a strict wall of separation doctrine and no preference doctrine as an ideal. Galanter argues that Indian secularism cannot be judged with reference to an idealized American pattern and to have a better understanding it is important to delink it from the western shape by these standards and in the mode of intervention religious authority is directly challenged and a change is attempted from within the religious tradition. Both modes accept the external superiority of legal norms. According to Galanter secularism embodied in the Indian Constitution exemplifies the limitation mode.⁶³ Indeed, the concept and practice of Indian secularism is not based on the principle of an absolute separation of state from religion as proposed by an idealised American and French model of strict separation but reflected upon its flexibility and relative separation, which is demystified in the form of contextual perspectives.

⁶² Smith, Donald E. (1963). *India as a Secular State*, Princeton University Press, USA, Pp. 230-254

⁶³ Sharma, Chetna. (2015-2016). *Op.cit.*, Pp. 145-146

In response to crises and debates on Indian secularism, Thomas Pantham in his critique to Nandy argued that it could be a difficult and flawed argument to argue a return from modern Indian secularism to the religious tolerance of pre-modern times, as Nandy failed to acknowledge or underemphasize the implication of the religious life in India. Before the onslaught of Western Post-Enlightenment, modernity was not free from tyrannical Brahmanism and other forms of religious intolerance. Challenging Nandy's interpretation of Gandhian philosophy, Nandy (quoting Gandhiji) claims that Gandhi showed us a way of rejecting modernity in favor of a non-modern way of tolerant religious living. Pantham in his critique of Nandy viewed on Gandhi secularism, argues that Gandhi was far from making any wholesale rejection of modernity but did rely on the civil liberties and democratic rights components of modern liberal democracy.

In brief, Pantham argued that critics of Indian secularism had misinterpreted Gandhian perspective either as a pre-modern, pre-liberal, anti-secular approach to religious tolerance or as a traditional peasant-communal moralism that has been re-done either for sub-serving the bourgeois-liberal project of modernity in India or for promoting communalism among both Hindu and Muslim. Against these interpretations, Pantham suggests that Gandhi pioneered a way of moral-political experimentation in which the relative autonomy of religion and politics from each other is used for the reconstruction of both the religious traditions and the modern state. Pantham argues that it is incorrect, to speak of Nehruvian secularism and Gandhian religiosity in dichotomous terms. Such a reading would deny the advantages of richer, more enabling moral-political legacy which is continuously relevant for a multicultural society.⁶⁴ Thus, Pantham illustrated a new perspective to

⁶⁴ Pantham, Thomas. (1997). *Op.cit.*, Pp. 537-540.

understand secularism from both Gandhian and Nehruvian traditions of secularism.

Rajeev Bhargava, an Indian political theorist argued that, unlike the Western normative secularism, Indian secularism is a multi-value character and it valued religious liberty, equality, peace and toleration. The core idea of secularism then is the separation of religion and state for the sake of religious liberty and equality of free citizenship. Bhargava argued that some alleged misconception of secularism can be ruled out from the conception of secularism. First, the point about the constitutive link between a secular state with the value of liberty and equality, removes a widespread misunderstanding that assumed that the only thing required for a state to be secular is the separation from religion. The purely instrumentalist view of secularism is that, whether or not any substantive value is realized even when that some key values are undermined, a state is secular if religious and political institutions are separated. Second a non-instrumentalist view that overburden secularism is equally mistaken. This view identifies secularism with rationalism, individualism, disenchantment, scientisation indeed with a particular extremely partial, prejudice understanding of the whole process of modernization. Secularism is not a comprehensive doctrine laden with every single substantive value in the empire of modernity nor it is merely a strategy with instrumental significance. Rather, it seeks separation for the sake of specific values. Third, secularism is not a single value doctrine. Given the above outline, further a state that does not show equal respect to all religious groups and its members and more particularly, a state that

does not grant equal citizenship rights is not a secular state. It follows that toleration and secularism are two different, quite incompatible ideals.⁶⁵

Bhargava argued that the state in the Indian Constitution appears to possess all the features outlined above of a secular state. Article 27 rules out public funding of religion and Article 28 (1) under which no religious instruction is to be provided in any educational institutions wholly maintained out of state fund. Article 25, 27 and 28 guarantee religious liberty and meet the condition. Under Article 25 (1) all person is equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion. The phrase freedom of conscience is meant to cover the liberty of person without religion under Article 27; no person is compelled to pay any taxes, the proceeds of which are specifically appropriated in payment of expenses for the promotion and maintenance of any particular religion or religious denominations. Finally, under Article 28 (3), no person attending any educational institution shall be required to take part in any religious instruction or to attend any religious worship that may be conducted in such an institution. Equality of citizenship is guaranteed by Article 14, 15 (1) and 29 (2) of the Indian Constitution. Article 15 (1) states that the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them. Article 29 (2) declares that no citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the state on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them. Article 16 (1) and (2) of the Indian Constitution affirm equal opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment of any office under the state. It further affirms that no citizen, on grounds of religion or race, be eligible for

⁶⁵ Bhargava, Rajeev. (2012). "India's Secular Constitution," in Vanaik, Achin and Bhargava, Rajeev. Eds, *Understanding Contemporary India, Critical Perspectives* (Reprint), Orient Blackswan Private Limited, New Delhi. Pp. 24-25

or discriminated against in respect of any employment or office under the state. The clause on universal franchise as well as Article 325 declares a general electoral roll for all constituencies and states that no one shall be ineligible for inclusion in this roll on the ground of religion embodies in the value of equal active citizenship. This feature is specified in the articles on the equality of active citizens.⁶⁶

Articles, 15, 16, 25, 29 (2) and 325 support the wall of separation interpretation. Though there is no direct reference to disestablishment, Article 27 and 28 (1) imply strict separation. Article 60 confirms the strictly neutral character of the Indian Constitution. Thus, it appears that the state in India is constitutionally bound to follow Smith model of secularism. However, further examination of the Constitution reveals this impression to be mistaken. To begin with, Article 30 (1) recognizes the rights of religious minorities which unlike other articles applicable to citizens qua individuals are group-specific. Article 30 (2) commits the state to give aid to educational institutions established and administered by religious communities. Also permitted is religious instruction in educational institutions partly funded by the state. Even more significant are Articles 17 and 25 (2) that require the state to intervene in religious affairs. Article 25 (2) states that nothing in Article 25 (1) prevents the state from making a law providing for social welfare and reform or the growing open of Hindu religious institutions of a public character to all classes and sections of Hindus. Article 17 is an uninhibited, robust attack on the caste system, arguably the central feature of Hinduism, by abolishing untouchability and

⁶⁶ Ibid., P. 26.

by making the enforcement of any disability arising out of it an offense punishable by law.⁶⁷

Bhargava argued that the Constitution respected and recognized the community-specific rights and followed an approach of principled distance to deal with the religious issues. It is not the mutual exclusion of State and religion and accepts a disconnection between State and religion at the level of ends and institutions but does not make a fetish of it at the third level of policy and law. It uniquely combines an active hostility to some aspects of religion with equally active respect for its other dimensions. It attends to the issues of intra-religious oppression and inter-religious domination. In defense of political secularism Bhargava criticize Nandy and Madan's thesis on secularism and argued that "modern secularism arose because the resources of tolerance within traditional religion had exhausted their possibility."⁶⁸

Bhargava further argued that different conceptions of secularism depended on how the metaphor of separation was defined. He describes Indian secularism as contextual secularism, which broadly implies to the principled or non-sectarian distance between the state and religion. State excludes religion for some purposes and includes it for some other purpose, but it is always guided by non-sectarian principles constituting a set of values that incorporated equal dignity for all. Within contextual secularism, the policy of principled distance entails a flexible approach to the question of inclusion/exclusion of religion and the engagement/disengagement of the state, depends on the context, nature or current state of relevant religions. This

⁶⁷ Ibid, P. 29

⁶⁸ Bhargava, Rajeev. (2004). "What is Secularism for?" in Bhargava, Rajeev. Ed, *Secularism and its Critics*, OUP, Delhi. P. 530

means that the state is justified to intervene in the affairs of religion, as long as its intervention promoted freedom, equality or any other value integral to secularism. Precisely, Bhargava argues that political secularism is only a viable mechanism to address the problem of secularism in a multi-religious state such as India.⁶⁹ For Bhargava, secularism implies a non-sectarian, a contextual approach where the intervention or non-intervention between religion and state is justified as long as it promoted the democratic values and norms.

Similarly, Amartya Sen argues that the principle of secularism did not require that the state must steer clear of any association with any religious matter. Rather what was required was to ensure that in so far as the State had to deal with different religions and members of different religious communities there must be a basic symmetry of treatment. The virtue of this approach emphasizes the requirement of symmetric treatment that leaves open the question as to what form that symmetry should take. Sen's formula of basic symmetry of treatment illustrates that the theoretical inadequacy of the secular discourse was largely due to lack of stability in the essential conceptual distinction between the religious and the secular. Sen defends secularism as part of a more comprehensive idea that of India as an integrally plural country made up of different religious beliefs, language groups and divergent social practices. It is part of the bigger project of recognizing this heterogeneity. Engaging with six strands of critique against secularism, Sen argues that any re-examination of the difficult question relating to the principle of symmetrical treatment of different religious communities must arise within a

⁶⁹ Bhargava, Rajeev. (2013). "Reimagining Secularism, Respect, Domination and Principled Distance," *Economics and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLVIII. No.50. Pp. 86-88.

commitment to secularism.⁷⁰ Thus, Sen advocated a symmetrical equilibrium in the form of differential treatment to address the problem of a diverse multi-cultural society of India.

Achin Vanaik criticizes both the idea given by Nandy and Madan, on the basis that it was grounded on the traditional idea of embedded self and support a form of religious communitarianism. Despite theoretical insightfulness, the 'anti secularist' legitimizes politics of religious identity. According to Vanaik, Nandy's idea of replacement of secular state and secular public morality with religion-based public morality of tolerance is dangerous. While for Nandy, secular state is imposed from above on traditional society. Achin Vanaik argues that, in a non-denominational State of India, with substantively secularized laws, resting on a secular Constitution, the coexists of civil society and religious influence gave rise to a profound tension. Even the flawed 'secularity' that the Indian state possesses makes it a crucial bulwark against the growing tide of communalism.⁷¹ Vanaik in his critique to Nandy argued that traditional beliefs and practices were responsible for undermining the secular state and democratization of society. The root cause of religious communalism is religion itself. The struggle against religion should not be limited to setting up a state equally tolerant of all religions but extend to the secularisation and diminution of religion in civil society. He further argued that the notion of secularism or secularisation as tolerance was neither a proper goal or an adequate means. The secular state in India must endorse a basic separation of state and religion, strengthened by further secularisation of state law, state apparatuses and state

⁷⁰ Sen, Amartya. (2004). "Secularism and Its Discontents," in Bhargava Rajeev, Ed., *Secularism and its Critics*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi. Pp. 454-485.

⁷¹ Vanaik Achin, Reflections on Communalism and Nationalism in India, [http://content.csbs.utah.edu/~mli/Economies%205430-6430/Vanaik Communism%20and%20Nationalism%20in%20India.pdf](http://content.csbs.utah.edu/~mli/Economies%205430-6430/Vanaik%20Communism%20and%20Nationalism%20in%20India.pdf). Retrieved on 18 September, 2016

policies. The effort to secularize civil society in India must be a mean of striving to reduce the religious influence, religious identity and increasing intensity of privatization and operationalization of religious commitment.⁷²

Sharing a common ideological ground with both the orthodox and subaltern schools of Marxism, Vanaik interprets Gandhi's mixing of politics with religious idioms of ahimsa and trusteeship as a strategy of class accommodation for preventing any socialist revolution against capitalism. Gandhi mobilized masses in the Indian national movement but this contributed to conservative anti communalism, religious nationalism in contrast to a secular, democratic and egalitarian nationalism.⁷³ Vanaik argued that the rapid secularisation of society and politics could be an answer to the problem and crisis of secularism in India. However, to establish Gandhi's philosophy, as against the democratic values of tolerance, fraternity and harmony are fallible, as can be observed from Gandhi's politics during the national movement. Therefore, Vanaik views on Gandhi's philosophy is only one dimension and limited.

Neera Chandhoke argues that the concept such as secularism could be understood if viewed from its wider conceptual context of which it forms part and unravels its meaning concerning the meaning of equality, freedom and democracy. The Indian version of secularism is rooted in the principle of *Sarva dharma sambhava* which requires equal respect for all religions. She argued that the premise of equality of all religions is problematic in a multi-religious society where religious communities are divided based on majority-minority and some minorities are weak and extremely poor. In this background, the idea of secularism as equality of religion

⁷² Vanaik, Achin. (1997). *The Furies of Indian Communalism, Religion Modernity and Secularisation*. Verso, UK & New York. P. 117.

⁷³ Sharma, Chetna (2015-2016). Op.cit., Pp. 145-146.

when employed by Hindu right put pressure on religious minorities. She proposed a principle of substantive equality that could facilitate equality within both intergroup and intragroup equality and defends the protection of minority rights. This principle demands to recognize institutionalized inequalities in society and to rectify inequality in such a way that it benefitted the least well off that might include accommodating minority rights.⁷⁴ Neera Chandhoke offers an un-identical perspective theory of equal right for minority rights, a shift from normative secular approach towards inclusive moral equality.

Thus, the growing intensity of debate on Indian secularism not only acknowledged and identified the flaws and crisis of Indian secularism but also enhance our understanding and provide an epistemological insight on the complex and dynamic nature of interlinkage of religion, identity politics and citizenship rights in the contemporary multicultural state of India.

3.5 CONTEMPORARY ISSUES AND CHALLENGE OF INDIAN SECULARISM

Despite various constitutional provisions on secularism which ensure to secure for all its citizens: social, economic and political justice, liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, equality of status, opportunity and promotes among them all fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation. In 1976, the word 'secular' was inserted in the Preamble of the Constitution, yet it has failed to bring any substantive structural change within the concept and practice of secularism in India. One of the major problems of demystifying Indian secularism is the absence of proper criteria, parameters and democratic consensus to establish a structure to demarcate the secular and religious realms.

⁷⁴ Chandhoke, Neera. (2010). *Op.cit.*, Pp. 335-345.

Notwithstanding, India follows the path of liberal secular ideal of sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic republic. The nature of Indian secularism has been a highly contested issue from various dimensions, such as ideological differences, minority-majority issue, group rights against individual right, state intervention against the principles of equidistance or equal respect or tolerance of all religions, various inconsistency on reinterpretation of secularism (legal perspective) in matter determining the essential and non-essential character of religion has been an issues of controversy in a multi-religious state. These developments within Indian society and politics has undermined the constitutional objective of securing democratic rights and social justice.

The ideal notion of state neutrality has been repeatedly questioned and challenged from various dimensions. Marc Galanter argued that the notion of religion as essentially private and separate from public life is an indefensible dogma to those who hold religion to encompass more than a doctrine, worship and private conduct, but to provide obligatory principles for the ordering of public life. Secularism cannot be entirely neutral among religions when confined them to their proper sphere. Galanter infers that in assessing the thrust of Indian secularism, equating secularism with the formal standard of religious neutrality or impartiality on the part of the state could be avoided. No secular state is or can be merely neutral or impartial among religions, for the state defines the boundaries within which neutrality must operate.⁷⁵ Albeit state neutrality towards religious groups is assumed as one of the basic principles of secularism. However, in the context of diverse multi-religious Indian society, the notion of strict neutrality hardly had any implication in Indian politics. Existence of special rights in the constitutional provisions for some

⁷⁵ Galanter, Marc. (2004). *Opcit.*, Pp. 259-280

groups and the exception of the other groups from these special constitutional provisions has been an issue of intense controversy in contemporary society and politics of India.

Though the Indian constitutional scheme is generally described as embodying equal respect secularism, the notion has been on many occasions repeatedly tested in terms of the constitutional provision to secure equal rights among the majority-minority community. Continuance of constitutional allowance of special provisions for minorities, in terms of recognition of minority rights to religious instruction in educational institutions and special rights to certain religious groups to administer on their social and religious customs, has been portrayed as against the secular character of equality. For instance, Article 44 of the Indian Constitution, which asks the State to endeavor and secure the Uniform Civil Code for its citizens throughout the territory of India is currently at the centre of heated public debate. The liberalists' case for the Uniform Civil Code was vehemently opposed on the ground that the imposition of uniformity would reflect majoritarian beliefs and would hence erode the identity of minority groups such as Muslims, Christians, Parsees and Jews.⁷⁶ Therefore, in the absence of the Uniform Civil Code, the concept of equal respect secularism has been severely criticized by the majority Hindu. The majority Hindu felt that the state intervened in the codification of Hindu law, but exempted the other to freely practicing their laws has been viewed as a violation of formal equal protection under Article 14.⁷⁷ The majority view that any deviation from formal equality was a threat to the majority culture and termed the prevailing notion of secularism as pseudo-secularism. Thereby, the inability to evolve consensual secular

⁷⁶ Balakrishnan, K.G. (2009). *Op.cit.*, P. 24.

⁷⁷ <http://indianexpress.com/article/explained/in-fact-uniform-civil-code-debate-is-not-new-divided-constituent-assembly-as-well-3086583/> Retrieved 2 November, 2018

principles has not only polarized the society on the basis of religion and politics but also intensified the communalization of politics.

Another testing ground and challenge for secularism is in terms of the interface between religious group rights and social justice. For instance, in the Shahbano Case (1987), where judicial interventions were described as attempts to safeguard the status of women in respect of Muslim personal law and the issue of triple talaq has been a paradoxical case. With the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) accusing the government of attempting to sneak it in under the garb of promoting gender equality through its opposition to triple talaq in the Supreme Court, the case for uniformity in personal laws has been opposed by relying on the language of 'equal protection' which justifies differential treatment for preserving the identity of religious minorities. However, when viewed from the context of social justice, the logic of non-interference has a detrimental effect on ensuring gender-based equality and social justice. The debate has also been cast as posing a dilemma for a constitutional system in a pluralist society by describing it as a clash between the 'group rights' of religious minorities to continue with their laws and the 'individual rights' of members of such minorities who face discrimination on account of these customs.⁷⁸ Therefore, in a contemporary diverse multi-religious society, the existence of various special rights to minorities has been a controversial issue, not only to the extent that it upset and polarized the relationship between the minority and majority religious groups, but also further became a factor that undermined the democratic value of equity and social justice.

In the backdrop of the absence of substantive theory or practice of

⁷⁸ Balakrishnan, K.G. (2009). *Op.cit.*, Pp. 25-26.

constitutional secularism, the interface between religion and law has confronted a dynamic twist. Various instances, such as, the Hindutva judgment, religious discrimination, gender inequality, lynching of minorities, attacks on minority religious institutions, role of state in controlling communal riots and more recently the distinctive efforts made to recast the history curriculum for government schools has seriously attempted to build a homogeneous cultural society, that could be detrimental to religious belief and practice of diverse multi-religious society. The constitutionalization and legalization of every aspect of society have opened a space for legal penetration of politics deep into religious domain. Albeit, the constitution does not say to practice only the essence of religion, the court had taken a centre stage to qualify or disqualify such matter as essential and non-essential elements of religion, the courts can discard as non-essentials anything which the court decides to prove as essential elements of religion and in the process religion lost its constitutional rights. This has considerably contained the free exercise to profess, practice and propagate religious rights. In brief, the increasing jurisprudential task of determining and distinguishing the essential from non-essential religious activity has enabled the judiciary to encroach deeply into the domain of the religion.

Amid dynamic social and political development, the recent introduction of Citizen Amendment Act (CAA), 2019 has brought a new debate on Indian secularism and constitutionalism. According to enacted Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB), the Act open its citizenship door to members of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities, who have come from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, which are declared Islamic nations - till December 31, 2014 and facing religious persecution there, will not be treated as illegal immigrants but given Indian

citizenship.⁷⁹

A key argument against the CAB is that it will not extend to those persecuted in Myanmar and Sri Lanka, from where Rohingya Muslims and Tamils are staying in the country as refugees. Further, it fails to allow Shia and Ahmadiyya Muslims, who also face persecution, to apply for citizenship. The exemption from the application of the CAB's provisions in tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura and the Inner Line Permit areas in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur, is clearly based on political expediency, even if it is in line with the constitutional guarantees given to indigenous populations and statutory protection given to Inner Line Permit (IPL) areas. It demonstrates the need for careful and meaningful categorisation, something that the main provisions fail to do. The central feature of the equal protection of the law envisaged in Article 14 is that the basis for classifying a group for a particular kind of treatment should bear a rational nexus with the overall objective. If protecting persecuted neighbourhood minorities is the objective, the classification may fail the test of constitutionality because of the exclusion of some countries and communities using religion.⁸⁰

The obvious question on which much of the debate has so far focused on is whether in a country such as India, with a secular Constitution, certain religious groups can be preferred in acquisition of citizenship. Especially when secularism has been declared to be a basic feature of the Constitution in a multitude of judgments. But in addition to this basic question, the classification of countries and communities in the CAB is constitutionally suspect.

⁷⁹ <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/consider-sanctions-against-amit-shah-us-commission-says-on-citizenship-amendment-bill-2146124>. Retrieved on 11 December, 2019.

⁸⁰ The Hindu, Unequal, Secular: On Citizenship Amendment Bill, Editorial, 10 December, 2019

CAB is devoid of any constitutional logic, as explained above. But it does have a sinister political logic. By prioritising Hindus in matters of citizenship as per law, it seeks to make India a Hindu homeland and the first *de jure* attempt to make India a Hindu *Rashtra*. If India is to stay a country for Indians and not for Hindu Afghans, Hindu Pakistanis and Hindu Bangladeshis and eventually for Hindu Russians, Hindu Americans, CAB should not be passed in Parliament. If it is, the judiciary must call it out for what it is a patently unconstitutional piece of legislation. Else, make no mistake, it is only the beginning and not the end of similar legal moves, which, with time, will bring an end to the Constitution as it is known.⁸¹

As soon as the Bill was introduced in the Parliament, the US Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) alleged that the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill enshrines a pathway to citizenship for immigrants that specifically excludes Muslims, setting a legal criterion for citizenship based on religion.

It claimed that "The CAB is a dangerous turn in the wrong direction; it runs counter to India's rich history of secular pluralism and the Indian Constitution, which guarantees equality before the law regardless of faith. Further, the USCIRF said it "fears that the Indian government is creating a religious test for Indian citizenship that would strip citizenship from millions of Muslims. Any religious test for citizenship undermines the basic democratic tenet."⁸² With the emergence of Hindutva politics, there has been a serious attempt to build a Hindu *Rashtra* in a multi-religious

⁸¹ Shadan Farasat, The Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2019 has a sinister political logic; the first *de jure* attempt towards a Hindu *Rashtra*, *The Hindu*, 11 December, 2019

⁸² <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/consider-sanctions-against-amit-shah-us-commission-says-on-citizenship-amendment-bill-2146124>. Retrieved on 11 December, 2019.

state. In other words, strong religion⁸³ begins to challenge the secular arrangements directly or indirectly that could undermine the plural structure of the society to such an extent of defying the constitutional pluralism.⁸⁴ Legal constitutionalism has taken a new twist to such an extent, where major religion aspires to control or reclaim the public domain. These undercurrent developments posed a challenge not only to secularism but also to the democratic ideal and ethos.

To sum up, considering the socio-religious system of India, secularism was adopted as the basic structure of the Indian constitution to bring socio-religious reform and unify the political system of India. Indian secularism in contrast to the normative Western notion and practice accentuates relative separation of religion and state, where both state and religion penetrated upon each other sphere. Secularism is not seen as anti-religion or irreligion, where the state maintains separation and interfered within the domain of religion based on some specific contexts, such as removing illiberal socio-religious practice and promotion of democratic values and norms. Therefore, Indian secularism can be seen as a multifaceted concept that implies various meanings and implications on different junctures and contexts.

Secularism in India can be understood from various perspectives. One way of understanding secularism is to understand from its historical juncture where secularism was seen as an instrument of promoting religious tolerance and integration of diverse religious community into one entity. The second way to

⁸³ For strong religion, I followed Sajo Andras term, but here I refer to the rise of Hindutva, a right wing Hindu nationalist ideology that attempt at establishing a Hindu hegemony in India's multicultural society.

⁸⁴ Sajo, Andras, (2015). "Preliminaries to a Concept of Constitutional Secularism," <http://icon.oxfordjournals.org/>. Retrieved on 5 October, 2015.

understand Indian secularism is to view from its constitutional objective of securing democratic values of liberty, equality and fraternity, by reforming the traditional socio-religious norm of Indian society. The third way of understanding Indian secularism is to see from the dynamic legal-constitutional parlance, where the interface between law and religion has redefined and restructured the religious dimension. Therefore, in the Indian context, it is difficult to locate a substantive meaning and practice of secularism from normative perspective.

The existence of a wide gap between constitutional secular objectives and majority mass understanding on the demarcation between religion and secular realm has been a major problem to evolve a substantive notion and practice of secularism in a diverse multicultural Indian society. In a pervasive religious society, where religion covers every aspect of life, to bifurcate religion from a social system is an issue of a practical problem. Thus, the disjuncture of constitutional secular objectives with majority masses practices of secularism on one hand and the dynamic nature of the interface between law and religion, on the other hand, has been a major issue of debate and controversy in Indian secularism.

In the contemporary multicultural state of India, politics have been reduced to the language of religion, rather than to social inclusion and social justice. In the multicultural state of India, up-surgence of religious-based identity and nationalism, with one particular religious' majority, constitutional arrangements are confronted with the challenge of new forms of articulation of religion in the legal-constitutional system. Particularly, in a Hindu dominated state of India, strong religious nationalism, in the form of Hindutva politics with its apparent goal of reconquering the public domain and reforming the Constitution in favor of majority culture could have a detrimental effect upon constitutional neutrality and upset the pluralistic

nature of Indian society. The Supreme Court had observed in the Bommai case, if religion is not separated from politics, the religion of the ruling party tended to become the state religion.⁸⁵ The Supreme Court itself has expressed apprehensions in this regard and its recent 4:3 verdict, made it illegal to seek votes in the name of religion and reiterated elections are secular activities. Mixing religion with State power is not permissible while freedom to practice profess and propagate the religion of one's choice is guaranteed.⁸⁶ The recent case of Sabarimala temple, clearly indicated that religious sentiment dominates over democratic ideals and social justice.⁸⁷ India till now is a secular country, considering the increasing intensity of religion in politics and the weakening of constitutional check and balance mechanism. The winner takes all seem to be actualizing. Therefore, it is uncertain for how long could India remain a secular country.

Both the majority and minority communities are confused with the implications of secularism in India's plural society. Secularism rather than being an instrumental force for an inclusive common political platform, has led to the alienation of communities. This is borne out by a series of failures in important areas. These include the failure to evolve substantive secularism on the part of legal-constitutional parlance in demarcating the secular and religious realms. Increasing intensity of legalization of every religious aspect has questioned the interface between law and religion. On one hand, the increasing penetration of court in defining the domain of religious identity and state regulation of various religious aspects had a detrimental

⁸⁵ Godbole, Madhav. (2016). "Is India a Secular Nation?" *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 51, Issue No. 15. 9 April.

⁸⁶ Indian Express, February 10, 2015.

⁸⁷ Researcher's viewpoint on the recent Sabarimala Temple case

effect on religious right and autonomy. The dynamic and inconsistent nature of legal constitutional interpretation on secularism and the absence of balance equilibrium between group and individual rights, minority and majority aspirations has been the major factor that confronted and challenged secularism in a diverse multi-religious society of India.

Therefore, in a contemporary Indian society and politics, there is a need to reassess and address the crisis and flaws within Indian secularism. Various misunderstandings and dilemmas on the concept and practice of secularism can be avoided if secularism is seen within wider contexts, that promote inclusive participation, dialogue among various religious groups, attainment of democratic values and social justice. Considering the pervasive nature of religion and pluralism, secularism can be seen as political and ethical mechanism to appropriate the pattern of relationship between religion and state, which emphasizes not only on equal respect for all religions but also facilitate the internal democratization of religious community, particularly in a multi-religious state, where overlapping consensus is immanent as a result of varied views of religious issues and practices. Secularism must be seen as a comprehensive platform for inclusive dialogue and the development of a shared culture that would ensure a balance equation between democratic values and religious sentiment.

The argument whether religious deprivation threatens society depends on how religion and politics interface and interact. For instance, if religion promotes comprehensive and inclusive liberal values, such as freedom of religion, equality, democratic participation, deliberation, tolerance and social justice, then it is consistent with a modern democratic society. Further, secularism and its related concepts are multifaceted and multi-values rather than a uniform standardized

concept. Secularism does not only concern with separation of politics from religion but also concerns the relationship of religion with other dimensions of social, culture, ethnicity and identity politics. Therefore, in a contemporary diverse multicultural society and politics, it is difficult to demarcate what constitutes religious and secular realms.

In the democratic state of India, legal pluralism is not inconsistent with national integration and hence to argue for uniformity on such grounds is indeed against the spirit of pluralism. The legal-constitutional narrative of secularism based on the principle of inclusive deliberation, participation and dialogue among various stakeholders can facilitate a viable option in addressing various controversial secular-religious related issues. Issues of personal law or minority rights can be resolved if it is translated into shared language through inclusive democratic deliberation, debate and public justification in a democratic society. Thus, this would not only build and strengthened the democratic shared values but also promote a multicultural society. Unless and until an inclusive and comprehensive democratic platform is evolved to debate and deliberate religious issues and politics, the development of substantive secularism would hardly actualize.

CHAPTER - 4
SECULARISATION PROCESS IN THE MIZO SOCIETY IN
MIZORAM

This chapter explores the impact of Christianity upon the traditional socio-cultural set up and its implications in Mizo society. The chapter also elaborates on the role of Christian missionaries not only in advancing its evangelical missions but also in the socialization and secularisation process of Mizo society. Furthermore, the chapter explores the Christian socialization process and its effect upon the pattern and traits of the relationship between the sacred-secular realm of Mizo society. Apart from a brief discussion of the Christian pattern of socialization process, it also analyses the role of Church in the social process and its implications on the development of secularism in the Mizo society.

In contemporary society, the secularisation process is understood as part of general Western normative. Secularisation theses generally refer to structural differentiation of institutional spheres, confinement of religion to the private sphere and the declining significance of religious belief, commitment and institution, all of which have been considered as elements of modern society. Precisely, the Western normative concept of secularisation refers to a process, a movement where religious influence and sentiment in the decision-making process and practice became less important and gradually declined from society and politics. Jose Casanova argued that the presence of historical stadial secular consciousness was a crucial factor in the widespread secularisation that had accompanied the modernization of western European societies. European societies tend to experience their secularisation, that is, the widespread decline of religious beliefs and practices in their midst, as a quasi-natural consequence of their modernization.¹ Western secularisation process can be

¹ Casanova, Jose. (2011). "The Secular, Secularisations and Secularism," in Calhoun, Craig, Juergensmeyer, Mark and VanAntwerpen, Jonathan. Eds., *Rethinking Secularism*, Oxford University Press, New York. P. 58.

understood as a product of long historical movement towards rationality of public domain and the confinement of religion to private realm, where it hardly interfered in the public domain.

In the non-Western pervasive religious society, where secular consciousness is absent, the demarcation between secular and religious became fluid and blurred. The secularisation process hardly implies a form of separation of religion from politics and society. In the context of Christian dominated state of Mizoram, there is a close relationship between Church and State, religion plays a dominant role in the interpretation and determination of what constitutes a secular and sacred realm. Therefore, one finds a paradoxical process of relative institutional differentiation, neither accompanied nor followed by the process of religious decline, as shown in the given tables below.

Table 1- Growth of Christian population in Mizoram.²

Years	Population	Christian community	Percentage of the total population
1901	82434	45	0.05
1911	91204	2461	2.77
1921	98406	27720	28.17
1931	124404	59123	47.52

² Census of India, 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931, 1941, 1951, 1961, 1971, 1991, 2001, 2011.

1941	152786	98108	64.21
1951	196202	157575	80.31
1961	266063	230509	86.64
1971	332390	286141	86.09
1991	689756	591342	85.73
2001	888573	772809	86.97
2011	1097206	956331	87.16

*data not available for Census of India (1981)

The secularisation process in the Mizo society can be understood in different forms. One way to understand the secularisation process in Mizo society is to view as a product of early Christian missionaries' socialization process towards the modernization of the Mizo society. The other way to understand the secularisation process is to view from the contemporary role of Church in the interpretation of various contemporary socio-political and cultural issues from Christian perspectives. Thus, the Church with its dominant role in society became an instrumental factor in distinguishing and determining what constitutes the sacred and secular realms.³ Secularisation in Mizo society can be better comprehended from the context of Mizo religious perspective rather than understood within the Western normative concept of secularisation. Thus, the unique pattern of the secularisation process within the Mizo

³ For, instances, apart from its historical role in the promotion of peace, development and acculturation of Mizo society, Church in Mizo society has widen its scope of activities and has been active in clarifying and determining what constituted religious and secular spheres, such as, Aadhaar Card, Ration card, CAB, electoral politics and corruption.

society had a tremendous impact and implications upon the concept and practice of secularism in the Mizo society and politics.

Before the advent of British colonialism and Christianity, the fringe region of Northeast India was referred to as the region beyond the boundary of civilization, unknown jungle and outside the civilized world.⁴ The traditional Mizo society had its own distinctive socio-political culture and religious beliefs that were closely linked with their everyday needs and world views.⁵ The socio-political culture of the Mizo traditional village life revolved and organized around the institutions of Chieftainship, whereas the religious life of traditional Mizo society revolved around the traditional belief system. There was hardly an institutional differentiation between the secular and religious spheres.

Traditional narratives of the Mizo socio-religious culture can be described from various perspectives. One dimension of Mizo traditional belief and practice can be described as animism, as the people were animists. Animism had been described as the faith of pre-literate people. It depends on tribal memory and oral traditions more than on sacred literature and it is inarticulate in comparison with the great religions of the world. Traditional beliefs systems such as holding converse with the Spirits were dominant. These spirits however, were not beneficent; they were cruel, malicious and capricious. They inhabited and animated the non-human world in and around the village. They were present in high mountains, springs, great trees, precipices, larger rocks and trees of abnormal shape. Men needed always to be on guard against them.

⁴ Nag, Sagal & Kumar, M Satish (2002). "Noble Savage to Gentlemen: Discourses of Civilization and Missionary Modernization in Northeast India," in Kejariwal O. P. Ed., *Contemporary India, Journal of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library*, Vol. 1. No.4, October-December. P. 119.

⁵ Zaithanga, V L. (1981), *From Head Hunting to Soul Hunting*, Mizoram Synod Press, Aizawl. P 11.

They were easily offended if a man trespassed on their domain, which often happened by pure accident. A man would soon realize that he had given offense to some spirit and would need to make formal amends, for they could cause illness and even death.⁶ This type of spiritual belief system was a popular phenomenon that had a tremendous impact on a traditional Mizo belief system. Thus, in one instance the traditional Mizo belief system which worshiped anything unusually large, be it tree, rock or river, out of fear of the reprisals of unseen devils can be categorized as animism.

The second dimension of the traditional Mizo belief system is believed in the existence of powers beyond human control, the supernatural beings, some of which were good while the others were bad. Thus, there was broadly a division between the God or Gods who live in heaven and the other spirits of the world. This broad division manifested itself in two forms of sacrifices, the *ramhuai bia* (sacrifices for bad spirits) and the *sakhaw bia* (sacrifices to God). They gave a variety of names for the bad spirits like *ramhuai* (evil spirits of jungle), *Phung* (ghosts), *khamhuai* (spirits of the precipice), *thinhuai* (spirits of tree) and numerous other spirits. Outside the village domain, one had to submit to the domain of evil spirits which ruled the world beyond village domain. As much as the daily activities of the Mizos had been in the domain of evil spirits, such as work in the jhum fields, hunting in the jungles, fishing in the streams, their daily life was filled with the constant fear of the evil spirits. Any intrusion to these abodes would cause illness to the intruders. In this way, any illness was believed to have been caused by the evil spirits demanding offerings of blood; the actual sacrificial offering required for any illness was known only by priests, who were considered to have telepathic contact with the evil spirits. Therefore, the sacrifice materials, the tools and portions of the victim's flesh—the head, liver

⁶ Llyod, J Meirion. (1991). *History of the Church in Mizoram; Harvest in the Hills*, Synod Publication Board, Printed at Swapna Printing Work, Private Limited, Calcutta. Pp. 9-10.

and the skin, which might again vary depending on the type of sacrifice, set aside to represent the victim's spirits became sacred, not to be touched, soon after the priest had completed the rituals of sacrifice. They became sacred because they belong to the world of spirits, but that might be considered as bad sacred in so far as they belonged to the world of evil spirits and not to God's. In this sense, there were two forms of sacred in a traditional Mizo belief system.⁷

As such, they offered sacrifices to Him in the form of *sakhaw bia* or *sakhaw hman* (religious sacrifices) in the kind of thanksgiving to demand material blessings to the villagers. These sacrifices were, conducted by the *Sadawts* (Priest) of the respective clans in the case of individual or family sacrifices but the Lusei *Sadawt* invariably performed sacrifices and offerings concerning the whole village.⁸ J Meirion Llyod also observed that public sacrifices were obligatory and even the terms used to describe the act of sacrifice are different from non-obligatory. Whereas the non-obligatory sacrifices were aimed at appeasing the jungle spirits, the obligatory sacrifices were aimed at clan god or *sakhua*, for fear that the god might turn sulky, that is, displeased and relax his protection.⁹ Some writers ignore the presence of any elements of theism in the Mizo religion and classified as primal rather than animism.¹⁰ However, no doubt, one can also observe that the traditional Mizo belief system was complex, without any proper established religion.

⁷ Nunthara, C. (1996). *Mizoram Society and Polity*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi. Pp. 95-96.

⁸ Ibid., P. 94.

⁹ Llyod, J Meirion. (1991), Op.cit., P. 11.

¹⁰ Kipgen, Mankhosat. (1996). *Christianity and Mizo Culture, The Encounter between Christianity and Zo Culture in Mizoram*, Published by Mizo Theological Conference, Mizoram, at Assam Printing Work (P), LTD, Assam. P. 106.

Thus, the concept of Gods, good and evil spiritual realms, were known to the Mizos since time immemorial. The Mizo belief system was limited and confined with spiritual (mostly in term of superstition) world, which influenced their everyday social lives and world views. Thus, one can hardly locate the concept and practice of differentiation; the domains of sacred and profane within the context of traditional Mizo socio-religious culture. Therefore, a concept such as secularism and secularisation was unknown and new to the traditional Mizo society.

With the annexation of Lushai Hills in the early 1890s and the simultaneous advent of Christian missionaries, Churches established by Christian missionaries and later on by indigenous churches became a crucial factor towards accelerating social change and modernization of Mizo society. In contrast to Northeastern India, Christians in the Southern part of India traced the origin of their church to Apostle Thomas (who was believed to have visited India and preach the gospel there), its flourishing contacts and commerce with the Roman Empire contributed for the origin of churches. These were confined mostly with the Southern part of India.¹¹ Christians of the North-eastern part of India traced their origin mostly to Christian missionaries and indigenous churches. Particularly, among the Mizos, Christian missionaries succeeded in planting and establishment of indigenous churches headed by the early Mizo converts.¹² No doubt, in Mizoram churches were the product of both Christian missionaries and indigenous churches set up during the post-independence period.

Exposure to the British colonial system of administration and Christianity brought inevitable change in the traditional Mizo religion and world views. Unlike in

¹¹ Thomas, P. (1981). *Churches in India*, New Delhi Publication Division, New Delhi. P. 1

¹² Kipgen, Mankhosat, (1996), *Op.cit.*, P.1.

various parts of India, the fringe tribes of Northeast India, being free from caste or class-ridden society, the advent of Christianity did not lead to the dehumanization and disempowerment of tribes. Christianity became an instrument of social transformation that was fair, just and free of exploitation.¹³ Thus, Christianity in Mizo society was seen as equivalent to empowerment rather than that of exploitation. This was one of the main reasons why the primitive Mizos were easily attracted to Christianity.

Albeit, colonial administrative policies were intended to safeguard the traditional culture, it was inevitable that the very presence of the British had led to changes in the life of people. The fact remains that the British judged the traditional practices of tribal by their value system and condemn those aspects of the culture which they judged to be detrimental to the interests of people. At this juncture, the British colonialists believed they acted in the interest of people. However, they were, of course, interfering with tribal culture.¹⁴ The Mizos were no exception to this process, the traditional socio-economic and political structure was restructured to some extent as a result of a rapid social change that took place in the Mizo society. Had not certain measures been taken to preserve the identity of Mizos, the powerful influences of both the Colonial administration and the Christian missionaries could have had drastically eroded the Mizo indigenous cultural identity. Thus, the Mizo identity which was the hybrid of both Christianity and Mizo cultural values served to be the strongest bond that defined the contemporary structural and cultural identity of Mizo society.

¹³ Nongbri, Tilput. (2003). *Development, Ethnicity and Gender*. Rawat Publications: Jaipur. P. 16.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, P. 152.

4.1 CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIALIZATION PROCESS IN MIZO SOCIETY

Consolidation of Lushai Hills by the British Colonialist, since the early 1890s, had brought tremendous structural changes upon the traditional Mizo society. C Nunthara, an eminent scholar summarized the annexation of Lushai Hills in the early 1890s immediately affected the Mizos in three ways; (a) the hitherto nomadic character of the Mizo social life rapidly came to an end as a result of restriction on territorial mobility of the chiefs, b) The external relations of the Mizos with the neighbouring people became channelized through the British code of peaceful co-existence, c) The appearance of monetary economy immediately gave rise to a small group of the privileged class to the hitherto classless, simple society.¹⁵ Furthermore, various savage and barbaric practices, such as headhunting, burying alive of infants together with their dead mothers, the spearing to death of an eavesdropper, the slitting of the nose and/or ears by the grieved husband of the paramour of his unfaithful wife, the killing of those believed to be magic workers (*Dawithiam*) and gang rape of reputedly loose woman by young men were prohibited. These Acts made certain practices illegal and were made punishable with imprisonment for the more serious cases and fines for the others.¹⁶ These Acts had a tremendous impact on the traditional cultural lives of the Mizos.

Other measures taken by the Colonial administration in Lushai Hills was designed to remove causes of disturbance and clashes caused by migration. J. Shakespeare, the first Superintendent of Lushai Hills District introduced the Land Settlement in 1898-99 to cease such disturbance. The land settlement introduced a

¹⁵ Nunthara, C. (1996). Op.cit., P. 57.

¹⁶ Kipgen, Mangkhosat. (1996). Op.cit., Pp 152-154.

marked of the boundary of the chiefs and issued a lease of perpetuity called *Ramri lekha* (boundary paper) based on the natural boundary and the village therein. The holder of *Rami lekha* also held them responsible for the payment of taxes and observance of government order.¹⁷ This measure was succeeded as a means to cease various incidents of inter-village raids and disturbances among the Lushai villages.

Apart from ending raids and wars, during the period of British Colonial rule in Lushai Hills, the Colonial government adopted the recommendation of Shakespear and retained the existing system of appointment of a political officer of Lushai Hills in 1889. Under this recommendation, the Lushai Hills was vested in the Chief Commissioner of Assam, the Superintendent of Lushai Hills, his Assistants and the Chiefs. The Chief was held responsible for the behavior of their people and the Superintendent and his Assistants were to uphold the authority of chiefs to the best of their ability. As Shakespeare argued, to ensure success it only needs that each successive Political officer should conscientiously apply himself with task and intelligence to gain the friendship of the chiefs and guide them in the way they should go.¹⁸ Therefore, the Colonial system of administration which reinforced the rule of chieftainship consequently became a hurdle for the development of a modern democratic system in Lushai Hills. The Colonial policy to a great deal not only worked in favor of British administrative policy to maintain a low-cost administration in the Lushai Hills but also legitimized the authority of the British government over the chiefs. Thus, the Colonial Administration which brought a new modern system of

¹⁷ K Lalfakzaula Joseph. (2015). "Land Settlement, Land Privileges and People's Response in Mizoram," in Malsawmdawngliana and Rohminmawii, Eds, *Mizo Narratives; Account from Mizoram*, (Revised and Enlarged Edition, 2nd Edition), Reprint, 2015, Scientific Book Centre, Guwahati. Pp. 160-161.

¹⁸ Ray, Animesh. (1982). *Mizoram Dynamic and Change*, Pearl Publisher, Calcutta. P. 23.

administration to a large extent restructured the traditional political structure of Mizos.

Apart from the Colonial Administrative measures, it was Christianity and the educational system introduced by the Christian missionaries that brought far-reaching changes in the Mizo traditional socio-culture and political structures. S K Chaube, summarized that the role of Christianity relating to the process of changes introduced by British administration, as under, the contribution of Administration can be summed up under the following categories, such as establishment of law and order, improvement in communication, introduction of money economy in the remote areas and as will be seen the creation of vested interest. The task of acculturation, at the subjective level, was almost entirely left to the church of various denominations.¹⁹ The Colonial government as an agent of change was limited and concerned relatively with the consolidation of British colonial domination and maintenance of law and order rather than bringing change at the social and cultural level.

It was Christianity and its educational system that played a dominant role in transforming the socio-cultural structure of Mizo society. Before the advancement of Christianity and education (which is closely associated with Christian Missions) traditional society of the Mizo represented a paradoxical life. On the one hand they lived in perpetual fear of the evil spirits who made life in this world miserable and on the other hand they lived a life of trust in a supreme being who was able and willing to protect, help and bless humankind whose true worship lives of virtuous bravery and generosity earned a man at least a position of respect in society here on earth and a blissful life beyond this earth. However, with the advancement of Christianity, it not only converted the people into a new religion but also introduced them into modern

¹⁹ Chaube, S.K. (1973). *Hills Politics in North-East India*, Orient Longman, New Delhi. P. 42.

education thereby preparing the ground for modernization to take off in the Lushai Hills.²⁰ In the context of Mizo society, sacred and secular activities, as it were, were inextricably mixed, but not so acute.²¹ Therefore, in the Mizo context, Christian activities were not limited to evangelical purpose (religious realm) only but also facilitate secular activities, such as education and health services.

Within a short span of the introduction of Christianity, it not only changed the religious faith of the people but altered their whole outlook and way of life completely. Thereby, the sacrificial system (*inthawina*) disappeared within a generation, though the belief in the existence and fear of evil spirits did not disappear completely. The sacrifices offered to *Pathian* too were abandoned, though he continued to worship as the divine Father of Jesus Christ. Belief in paradise also continued, but the means of entering it which could be attained only by the great and affluent was replaced by the belief that the costly sacrifices of Jesus had made entrance possible for all those who have faith in him.²² The traditional world view of the Mizo which may be described as animistic, characterized by fear and superstition had been replaced by more rational attitudes inculcated through religious teachings, modern education and health services. These social services of Christian missionaries became a dominant factor in demising traditional religious practices and beliefs system.

The religious teachings of Christianity set the people free from their deep-rooted fear of traditional illusion and superstition. The Christian Missionaries taught about

²⁰ http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/60789/12/12_chapter%204.pdf. Retrieved on 18 September, 2017

²¹ Llyod, J Meirion. (1991). Op.cit, P. 151.

²² Kipgen, Mangkhosat. (1996). Op.cit., P. 316.

the worthy of new religion over the traditional beliefs system. Hence, the Missionaries hardly found any hindrance from the beginning to convince the Mizo in the path of Christianity.

With the wide spread of Christianity, the primitive and animistic worldview of the people disappeared rapidly. Thus, changes brought about by Christianity in Mizo society seem to be realistic and deep. Rather than offered sacrifices to the *Ramhuai*, physicians and pharmacists are now consulted in times of illnesses. What had been considered as the works of 'evil spirits' are now explained, by the people themselves, within the framework of rationality and science. Christianity, by portraying man as the master of his destiny through his own decision, set the Mizo people free from the fatalistic conception. Thus it provides the groundwork for a scientific conception of the world and happenings in his surroundings.²³ Thereby, explicitly widening the secular perspective in Mizo society.

In brief, the inroad Colonialism and Christianity have brought a significant change among the once fierce Mizo tribe of Northeast India. The interest of the British colonialists was to consolidate its domination. Whereas early Christianity intended to evangelize the people. In reality, it was Christianity and its educational system that prepared the once fierce tribe to confront the new situation brought by inevitable socio-structural and cultural changes. Therefore, changes in attitudes brought by the Christian pattern of socialization process has a far-reaching impact on the secularisation of the Mizo social and political process.

²³ http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/60789/12/12_chapter%204.pdf. Retrieved on 18 September, 2017

Even in contemporary modern Mizo society, the perception of religious life can be illustrated from the given tables below:

Table – 2 Mizo perception of Religion.²⁴

Sl. No	Responses	Percentage of Respondents
1	Religion is relevant/significant	83.75
2	Religion is irrelevant/insignificant	5.83
3	Religion is illusion	0.42
4	Religion is neither Significant nor relevant	10

As per table-2, it could be observed that majority 88.75 percent of the total respondents argued that religion is relevant/significant in their life. Therefore, based on this observation one can infer that the secularisation process which is broadly identified with modernization is not linked with the declining relevance of religion in Mizo's society and polity. In other words, it does not have a direct implication on declining the relevancy of religion in Mizo social life. Religion still holds a significant place in the Mizo society.

²⁴ Source, data collected through semi-structured interview schedule among 240 respondents of different denominations across Aizawl and Lunglei town areas of Mizoram in 2018.

Table - 3 Mizo view on religious ethics and socialization process in Mizo society.²⁵

Sl. No	Responses	Percentage of Respondents
1	Religious ethics played a role in the socialization of Mizo society	67.09
2	Religious ethics does not play a role in the socialization of Mizo society	10.42
3	Partially / to some extent religious ethics played a role in the socialization of Mizo society	16.66
4	Cannot say	5.83

Based on table-3, it can be observed a majority 67.09 percent of respondents argued that religious ethics plays a significant role in the socialization of the Mizo society. As a consequent, despite modernization of Mizo society, religious centric socialization has a tremendous impact on changing the attitudes of individuals toward

²⁵ Source, data collected through semi-structured interview schedule among 240 respondents of different denominations across Aizawl and Lunglei town areas of Mizoram in 2018

the various social and political aspects of the society and state. This had also directly or indirectly influenced on the process of secularisation process and development of secularism in Mizo society.

Table - 4 Factors influencing the decision-making process of the Mizo.²⁶

Sl. No	Responses	Percentage of Respondents
1	Religion	45.84
2	Community	14.58
3	NGOs	7.08
4	None of the above	8.75
5	Cannot say	23.75

From above table-4, one can observe that the majority of Mizo (45.84) percent argued that religion plays a dominant role in the decision-making process. Therefore, to consider religion as an abstract idea, that has no role in socio-political process would be inappropriate in Mizo context. Therefore, it can be argued that religion play a significant role, as a factor for influencing the decision making process of the Mizo. In other words, the social, political and economic life of the Mizo were influenced by religious aspects.

²⁶ Source, data collected through semi-structured interview schedule among 240 respondents of different denominations across Aizawl and Lunglei town areas of Mizoram in 2018

4.2 IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON SOCIO-CULTURAL MODERNIZATION OF MIZO SOCIETY

Christianity brought cultural changes among the tribals of Northeast India, particular among the erstwhile Mizo society. After the introduction of Christianity in Lushai Hills, socio-cultural changes took place in the Mizo society. The newly converted Mizos, who became a Christian means adopting a new mode of life. Conversion to Christianity involved not only spiritual but also physical transformation as certain standards way of life were maintained for a Christian. Being a new creation the new converts had to give up the old practices and adopt a new way of life. There was a strong tendency to look at traditional practices as an outdated element. The new concept introduced by the Christian church was not in tune with the traditional culture. Therefore, the newly established church strongly criticized and prohibited, many of the earlier traditional practices like the use of the drum, the traditional form of dance, tunes and songs, taking rice beer and a Christians found indulged in such activities were excommunicated from the church. Even in the dress code, Christians taught themselves to be different. J M Lloyd noted that there was even a time when in any village it was easy to distinguish the Christian from non-Christian by his appearance.²⁷ Thus, the conversion to new religion breakdown the old practices and became the strongest factor that differentiated the Christian way of life and practices from non-Christian. To some extent, this led to the differentiation and distinction of sacred and secular domain with the Mizo society.

²⁷ Llyod, J Meirion, (1991). Op.cit., P. 223.

Albeit, it was the greatest trend among all the Christian missionaries to create a prototype of their condition and culture to which they belonged in their own country.²⁸ When Christianity first came to Mizoram it was dressed in western garb. The early Mizo Christians were not in a position to differentiate substance from the form and therefore simply adopted Christianity in the western form. Believing western culture to be Christian culture, they discarded most of their cultural heritage. In the process, they discarded some elements that were of great value and in no way incompatible with Christianity, such as the traditional tunes for their songs and the use of the drum.²⁹ Cultural Modernization of Mizo society was first manifested in the growth of a westernized sub-culture of the Christian population initially in the Missionaries inhabited areas of Aizawl, Durtlang and Serkawn, where contact with Western culture and tradition started. Cultural modernization in its initial stage was characterized by two stages of development, the early phase was represented by a small community of church workers and students of Mission Schools who imitated the dress and lifestyle of the British-Christian missionaries and administrators. While in the second stage, the whole population was permeated by western cultural traits, such as the use of new technology, institution, knowledge, beliefs and values. Thus, the early phase of contact may be equated with westernization.³⁰ However, it is significant to note that the interaction between the new faith and the traditional culture remained itself limited to those cultural traits such as dress, food habits and styles of life rather than full-fledged cultural change.

²⁸ David M D, (1995). American Missionaries in India, A Difference, *Indian Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1. P. 39.

²⁹ Kipgen, Mankhosat. (1996). Op.cit., P. 316.

³⁰ http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/60789/12/12_chapter%204.pdf. Retrieved on 18 September, 2017

As Yogendra Singh has observed, this form of westernization does not have its basis in the assimilation of values or cognitive categories but merely in the imitation of external forms of culture.³¹ Cultural modernization was limited and does not emerged on the brink of total abolition of Mizo indigenous culture, but rather emerged as a hybrid of both Christianity and Mizo culture. Many of the existing pre-Christian beliefs of Mizo society were adopted or modified by missionaries to help the Mizos to understand fully Christian concepts and beliefs, especially regarding the concepts of health, healing and social services. It can be argued that pre-Christian social, religious and cultural beliefs carried in them 'theologies of life' which were adopted by missionaries in spreading the gospel message, thus allowing these practices, as well as Christian doctrines themselves, to be seen in a new light.³² Though the early Mizo Christians were against selected traditional customs, values and beliefs, but retained those traditional cultural values which were not of inconsistent with Christian and were of great values for Mizo society.

Understanding how elements of the traditional culture made their way into Mizo Christianity is essential to understand the Christian movement in Mizoram. Like the missionaries, the first Mizo Christian believed that the converts should be protected from anything that was deemed to be heathen superstition. They tended to include within that category anything that had to do with the traditional culture, at least anything in the traditional culture that was thought to have religious significance. This attitude led to the creation of high discipline and rigid church. The interface of Mizo traditional values with Christianity became the strongest bond that determined

³¹ Singh, Yogendra. (1988). *Modernization of Indian Tradition*, Rawat Publications, Jaipur. P. 87.

³² Studies in World Christianity, Vol. 20, No. 2, April 2014, Pp, 39-53
<http://www.eupublishing.com/doi/full/10.3366/swc.2014.0070>. Retrieved on 10 August, 2013.

contemporary Mizo social system.³³ Therefore, one can hardly understand the socio-culture of Mizo society in isolation from a Mizo religious perspective.

The first revival movement of 1906 brought about change. It brought the Zo Christian a new sense of joy as a result of the experience of forgiveness of sin and the freedom to express that joy in dancing and proclamation of the faith to others. It was also a turning point in the growth of churches. The emphasis on sin and repentance led the Mizo Christian to see things in a new light, sharpening the differences between what they perceived to be sacred and the profane. They became very judgemental in their old ways. For instance, the persecution that resulted, with the general cultural revival of the *Puma Zai* movement was considered necessary to tighten its discipline to the point of fanaticism. However, during the third revival, the Mizo Christians began to create in large numbers a new type of spiritual song which superseded the earlier translated western hymns that had been sung in the churches. They were an expression of the freedom from missionary control and western forms of Christianity experienced in the second revival. The new songs, the spontaneous outflowing of inner spiritual experience were rich in meaning and haunting in tune. The true spirit of *Lunglen* (traditional tune) was now celebrating the new life of Christ. The new freedom to create their forms of Christian life was manifested in many ways indigenous to the Mizos. One early manifestation of this was the bringing back of the drum for use in Christian worship, a practice that had earlier been banned by the missionaries. Another popular expression and the most significant path that developed was the readiness of Christian to serve in the spirit of *Tlawmngaina*, a readiness to do whatsoever the Lord the King shall command, in the same way as the *Tlawmngai* person would do for his

³³ Kipgen, Mangkhosat. (1996). Op.cit., P.316

or her chief in the traditional setup. All these developments contributed to the formation of uniquely indigenous Mizo Christianity.³⁴

In brief, Christianity could be regarded as the foremost factor for the socio-cultural and political modernization of Mizo society. The Churches established by Missionaries further nurturing the Christian faith in Mizo society greatly influenced the general conception about the socio-cultural and political value of the majority of Mizos. However, cultural change within the Mizo society does not actualize in a total abolition of traditional culture and values. The process of modernization of Mizo society was confined to changes in the cultural realm and social structures. Most of the traditional social culture and values adopted were reconceptualized on the basis of Christian principles. Thus the amalgamation of Christian and traditional values with Mizo society provides a new sense of unique Mizo identity.

4:3 CHRISTIANITY AND STRUCTURAL CHANGE OF MIZO SOCIETY

Colonialism and Christianity also brought drastic changes within the social structure of Mizo society. Before the formation of any modern institution in Mizoram, the social and political life of Mizos revolved around the institution of Chieftainship and *Zawlbuk*.³⁵ The *Zawlbuk* system was a traditional way of life for the bachelors in every village, they sleep in one big house for discipline, defense and emergency at night.³⁶ In other words, the traditional institution of *Zawlbuk* was considered an important traditional

³⁴ Ibid., Pp.316-318

³⁵ *Zawlbuk* refers to the traditional Mizo male dormitory, a center of Mizo socio-cultural life, for more detail. See, Kipgen, Mankhosat. (1996) *Christianity and Mizo Culture, The Encounter between Christianity and Zo Culture in Mizoram*, Mizo Theological Conference, Aizawl at Assam Printing Work (P), LTD, Assam. P.177

³⁶ Lalthanliana, (2000). *Mizo History-Before 1900* (Mizo), MC Lalrinthanga Press, Aizawl, Mizoram. P. 49

institution to impart social values and discipline among the youth. However, with the development and advancement of church and educational institutions in Lushai Hills, the institutions of *Zawlbuk*, chieftainship and *Bawi*³⁷ (slavery) system was considered irrelevant and gradually was replaced by new institutions which were more inclusive and democratic.

a) Abolition of *Zawlbuk* system

Albeit, the early missionaries considered the traditional *Zawlbuk* as the arena for preaching the Gospel and was not considered as a hindrance in their evangelical work, as it was not linked with traditional Mizo religion. McCall traced the extinction of *Zawlbuk* to the antipathy of the Lushai church leaders. As the mission did not take a positive attitude either to preserve the institution or to abolish it, the local church leaders and the local school teachers took an active lead in abolishing the *Zawlbuk* in the villages, as some of the practices in the *Zawlbuk* were not strictly in conformity with the Christian ideals. This led most of the Lushai church leaders to condemn the *Zawlbuk*.³⁸ Considering the rapid changes in socio-cultural lives and abolition of traditional chieftainship in Mizo society, the Mizos no longer bother to maintain the *Zawlbuk* system and realized that if the traditional institution continued, it would bring unfavorable future for their children as formal education could not be imparted from

³⁷ The British local officials referred the *bawis* as traditional slavery, were simply paupers or criminals who took refuge in a chief's house and lived as members and not slaves of the chief's family. For detail please refer to Lal Dena Article, Dr. Peter Fraser (1864-1919). A missionary from Caernarfon, North-Wales to Northeast India at, <http://proflaldena.blogspot.com/2014/10/dr-peter-fraser-1864-1919-liberator.html?m=1>. Retrieved on 20 February 2018

³⁸ McCall, A. G. (1977). *Lushai Chrysalis*, (London: Luzac & Co., 1949; Reprint, Aizawl, Tribal Research Institute. Pp. 211-212

traditional institution of *Zawlbuk*.³⁹ Thus, the *Zawlbuk* lost its relevance as a result of structural social changes.

Therefore, with the abandonment of *Zawlbuk*, people felt the need for an alternative institution that could meet and serve many of their undercurrent socio-political needs under the changed situation. This led to the foundation of Young Mizo Association (YMA) (formerly known as Young Lushai Association), a quasi-church youth organization, under the pattern of Young Welsh Association, by a Welsh missionary Rev. David Edward in 1935. This change has a tremendous effect on the social life of Mizo people. The Christian community in each locality built their chapel everywhere, now replacing the *Zawlbuk* and gather there regularly for prayer and worship, listening to the sermons that cover exhortations to the standard of life expected of a Christian.⁴⁰ The Church and YMA became the major vehicle of change and guardian of Mizo culture and identity.

Thus, development of the Church and the growth of schools has provided a new realm for imparting social ethic and thus many youths had to leave *Zawlbuk* to attend schools. In contemporary Mizo society, the Mizo church and YMA became the principal vehicle for social change, uphold the code of social discipline of Mizos and renders social service to the community.⁴¹ However, it is also appropriate to argue that the churches, the YMA and schools did replace the traditional institutions, not as a

³⁹ Khawbung, Robert Sanglora (2000). Church and Social Development in a Tribal-State of Northeast India; A Case Study of Mizoram, an unpublished Dissertation Submitted at the Centre of Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, (JNU)

⁴⁰ Rev. Dr. Zaihmingthanga, (2016). *The History of Christianity in Mizoram. 1944-1994*, Lengchhawn Press, Aizawl, Mizoram. Pp. 8-9.

⁴¹ Pachuau, Sangkima. (1992). *Mizo's Society and Social Change*, Spectrum Publication, Guwahati. P. 135.

result of Christian disapproval of it but rather as an inevitable consequence of socio-economic and political changes. Thus, in a changing socio-cultural milieu, the Mizo Church, the YMA and schools had substituted the traditional institution of *Zawlbuk*, as it could no longer meet the changing socio-economic and political needs of the new milieu.

b) Abolition of *Bawi* system

Another remarkable structural change ushered by Christianity was the abolition of *Bawi* system and the inculcation of democratic values within Mizo society. The *Bawi* system, because of its close relationship to the institution of chieftainship, the government was reluctant to deal with it or even to recognize it as slavery. Therefore, the controversy of *Bawi* system, also known as *Bawi* controversy emerged with the conversion of Khawvelthanga to Christianity and his decision to free his slaves sparked off a fierce controversy between Dr. Frazer, a medical missionary who championed the cause of the *bawis* and Major H W G Cole, the superintendent, who defended the cause of the slave-owning chiefs on the ground that he was seeking to preserve Mizo culture.⁴² Gradually, with the abolition of Chieftainship, the *Bawi* system was abolished from Mizo society.

Through the modern educational system, many Mizos who did not have any social standing in the traditional social structure were able to come up to the front as they were offered positions in the mission work as well as in the government. Some fine young men were wiser than the chiefs. On account of their access to education, many young men attained better social status. And the erstwhile commoners were

⁴² Kipgen, Mangkhosat. (1996). Op.cit., P.154

allotted a place in the society over the chiefs. Thus, the emergence of new elite groups which comprised mostly of the newly educated classes and were mostly Christians. This resulted in the transformation of traditional social set up and the emerging elite groups claimed more space in the society. Indeed, they became the leaders in the churches, schools and government services. This resulted in a challenge to the authority sectioned by tradition and led to a struggle between commoners and the chiefs that led to the abolition of chieftainship in 1954, and the establishment Mizo Union,⁴³ the political party of the commoners. Thus, education which was closely associated with Christianity to some extent brought a democratic structure in the society.

c) Gender Equality

Apart from the abolition of institutions of Chieftainship, *Zawlbuk* and *Bawi* system, Christianity also plays a pivotal role in the promotion of gender equality. In the traditional Mizo society, despite women were treated with love and care and adorned in much the same manner as men are treated, women were not treated equally with men and their position was placed at a very insignificant position.⁴⁴ There was a traditional saying that "as the meat of a crab is not meat, so the word of a woman is no word; the wisdom of a woman does not extend beyond the limit of the village water source and let a woman and a dog bark, it pleases them."⁴⁵ The traditional society was based on undemocratic inequality, which lacks inclusive participation and was

⁴³ Rohmingmawii. (2015) "Christianity and Society in Mizoram," in Malsawmdawngliana and Rohminmawii, Eds, *Mizo Narratives; Account from Mizoram*, (Revised and Enlarged Edition), 2nd Edition, Scientific Book Centre, Guwahati, (Reprint, 2015). Pp. 234-235.

⁴⁴ Chatterji, N. (1992). *Status of Women in the Earlier Mizo Society*, Tribal Research Institute, Mizoram, (Reprint). Pp. 2.

⁴⁵ Lalbiakthanga. (1978). *The Mizos: A Study in Racial Personality*, United Publisher, Calcutta. P. 23.

exclusively male-dominated society. However, with the advancement of Christianity, the Gospel imparted the notion of equality among the Mizos. The Gospel with its message taught them that in the eyes of God, there was no distinction between men and women, they were equal in every aspect. Thus Christian doctrine immensely encouraged Mizo women to shed their shyness and improve their social status. Further, change in perspective of gender equality had been spectacularly brought by educating women in various aspects. The educated women formed the Mizo Hmeichche Tangrual pawl (MHTP) women organization on 16 July 1946. Its main objective was to promote the causes of women in society. One instance of the success of this organization was that the authorities allowed a woman to inherit property by formal deeds of will.⁴⁶ Today, a Mizo woman has succeeded in various fields such as holding high position in society, government offices and active in protection and promotion of women rights.

Table-5. Mizo view on the role of Christianity in demising social equality (particularly towards gender equality).⁴⁷

Sl. No	Responses	Percentage of Respondents
1	Christianity facilitated in demising gender equality	45.54

⁴⁶ Pachuau, Sangkima. (2004). *Essays On the History of the Mizos*, Spectrum Publication, Guwahati. P. 249

⁴⁷ Source, data collected through semi-structured interview schedule among 240 respondents of different denominations across Aizawl and Lunglei town areas of Mizoram in 2018

2	Christianity does not Facilitate in gender equality	14.35
3	Christianity does partially facilitate in gender equality	28.23
4	Cannot say	11.88

As per table-5, it can be observed that the majority of 45.54 percent of the respondents argued that Christian values and principles played an essential role in promoting gender equality in the Mizo society. Christianity was not only the major factor that facilitates gender equality but also emancipate women and promotes social justice in society. Therefore, considering the tremendous role of religion in various aspects of society, one cannot ignore the religious insight to understand the role of Mizo women in socio-political system.

4.4 CHRISTIANITY AND EDUCATION

Before the advent of Colonialism and Christian missionaries, formal education was unknown to the Mizos,⁴⁸ the traditional institution of the *Zawlbuk* was only the means of educating the male youth. The Colonial government was indifferent towards the development of education. Various measures, such as Charter Act of 1813, (which gave the East India company the responsibility to educate the Indian), the Wood's

⁴⁸ Goswani, D H. (1982). *University Administration in North East India*, Venus Printing work, Calcutta. P. 38

Despatch of 1854 (Educational Reform), Education Commission of 1882, under President WW Hunter, was hardly effective in the Lushai Hills.⁴⁹ During the Colonial period, it was only under the initiative of Christian Missions that educational institutions were established and education reached among the fringe Mizo tribe. The pioneer missionaries laid the foundation of educational institutions in the Lushai Hills.

The primary objective of the missionaries was to convert the people into Christianity. The missionaries believed that through primary schools they could spread the gospel among the masses in villages. During this time, there was hardly any difference between the school and the Church. Schools were used as Church, therefore going to school also meant attending church and vice-versa.⁵⁰ Schoolhouses not only served as centre for social intercourse, religious worship and educational activities for the Christian missionaries but also gave the missionaries easy access to preach among the people. Side by side with the increased number of conversions, there was a dominant need for training the young Christians in a Christian atmosphere. Education was seen as necessary to educate the illiterate converts to enable them to read the Bible and provide the converts with intelligent leadership. Therefore, during the early phase of education, it served both the purpose of immediate evangelism and the long term objective of building an indigenous Christian community. Rev. W S Stanton of the American Baptist Telegu Mission pointed out that the real purpose of missionaries' work is not merely to educate nor merely to remove obstacles and break down the

⁴⁹ Hluna, V L. (1992). *Christian Missionaries and Education in Mizoram*, Spectrum Publication, Guwahati. P. 51

⁵⁰ Saiaithanga. (1993). *Mizo Kohran Chanchin*, (History of Mizo Church), Printed at Synod Press, Aizawl. p. 34

barrier but to win pupil to Christ.⁵¹ Thus, education served the purposes both evangelism and modernization.

Under the Christian mission schools, the pattern of education was meant to impart religious instruction rather than secular education. Rochunga Pudaite, an observer of the Mission educational activities, summed up that the aim of education under the early Christian missionaries was to equip the new converts with religious instruction. The people were taught the three R's in preparation for Bible reading, understanding of writing and simple Arithmetic for their religious exercise, with their conversion to Christianity, primary emphasis was placed upon their ability to read Bible.⁵² The teaching of the Christian doctrines and some portion of the Bible were compulsory in the mission schools as the propagation of Christian doctrines was the main function of Christian missionaries. Thus, the curriculum pattern in educational institutions under the Mission was oriented towards religious education and the students were taught and instructed in such a way that they would become good Christians and effective future leaders of the Churches.

Albeit, the educational system under the Mission was oriented towards the Christian instruction. However, the education system provided by the early Christian schools was not exclusively on the religious aspect. Apart from religious instruction such as Scripture and Christian doctrines, there were various secular aspects of education taught in the mission schools. Subjects such as Dictation, Zirtirbu (Lushai Reader), an outline of World History-III, the Legend of Old Lushai (in English),

⁵¹ Pathak, Suchil Mafhav. (1967). *American Missionaries and Hinduism*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi. P. 142.

⁵² Pudaite, Rochunga. (1963). *The Education of the Hmar People*, IBPM, Sielmat, Churachandpur, Printed at Calcutta Navana Printing Works Ltd. P. 72.

simple Arithmetic, English Grammar and Geography of India and Assam. In addition to the above captioned subjects, the extra curriculum including physical training, such as drawing, recitation, games, nature study, storytelling, health, clay modelling, music, basket making, sewing and knitting,⁵³ were also included and taught. In fact, besides religious education, the secular aspect of education, such as western science and literature was also provided as the missionaries believed that it would inevitably weaken the people's faith in traditional beliefs. Rev. Zairema remarks, that the advancement of modern education and medical work was one of the most effective means of destroying the traditional world views and belief system, which was super-naturalistic.⁵⁴ Since education was closely associated with Christianity, the growth of newly educated young men got the opportunities to work in either mission or government service and free from traditional weary toil of work. Therefore, education became popular and an instrumental for transformation of Mizo socio-economic life.

Through education, the Mizo worldview also underwent a drastic change. As Christian education offers a comprehensive worldview, many of the traditional beliefs were considered as mere superstitions. Christianity, as well as education, created a new privileged group who became more prominent in the society by dint of their access to education began to subscribe to the new Christians values and traditional values lost its importance.⁵⁵ The early phase of education which was entirely left in the hands of Christian missionaries and early churches gave them an advantage in the promotion of not only evangelical work but also in imparting a Christian pattern of

⁵³ Lalhmuaka. (1981). *Zoram Zirna Chhinchiahna* (Record of Education in Mizoram (Mizo), Tribal Research Institute, Mizoram. Pp. 31-93.

⁵⁴ Rev. Zairema, (1978) *God's Miracle in Mizoram*, Synod Press Aizawl: Mizoram, 1978. P. 24

⁵⁵ Rohmingmawii, (2015), Opcit., P. 236.

education. Thus, education which was closely associated with the coming of Christianity and later Church initiative brought about tremendous changes within the socio-economic structure of the Mizo society.

Table-6. Mizo view on the role of the Church in various social service sectors.⁵⁶

Sl. No	Responses	Percentage of Respondents
1	Church impart skill development	21.25
2	Church impart health services	27.5
3	Church impart education services	28.75
4	Church provide facilities for destitute / rehabilitation Centre services	22.5

Apart from the role in promoting acculturation of Mizo society. Table-6, shows that churches in Mizoram play a tremendous role in the social development process of the society. Church tremendous role in various secular activities such as imparting skill development, health, education and organized destitute/rehabilitation centres across

⁵⁶Source, data collected through semi-structured interview schedule among 240 respondents of different denominations across Aizawl and Lunglei town areas of Mizoram in 2018

Mizoram, has not only widened its scope to address the problem confronted by the society, but also directly or indirectly further accelerated a religious pattern of the socialization process of the Mizo society. In today Mizo society, the Church acts as a non-state autonomous institution that play a significant role in articulation the socio-cultural traits and trends of Mizo society.

4.5 CHRISTIANITY AND INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

In the sphere of intellectual development too, Christianity and later churches that became centres of power and patronage of modern education became the most significant factor for the emergence of intellectuals in Mizo society. The rapid growth of the church and the simultaneous spreading of education among the Mizos allowed the Mizos to face a wider world. Referring to the Lushai Hills District, McCall traced the origin of the new class, the intelligentsia, to the spread of Christianity and local educational practices. He further remarked that it was the churches and its various organizations for the most part, which led towards “black coatism.”⁵⁷ Black coated occupation became synonymous with progress. The result was the creation of an oligarchy, the privileged, the salaried and therefore, the materially powerful. Most of them were on the mission's payroll, church executives or in the employment of government, in which case they are probably, in any case, subject spiritually to the Lushai church. Christianity and oligarchy according to McCall bred individualism, flourishing in the headquarters, towns and naturally imbued with the thrill of seeking independence of the chiefs and freedom from customary communal discipline.⁵⁸ Thus,

⁵⁷ ‘Black coatism’ refers to the emergence of educated class who work under government or missionary payroll, it resulted on account of change in occupational structure from earlier traditional agricultural (primary) to tertiary system of livelihood.

⁵⁸ McCall, A. G. (1977). *Op.cit.*, Pp. 205-216

education provided by the Christian missionaries was seen as a new opportunity to progress and emancipation from traditional life. The new religion accompanied with education produced intelligentsia that in turn, made it possible for the tribes to maintain control in the new situation created by the process of modernization introduced by the British administration.

Christian philosophy which stressed on individual and democratic values became more popular and dominant in Mizo society. Albeit, initially, it was in a phase of low intensity, but later on, intensified. The emergence of a small group of the new educated elite as a result of the introduction of the modern education system by Christian missionaries and later churches soon posed a challenge to the traditional autocratic rule of chief backed by the Colonial administrators. This led to the disorder in the traditional elite. The emergence of a new elite witnessed a change in mental attitude began to protest against traditional values, customs and undemocratic traditional rights and privileges of the chief.

4.6 CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Apart from socio-cultural and structural changes, the contribution of both the colonial government and Christianity, also partially contributed to the formation of Mizo identity. Lalsankima Pachuau argued, as much as their traditional existence was disturbed by the British imperialist rule and the new religion, the Mizo sense of identity owes its development largely to these invasions. Before the British annexation of the land, the tribe's lacked political unity as each village was independent of each other. First, the imperial rule for its administrative convenience forced the small independent villages together which tended to enforce a sense of ethnic identity as the new basis of political unity. The villages, in turn, became local political units recognizing one

another. Secondly, Christianity with its message of fraternity became an important factor for the success of the unification of the Mizo people. Thirdly, the introduction of written language and the Christian literature largely contributed to the development of Mizo identity. The strongest bond, however, was the revival movement that interweaved Christian ideology and traditional culture. Thus the amalgamation of both the traditional and Christian cultures became the major factor, which gave birth to a new highly indigenized Mizo culture and identity. In the process, this defined the normative structure of the Mizo society.⁵⁹ Therefore, to argue that Mizo cultural identity and integrity were erased as a result of contact with Christianity and British colonialists would be inappropriate.

Before the introduction of Christianity in the Mizo society, Mizos were highly organized around the tribe or clan system. It was only after the introduction of Christianity that the church became a potent factor of integration. Through church organizations, it brought members of different villages and their tribes within the common structure for the first time. Villages of the same tribes that had previously been at war with each other were brought together in associations, presbyteries, assemblies, conventions and synod diocese. Therefore church ideology fostered openness to other that in most cases did not exist before.⁶⁰ In a society where there is an absence of social discrimination based on caste or class system, Church became a potent factor that facilitated the promotion of fraternity and integrity of Mizo society.

⁵⁹ Pachuau, Lalsangkima. (2002). *Ethnic Identity and Christianity, A Socio-Historical and Missionological Study of Christianity in Northeast India; with Special Reference to Mizoram*, Publication Franfrutam Main. Pp. 155-156.

⁶⁰ Downs, Frederick S. (1994). *Essays on Christianity in North-East India*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi. P. 152.

Moreover, the development of the Mizo dialect into written language also holds a significant development in the sustenance of Mizo identity. Hminga, a Mizo scholar argued that the introduction of the Mizo language by the pioneer missionaries was the right move at the right time. Initially the British Government, for its convenience, intended to impose the Bengali language on the Mizos as Court language.⁶¹ Thus, it can be observed that Christianity played a significant role by providing necessary resources towards the structuring of Mizo identity.

Table -7 Christianity as a factor of social integration in Mizo society.⁶²

Sl. No	Responses	Percentage of Respondents
1	Christianity integrate the society	66.25
2	Christianity disintegrate society	6.25
3	Christianity partially integrate	17.92
4	Christianity neither integrate / Nor disintegrate	9.58

⁶¹ Hminga, C L. (1987). *The Life and Witness of Church in Mizoram*, Serkawn Literature Committee, Baptist Church of Mizoram. P. 47.

⁶² Source, data collected through semi-structured interview schedule among 240 respondents of different denominations across Aizawl and Lunglei town areas of Mizoram in 2018

Table -8 Mizo view on denominational differences and its role in the disintegration of Mizo society.⁶³

Sl. No	Responses	Percentage of Respondents
1	Existence of denominational difference disintegrate Mizo society.	23.34
2	Existence of denominational difference does not disintegrate Mizo society.	26.25
3	Partially agreed that the existence of denominational difference disintegrate Mizo society.	38.33
4	Existence of denominational difference neither integrate/nor	12.08

⁶³ Source, data collected through semi-structured interview schedule among 240 respondents of different denominations across Aizawl and Lunglei town areas of Mizoram in 2018

	disintegrate Mizo society.	
5	Comment / sawi bel tur in nei em?	

As per the above tables-7 and 8, it can be observed that some mixed responses on the questions of Christianity and Mizo society, 66.25 percent of the respondents argued that Christianity has been the major factor for integration. However, on the question of the existence of denominational difference, a majority of 23.34 and 38.33 percent of respondents (partially) as against the 26.25 percent of the respondents agreed that the existence of various denominations act as a major factor for disintegration the Mizo society. Thus, the existence of denominational differences could lead to misunderstanding and became a detrimental factor not only for sustaining an integrated close-knit Mizo society but also for the development of an inclusive and democratic process.

Table-9 Mizo view on the fast secularisation process and declining domain of Church in Mizo society.⁶⁴

Sl. No	Responses	Percentage of Respondents
1	Secularisation led to the decline the domain of church	55.83

⁶⁴ Source, data collected through semi-structured interview schedule among 240 respondents of different denominations across Aizawl and Lunglei town areas of Mizoram in 2018

2	Secularisation led to the increase the domain of church	13.75
3	Secularisation neither led to decline nor increase the domain of church	16.25
4	Cannot say	14.17

In a dynamic society, as per the above table-9, despite the assumption of decreasing the church domain (55.83 percent of the respondents) as a result of the secularisation of Mizo society. However, on the other hand, one can observe that in a dynamic socio-political milieu, the deteriorating socio-political system, inroad of various social problems, such as HIV/AIDS, corruption, drugs abuse, party politics, social disintegration and disparity within society. Church by widening its scope and roles had become more active in addressing the contemporary problems confronted by Mizo society. Therefore, in light of these developments, it can also be observed that the rapid secularisation of society is also followed by increasing intensity role of church in various social and political domain.

To sum up, Colonialism and Christianity has ushered a new change; thereby leading to a development of new socio-cultural, political and economic structural changes within the Mizo society. At a cultural level, it was Christianity that brought a structural and institutional reformation which was inevitable in the new Mizo society. Therefore, Christian ethics and values became dominant principles in socialization of

Mizo society. In contrast to the normative secularisation process, the socialization of Mizo society based on Christian philosophy and pattern initiated by early Christian missionaries and later on by the Church had a tremendous impact upon the nature of the relationship between sacred-temporal and development of secularism. The interfaced of Mizo culture with Christianity, which resulted in the development of the highly indigenized social system has become the normative socio-political and cultural structure of the contemporary Mizo society.

Church apart from its role in acculturation of Mizo society, Christianity which was associated with education also brought a tremendous structural within Mizo society. The abolition of *Zawlbuk, Bawi* system, Chieftainship and gender inequality within Mizo society clearly indicated that the new religion ushered a democratic value within traditional Mizo society. Therefore, Christianity can be seen as a positive aspect in transformation the socio-culture of the Mizo society. The integration and democratization of Mizo society to some extent can be credited to the inroad of Christianity in Mizo society.

Therefore, to generalize the secularisation thesis, as a trend towards modernization and withering of religious values would be misnomer at non-Western society, particularly in the context of Mizo society. This unique pattern of socialization of Mizo society based on Christian principles has a tremendous impact on the prospect and development of the secularisation process and secularism. The secularisation process does not imply a trend towards the demarcation of the secular-religion realm, as well as in the withering away of religion from various socio-political aspects of Mizo society. Thus, normative concept and practice of secularisation, broadly understood as institutional differentiation between religion and secular, the decline of

religious values and the privatization of religion from the public domain can hardly be understood and located in Mizo socio-culture context.

CHAPTER - 5
SECULARISM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN MIZORAM

The chapter deals with the core issues of this thesis, it focuses on various issues relating to secularism and its implications in Mizo society and politics. The chapter attempts to demystify the secular-religious realm from the Mizo socio-cultural context. The chapter also discusses the impact of religion in the Mizo socio-political system and how society perceives it. It briefly discusses the effective role of Church for over some decades in interpretation and contextualizing the social, political and economic issues from religious perspectives and its implications in state politics. Apart from the above-stated issues, amid the dynamic and rapid secularisation process of Mizo society, the chapter also deals with the concept, practice and dilemmas of secularism in contemporary Mizo society and politics. In brief, the chapter explores the notion and practice of secularism from an indigenous socio-political perspective.

Contemporary secularism is a multifaceted concept that implies a variety of meanings and implications in different socio-cultural contexts. In the Western normative context, concept and practice of secularism can be traced as a product of Reformation and Enlightenment movement towards structural dualism between state and religion, a move away from traditional religious beliefs towards rationalization of society and politics by confinement of religion to private realm, where religion hardly interfered within a public realm. In contrast to Western society, secularism in non-Western society is not a product of historical stadial secular consciousness,¹ but a product of statecraft to address the problem of diverse religious society. Secularism does not imply an absolute structural dualism between religion and state, but a partial

¹ Casanova, Jose (2011). "The Secular, Secularisations and Secularism," in Calhoun, Craig, Juergensmeyer, Mark and VanAntwerpen, Jonathan, Eds. *Rethinking Secularism*, Oxford University Press, New York. Pp. 57-59

separation between religion and politics where both the element of religion and politics penetrated within each other sphere.

India is a secular union of states under the provisions of the Constitution of India. The Constitution of India made a provisions for a secular state, in which the state ought to be neutral in its approach to various religious issues and not to discriminate any person on the grounds of religion. The nature of secularism accentuates equal respect and tolerance of all religions. It does not imply an anti-religious or irreligious but rather an attempt to reform the society from religious sanctioned undemocratic values and norms. Indeed, secularism in India can be seen as an instrument for socio-religious reforms, where state interfered within the religious realm to root out religious sanctioned social evils such as inequality, illiberal practices and discrimination on the grounds of religion. Precisely, Indian secularism can be described as a program for socio-religious reforms towards the actualization of some liberal principles such as religious liberty, equal citizenship and social justice. Therefore, Indian secularism, in contrast to Western normative secularism does not advocate a strict separation of religion from politics and cannot be understood in isolation to various socio-religious beliefs and practices. Secularism in India can be described as relative secularism, where the state promotes an agenda of social reform based on liberal principles. In other words, state interfered within religion realm for the sake of attainment of specific ends.

In the context of the diverse religious society of India, secularism is a cluster of related terms that imply varying degrees of separation from one society to the other. Particularly, in a Christian dominated state of Mizoram, concept and practice of secularism is unique and hardly imply a bifurcation of religion and politics. Thus,

generally in India and particularly in Mizo society, secularism is a blurred and fluid concept.

As discussed in the previous chapter, concepts such as secular, secularism and secularisation were unknown and new concepts to the traditional Mizo society. Before the advent of British colonialists and Christian missionaries, the socio-political life revolved around the institution of chieftainship. The Lushai Chief was practically the leader of both secular and religious affairs of the people and he was Ceasar and Pope both rolled into one.² There was hardly any structural and institutional differentiation that differentiated between the secular and religious realms. It was only after the Mizos were exposed to the British Colonialists, Christianity and later on the incorporation of Mizoram within the Constitution of India, a secular space began to develop. Therefore, to have a comprehensive insight on the relationship between religion, society and politics in Mizo society, the constitutional provisions on secularism, the pattern of secularization process, the socio-culture and contemporary role of church in interpretation the sacred and secular realm holds an important factor in demystifying and understanding the development implications and prospect of secularism in contemporary Mizo society and politics.

² Charavarti, Mahadev. (2013). "Christianity and Lushais of Tripura: A Peep at the History," in Hluna, J V, Ed., *History and Ethnic Identity Formation in North-East India*, Concept Publishing Company Pvt. LTD, New Delhi. P.149

5.1 COLONIALISM AND CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES

The development of the State-church relationship is a long process of historical development. Lal Dena, an eminent historian argued that in the nineteenth century Christian missions and colonialism seemed to follow each other in Africa and Asia. It is for that reason that in the eyes of many African and Asian peoples, colonialism seemed to assume both the roles of a politician and a priest. The Christian missions appeared to be a part and expression of the western colonial expression. Some of them even go to the extent of characterizing these missions as merely the hunting dog of western imperialism. He also observes that the relationship between the Cross and the Flag was not as smooth as was usually assumed. While the Church had some pious interests, the colonial interest was motivated by commercial interests. The interlinkage between them was more like a highly temporal process which was solely determined by the principle of expediency. However, Dena argued that any generalization of the relation of the particular mission with a particular colonial government would be risky.³ There are some exceptional cases, particularly in India, where Christian missionaries were allowed to propagate English and preach their religion based on the Charter Act of 1813,⁴ which was later withdrawn as it was believed to be one of the major cause of the Revolt of 1857.

After the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, as part of the official government policy of British in India, the Colonial administration made it clear to the pioneer missionaries that they were not supposed to ask for help from the Government. In the Lushai Hills,

³ Lal Dena, *The Cross and the Flag*, <https://proflaldena.blogspot.in/2014/10/the-cross-and-flag.html>. Retrieved on 14 April, 2018.

⁴ https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charter_Act_of_1813. Retrieved on 23 September, 2018.

both the Baptist and Presbyterian missionaries were allowed to work, on the strict understanding that they would not interfere in politics.⁵ However, some British administrators were sympathetic towards missionaries and were convinced that the civilizing influence of the missionaries would help to advance the British colonial interest directly or indirectly. In the early days of the Colonial period, mission schools in Lushai Hills were given free hand to include religious instruction in both mission schools and government-funded schools. Apart from entrusting education in the hands of missionaries, the government also gave financial grants for this purpose. Except for the *Bawi* controversy⁶ between Dr Peter Frazer and the Superintendent H W G Cole and the misunderstanding that had developed between the Welsh Mission and Superintendent McCall over the High Revival excesses,⁷ the relationship between the Christian missionaries and the British administrators were on the whole very cordial.⁸ Cordial relationship and sympathetic attitude of colonial administrators towards the Christian missions in some parts of Northeast India indicated that the colonial

⁵ Lloyd, J Meirion. (1991). *History of the Church in Mizoram; Harvest in the Hills*, Synod Publication Board, Aizawl, Printed at Swapna Printing Work, Private Limited, Calcutta. P. 155

⁶ Generally, *Bawi* controversy arose between the local British officials and the missionaries (particularly Dr. Peter Frazer) over the nature of their different perception of *bawi* system practiced in Mizo society. The local officials contended that the *bawis* were simply paupers or criminals who took refuge in a chief's house and lived as members and not slaves of the chief's family. On the contrary, the missionaries strongly contended that the *bawi* system was not different from those slaves in other societies and demand its abolition, for detail please refer to Dena Article, Dr. Peter Fraser (1864-1919). A missionary from Caernarfon, North-Wales to Northeast India at, <http://proflaldena.blogspot.com/2014/10/dr-peter-fraser-1864-1919-liberator.html?m=1>, Retrieved on 20 February 2018.

⁷ A controversy between Superintendent McCall and E. L. Mendus, (Executive Officer on behalf of church in matter pertaining to government), arose on account of Superintendent accusation that high revival excesses committed was resulted due to the teaching of Christian missionaries and pleaded an explanation from Mendus on this matter, for further reference. See, Kipgen, Mankhosat. 1996 Christianity and Mizo Culture, The Encounter between Christianity and Zo Culture in Mizoram, Mizo Theological Conference, Aizawl at Assam Printing Work (P), LTD, Assam. Pp. 294-295.

⁸ Hminga, C L. (1987). *The Life and Witness of Churches in Mizoram*, Serkawn Literature Committee, Baptist Church of Mizoram. P. 284.

administration had failed to establish a uniform approach towards Christian missions.

In the year 1873, the Inner Line Act was passed, (it is also known as the policy of isolation), which refers to the British colonial government's method of administering the backward Hills frontier separately and excluding them from normal legislative and executive governance. Under this system, communities residing in the hills were prohibited from crossing an imaginary line to the plains. Similarly, any non-tribal missionary, explorer, traveller, businessman, woodcutter, hunter and honey collector was to seek prior written permission from competent authorities to enter such designated areas. The British justified its intention to safeguard the tea plantations in the plains from tribal raids. Similarly, they intended to provide security to the non-tribal entrants in the hills from the tribes and tried to see that they did not exploit the simple hill communities.⁹ However, at a certain point of the event, the intention of the Inner Line Regulation of 1873 became clear when viewed alongside, as an instrument that controlled the entrance of certain missionaries and favor certain missionaries.¹⁰ Lalrinkima Ralte, a research scholar of Mizoram University too argued that the restriction of other missions paved a way for the dominant tendency of both the Presbyterian and Baptist churches in Mizoram.¹¹ Thus, the Colonial policy of nepotism among certain missions had a tremendous impact on the growth and development of certain denominations. As a result, the Baptist Church of Mizoram (BCM) and

⁹ Oommen, T K. (2009). "Culture Change Among the Tribes of Northeast India," in Subba, T B. Phuthenpurakal, Joseph and Puykunnel, Shaji Joseph. Eds. *Christianity and Change in Northeast India*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi. P. 23.

¹⁰ Dawns, Frederick S. (1994). *Essay on Christianity in North-East India*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi. P. 21.

¹¹ Ralte, Lalrinkima. (2014). "The Politics of Church-State Relationship in Mizoram," *Eastern Quarterly*, Vol. 10, Issue III & IV, Winter & Autumn. P. 126.

Presbyterian Church of India (PCI) have respectively dominated the Southern and Northern parts of Mizoram.

The fact that many missionaries were honored by the government for their good work indicated that most of the British administrators did appreciate the good work of selfless missionaries and recommended them for honors.¹² The overall Colonial government officials had a friendly attitude towards the Christian missions, there was no doubt that such friendly relations between the officials and the missionaries were important because each partner got tangible benefits out of it.¹³ Thus, in contrast to other parts of India, the Colonial administrators gave due patronage to the Christian missionaries. Therefore, it can be argued that the cordial relationship and support between the Colonial administrators and early Christian missionaries indicated that the Colonial administrators in Lushai Hills were less interested to follow and carried out the secular policy of the Colonial government.

Apart from the cordial relationship between the Colonial administration and Christian missions, the incorporation of Mizoram under the Union of India had a tremendous impact on the socio-political structure of Mizo society. Various constitutional provisions, on one hand, empowered the state to change, regulate and extend assistance to certain religious institutions. On the other hand, it also made provisions for the religious liberty of thought, belief, expression and propagation. However, the presence of wide gap or disjuncture on the understanding of the constitutional secular objectives and mass understanding of secularism has a

¹² Hminga, C L, (1987), Op. Cit., P. 284

¹³ Dena, Lal. (1998). "Christian Missions and Colonialism: A Study of Christian Missionaries Movement in Northeast India: With Particular Reference to Manipur and Lushai Hills (1894-1947)," Vandrame Institute, Shillong. P. 117.

detrimental effect on the development of substantive secularism in India. The increasing intensity of articulation and mobilization of religion in the public realm has indicated that religion and politics had become more interlinked than ever. The Constitution (Fifty-third Amendment) Act enacted in 1986, inserted a new provision in the Constitution, Art. 371-G. The Amendment provides that notwithstanding anything contained in the Constitution, no Act of Parliament in respect of the following matters (a) religious or social practices of the Mizos (b) Mizo customary law and procedure; (c) administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Mizo customary law; and (d) ownership and transfer of land shall apply to the State of Mizoram unless the State Legislative Assembly so decides by passing a resolution.¹⁴ Thus, it could be established that apart from the cordial relationship between the Colonial administrators and early Christian missionaries, the special constitutional provisions toward the Mizos, has helped the Mizo society to preserve and sustain their socio-religious culture, amid rapid secularisation of society.

5.2 CHURCH AND EARLY POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN MIZORAM

Church in Mizoram since its inception has been a factor of transformation of Mizo society. Prior to independent India, the Mizo were excluded from active participation in politics. The colonial government was in favoured of upholding the traditional chieftainship, as it supported the Colonial interest of maintenance a low cost administration in frontier areas of Northeast India. As Shakespeare, argued that to ensure success it only needs that each successive political officer should conscientiously apply himself with the task and intelligence to gain the friendship of

¹⁴ Jain, M. P. (2003). *Indian Constitutional Law*, 5th Edition, Wadhwa, Nagpur. P. 2417

the chief and guide them in the way they should go.¹⁵ Therefore, political participation was limited and this became a hurdle for the development of a democratic system during the phase of the colonial period.

The development of education that was associated with evangelical activities has transformed the political outlook of the Mizos. The rapid growth of the churches and simultaneous spread of education among the Mizo led to the emergence of a small group of the educated elite, which soon posed a challenge to the traditional and autocratic rule of chiefs backed by the British colonial administration and led to the disruption of order in the traditional elite. The emergence of a new elite witnessed a change in the mental outlook and became an instrument for structural change in the Mizo society. The new elite with educational background began to protest the traditional values, customs and undemocratic traditional rights and privileges of the chief. Thus, in contrast to the traditional philosophy of hill people, the Christian philosophy which champions the individual and democratic system becomes more dominant and popular.¹⁶ Initially, it was in a phase of low intensity. However, the movement for democratization was gradually strengthened and transformed the chief-based administration itself into a formal democratic process within a short period.

Since the early period of political development, the missionaries at large were always cautious when it came to politics. However, prominent leaders of the Presbyterian and the Baptist Church began to play an active role in the early history of political development. For instance, the first Mizo political party, the Mizo Union

¹⁵ Ray, Animesh. (1982). *Mizoram Dynamic of Change*, Pearl Publishers, Calcutta. P. 23

¹⁶ Mitra, Ratin & Das, Barun. (1967). *A Common Perspective in Northeast India*, Calcutta. Pp. 86-87.

(MU) formed in the mid-1940s was supported by the majority of local pastors.¹⁷ It witnessed the entry of church leaders in high posts. Some ecclesiastical figures such as the first Mizo ordained Pastor, Chhuahkama of the Presbyterian Church, the founder of the Salvation Army in Mizoram, Brigadier Kawlkhuma and pastor Challiana of Baptist Church were among the early prominent members of Mizo Union. Albeit, the Churches themselves were never officially involved, but at individual level prominent church members do participate in the political process. The involvement of such ecclesiastical figures was not questioned, given the fact that the evolution of the party, as well as new political ideas, took place within the Christian milieu. Further, the early Christian leaders themselves tried to understand that they had a role to play in State politics as a part of their ministerial responsibility to emancipate the people.¹⁸ The religious leaders participated in the political arena, as they considered as their responsibility in guiding and bringing politics in to right path. Thus, participation in the various secular realm was not seen as a hindrance towards religious beliefs and practices.

But within a short span of development of the modern political system, in late 1940, the Mizo Union, the only political party witnessed conflict and defection in the party. This resulted in the emergence of a new political parties. Therefore, the fear of importing political disunity to the church seemed to dispel the church leaders from politics. Saiaithanga testified that the heat of growing political disunity in the late 1940s divided the church considerably. As the struggle for power between political

¹⁷ Hminga, C L. (1987), *Op.cit.*, P. 243.

¹⁸ Khawbung, Robert Sanglora (2000). *Church and Social Development in a Tribal-State of Northeast India; A Case Study of Mizoram*, an unpublished Dissertation Submitted at the Centre of Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, (JNU).

parties and between leaders in the parties became more and more intense, church leaders withdrew and some churches later officially prohibited the involvement of their ministers and employees in politics.¹⁹ From this juncture onward, the Church developed a negative attitude towards politics as they feared that the involvement of ecclesiastical figures would bring division among the churches. Thus, consequently, the gap between church and secular politics got widened.

Despite such negative attitude developed among the church leaders in the early phase of political development, the Church continued to play an active role in politics. Church body along with other non-governmental organizations particularly the Young Mizo Association (YMA) is active in the political process of the state. Even before the formation of Mizoram People Forum (MPF), the Presbyterian Church, the biggest church organization in the state, started a political awareness program to educate the public on how to conduct themselves during elections and what kind of people to vote for as well as on their political rights. The voters are also instructed by the churches to cast their votes with a good conscience. They are asked to elect candidates based on good character and good behaviour. Rev. Rosiama, Executive Secretary of Synod Mission Board, was reported to have said, that the church has been into the practice of issuing poll code of conduct for over a decade now, the church feels that it had a spiritual message for every aspect of human life, including the election.²⁰ The Church has widened its scope by inculcating religious ethics within socio-political domain.

¹⁹ Rev. Zairema, (1990), "Kohran leh Politics," 10-19, Synod Social Front, No. 8. Aizawl Synod Social Front Committee, Mizoram Presbyterian Church. Aizawl.

²⁰ Malsawmi Jacob, (2004), Church as a Peacemaker, https://www.telegraphindia.com/1040115/asp/northeast/story_2786139.asp, 15 January 2004. Retrieved 21 March, 2004.

In a similar tone, Rev. Zaihmingthanga, ex-Secretary of the Mizoram Presbyterian church stated; We normally issue pamphlets on the eve of the elections encouraging our members to cast their votes and utilized their franchise responsibly. The church does not mention the name of particular political candidates, but highlight what kind of people are trustworthy and have a good reputation in church and society. This process involves bodies as high as the executive committee of the Mizo Synod, Rev. Lungmuana of the Mizoram Presbyterian stated that the Church appeal to people to reflect on the kind of candidate they should vote for.²¹ Therefore, the Church gave the commoner a guide as to the selection of responsible leaders and conduct of electoral politics.

Furthermore, Lungmuana argued that the church in Mizoram presents its view of politics to the population, encouraging them to participate actively. We do outreach to all the villages, also in towns, telling them what we mean by politics and how we form the government, that we are important in the forming of the government by voting. Rev. Ngurhnema, a pastor in the Baptist Church of Mizoram, states that church bodies such as the Mizoram Kohran Hruaitute Committee. (MKHC), (Committee of Church leaders in Mizoram) became involved in the elections by formulating the qualification that should be expected of members of the Legislative Assembly and members of Parliament. Ngurhnema stated that these prescriptions play a very important role in determining which candidates were to be selected in Mizoram.²² Besides these appeals to the church members, churches in Mizoram also organized discussions, debates and seminars over questions of good governance, electoral

²¹ Lumsdaine, David Halloran. Ed. (2009). *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Asia*, Oxford University Press, New York. P. 140.

²² Ibid, P. 141.

politics and responsibility. Thus, the Church in Mizoram apart from a normal religious sermon, do actively participated in politics and provide a means for ordinary citizens to engage in democratic politics.

As every aspect of the socio-political lives of Mizo society is deeply influenced by religion, both the church and political leaders confirmed the church has acted as the cultural cement of society in Northeast India and that it sought to encourage political participation based on an understanding of Christian principles and theological ideals. This has a tremendous impact upon electoral politics of the state.

Secular India portrays a completely different posture in the Christian dominated states of Mizoram, Meghalaya and Nagaland where it allows the church to play an important role in matters concerning state policy and direction of politics in these states. To quote the Nagaland Baptist Council ‘it is not at all a question of taking party politics to the Church but rather of taking the spirit of Christ to the inspiration and upliftment of politics. Similarly, it is more or less obligatory for the candidates irrespective of Party affiliations to take the pledge and sign their name to abide by the wishes of the Church, (Nagaland for Christ).²³ Sanat Chakraborty, a well-known political commentator from the North-eastern region said that politicians in Mizoram start their campaign by swearing by the name of Jesus.²⁴ Apart from this, politicians do also quote religious texts and issues to woo voters. In a similar tone, the state also uses religious symbols and sentiment to justify their socio-political objectives and

²³ Chakraborty, Gorky. (2001). “Secular Thought and Communal Practices in India and its North-East,” in Deb, Bimal J. Ed, *Ethnic issues, Secularism and Conflict Resolution in North East India*, published by Northeast India Council for Social Science Research, Shillong, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi. P. 46.

²⁴ Abhijit Deb, Religion and politics in Mizoram, at <https://empoweringindiasays.wordpress.com/2013/11/15/religion-and-politics-in-mizoram/>. Retrieved on 20 February, 2015.

actions. In brief, both church and state use religious symbols, texts and ethics in pursuance and implementation of their program.²⁵

Thus, in the context of Christian dominated state, Church articulation and mobilization on various political issues has a tremendous impact on the political process of the state. Therefore, secularism reflects a different connotation and can hardly be understood in isolation to the Mizo socio-religious system. The concept and practice of secularism as a separation of the religious-secular realm can hardly be located and conceptualized within the Mizo political system. In brief, religion and politics do seem to influence each other's spheres.

5.3 CHURCH AND PEACE DEVELOPMENT IN MIZORAM

In the mid-1960s, with the onset of the political problem, normal life was disrupted for years on account of prolonged insurgency, initiated and spearheaded by Laldenga-led Mizo National Front (MNF). Amid this development, the two major churches, the Presbyterian and Baptist, were not altogether unaware of the possibility of the violent outbreak of the political movement and its impact upon the Mizos. During this period, churches in Mizoram not only raised their voice against violence and insurgency but also played a most notable contribution in bringing peace and normalcy in the insurgency affected Mizo District.

A word about Mizo Church is in order here, in 1965, the Church came out in opposition to the hostile pressures of the M N F. On August 1, 1967, a declaration was issued by the Mizo Presbyterian Church opposing the armed insurrection of the M N

²⁵ For instance, there are various cases where the state uses religious text to carry out state policy and program. Similarly, even the church is engaged with secular aspects, through its agenda of reforming the socio-political process.

F, against which Bulletin No. 1 of August 1967 issued by the Mizo Underground Minister, Information, Publicity and Broadcasting warned the Church that the Mizo Government will not tolerate any Church or organization which does not accept the present government, that is the MNF.²⁶ However, the above statement was reinterpreted, the Church was not politically biased as the above quotation made it appear to be. In the underlined statement in 1965, the Church came out in opposition to the hostile pressures of the MNF, that referred to the valediction sermon of the Synod Moderator, Rev. A Roberts. The text of the sermon was published in 1966 February issue of the official organ of the Presbyterian Church, *Kristian Tlaungau* just a month before the outbreak of violence. It was a clear statement that violence was not the way of Christ and that the follower of Christ should not resort to violence to achieve their goals. The mentioned Declaration issued by the Presbyterian Church was simply a declaration of principle than a declaration against the MNF. After the insurgency had taken place, both the Presbyterian and Baptist Churches made a declaration separately and later jointly made it clear that the Church could not but follow the instructions of the Bible and the example of the Lord Jesus. They were joined by other Churches in a call to prayer for the restoration of peace in the country. During the height of insurgency, normal life was disrupted for some time. In that situation, the voice of the Church was the only voice that could be heard for a few years. Civil administration had collapsed and the political voices became silent. The Mizo Church has not only promoted a good relationship between the public and the Security forces but also relieved the people from the consequences of the insurgency.²⁷ Church in Mizoram

²⁶ Hminga, C L. (1987). Op.cit., Pp. 234.

²⁷ Ibid., P. 235

has been an autonomous and apolitical institution that facilitated peace and harmony in times of political crisis and instability in the state.

In 1966, both Lunglei Citizens' Committee and the Aizawl Citizens' Committees were established at Aizawl and Lunglei respectively. These Committees were initiated by their church leaders, especially Rev. Lalngurauva, Sainghinga and Rev. Alwyn Robert, the then Moderator of the Mizoram Presbyterian Synod individually played significant roles. Rev. Lalngurauva even served as one of the members of the Peace Committee set up by the joint Churches of Mizoram in the later part of the insurgency period. These Committees then set up various cells or sub-committees such as Public Relief Committee (PRC) and Public Grievance Cell (PGC), they disposed of human and animal corpses lying scattered across the streets of Aizawl. In all, they gathered and buried thirteen (13) human corpses. Besides, the Committee also appealed to the churches of Mizoram to contribute donations and charity, which they used for relief efforts for the displaced civilians. They also often submit memoranda and complaints to the army Brigade and Battalion officers about army personnel acting extremely and illegally. Hence, the Citizens' Committee was the first instance where the Church took an active part in the rehabilitation and maintenance of social and political order within the District.²⁸ In such a situation, the Church as an apolitical institution played an important role in the facilitation of rehabilitation and social services.

Later, a more substantive peace committee, known as Christian Peace Committee (CPC) was formed jointly by the Presbyterian and Baptist Churches with members drawn from both the Presbyterian and Baptist churches. This Committee thereafter, supervised all relief efforts for the welfare of Mizo people and also initiated

²⁸ Ibid., P. 235

a number of peace missions during the insurgency period, between the Indian Government and the MNF that spanned for almost two decades, pleading both sides to take their problems to negotiating table and work out diplomatic solutions to such political problems that had triggered the insurgent movement.²⁹ Apart from its active role in the acculturation and socio-political process of Mizo society, Church in Mizoram can be considered as a harbinger for the development of peace and stability in Mizo society.

5.4 CHURCH AND SOCIO-POLITICAL ETHIC IN MIZORAM

Church in Mizoram, to a great extent, can be regarded as a social centre that expresses socio-political concerns of the Mizos. Church in Mizoram is not an abstract institution but a community of persons in the state. It is a socio-political centre (a place where people of a community meets in organized capacities for common interest) that express the social, political, economic and cultural concerns of the Mizo society. Thus, there is a strong sense of community membership among the Mizo Church members. The church could also be regarded to a great extent as an institution that structured and regulated the political ethic of Mizos. Since most of the social values in the Mizo society were founded and grounded on Christian values and principles, the Church could be considered as the articulator and moral guardian of Mizo society.

For over decades, the Presbyterian and the Baptist churches of Mizoram being the two largest denominations had extensive influence over the social and political ethics of the state. Any social and government activities which go against the church

²⁹ Zara Pachuau. "Role of the Church in the process of Peace and Development in Mizoram." <http://zarapachuau.blogspot.in/2014/02/role-of-church-in-process-of-peace-and.html>. Retrieved on 23 March 2015.

ideology hardly had any effective stand in the society and politics of Mizo. Church in Mizoram acts as a pressure group and watch-dog in regulating various socio-political ethics and policies of the state. Church bodies such as MKHC were also invited by the state government to send representatives to various committees, especially when matters relating to the public interest are slated for discussion. Rev. Zaihmingthanga talked about the ways the church can act as a watchdog, particularly on issues of corruption. In fact, in most of the Christian communities of Northeast India, Church plays a very vital role in shaping the social fabric of the state. The intervention of the church both during and after elections ensured that the state was accountable to its citizens.³⁰ Thus, for more than a decades churches in Mizoram has been issuing several socio-political guidelines to both public and political leaders of the state.

When the Mizo District was upgraded to Union Territory, new changes brought a tremendous impact on the Mizo society, corruption, party politics, nepotism had grown to such an extent that it threatened the social fabric and social ethics of Mizo society. The church authorities, being the gatekeeper of public morals and conscience was alarmed at the prevailing situation and finding no other alternative had taken recourse step by declaring 1983 as the year of anti-corruption. In pursuance of this, the Synod authorities, issued pamphlets on the subject and held seminars in the Synod hall on the subject of corruption on different occasions in 1983. The Synod also sent letters to various churches where it expressed its desire, appealed to them that the church members should keep themselves aloof from the clutches of corruption and should be

³⁰ Lumsdaine, David Halloran. (2009). *Op.cit.*, P.141.

free from its influence.³¹ A recent field observation given in the table below portrayed the contemporary role of religion in state politics.

Table -1 Mizo view on the role of church/religion in influencing state politics.³²

Sl. No	Responses	Percentage of Respondents
1	Religion/church influenced state politics	42.08
2	Religion/church does not influence state politics	15
3	Religion/church influenced state politics to some extent	32.08
4	No idea / Cannot say	10.84

Based on table -1, majority of 42.08 percent of respondents argued that the church intervened and influenced state politics. The church is one of the largest

³¹ Lalnithanga, P. (2005). *Emergence of Mizoram*, Lengchawn Press, Aizawl. P. 91.

³² Source, data collected through semi-structured interview schedules among 240 respondents of different denominations across Aizawl and Lunglei town areas of Mizoram in 2018.

organization in Mizoram, as well as the guardian of public morality does influence various social and political policies by rejecting those policies which stand inconsistent with Christian principles. Indeed, one can also observe that church played an extensive role in lobbying and mobilization of public opinion on various social and moral questions, such as the sale of alcohol, HIV/AIDS, social customs, corruption, electoral politics, party politics, sex education and conservation of environment. Thus it can be observed that the church plays a vital role in shaping the socio-political policies of the state.

Therefore, in the context of Mizoram, there is a close link between religion and politics, rather than a separation of religion from temporal. Religious ethics and ideology do hold a significant place to justify the socio-political programs of the state.

Table - 2 Mizo view on the role of the Church in promoting of democratic norms and values.³³

Sl. No	Responses	Percentage of Respondents
1	Promote free & fair election	67.91
2	Promote good governance	18.75

³³ Source, data collected through semi-structured interview schedules among 240 respondents of different denominations across Aizawl and Lunglei town areas of Mizoram in 2018.

4	Does not play any role in promotion of democratic values & norms	6.25
5	No idea / Cannot say	7.09

Based on the above table -2, 67.91 percent of the respondents argued that church-related activities do facilitated democratic values and norms, particularly in regards to free and fair elections, corrupt practices and good governance. Thus, Church being one the active institution in society, has a tremendous impact in the articulation of its members in exercising their political rights and obligations. Church in Mizoram by organizing various seminars, debates and conferences, issued messages not only to emancipate its members on various socio-political issues but also to make them an informed citizen.

Moreover, church teaching on various socio-political aspects has not only enlightened and informed the people on the various social and political issue, but also became an indispensable institution of interpretation and defining what constitute the secular and religious realms, which helped the Mizos to adjust with new developments.

5.5 CHURCH AND MIZORAM PEOPLE FORUM

In the midst of series of problems and issues concerning the elections and political situation in the state of Mizoram, a series of seminars and consultations on various socio-political problems were organised with the initiative of Presbyterian Church, based on the light of their studies it was finally resolved to form what has become

known as the Mizoram People Forum (MPF), the MPF constitutes of Churches and NGOs with an objectives of making election free and fair and bringing about good governance in the state. As the name implies the MPF is the forum in which all the people from all walks of life can freely participate in the good governance of the country. Even though the Churches are at the forefront, it is indeed a People's movement, as most of its activities are carried out at the local or village level by the people themselves and the common people are the strength and resources of the movement. In an attempt to cleanse the surge of corruption and malpractices during state elections, the Church had taken some steps to correct the problem of electoral politics in the Mizo society. The MPF became the administrative arm of the Church in its effort to bring free, clean and fair administration in Mizoram.³⁴

Right from its formation, the MPF became an active institution to monitor the electoral process of state and facilitate free, fair and clean elections, both at state and local village council election level. To ensure free and fair election, a memorandum of understanding that contained several guidelines concerning the electoral process was signed between MPF and political parties. The major guideline stated; Firstly, (a) every individual citizen was expected to work for a peaceful, free and fair election, (b) every electorate was encouraged to exercise his/her franchise in the election, (c) it was not desirable to give chances to those who are not in their voting constituencies by giving them free conveyances at the time of election by any political parties.³⁵

Secondly, in regard to curb the election expenditure, (a) the MPF set a limit for election expense and prohibited electorate to demand cash or kind from any political

³⁴ Zara Pachuau. (2014) Op.cit.

³⁵ Presbyterian Review, Vol. XX April –September 2012, No. 64, p.15.

party, (b) house to house campaign was prohibited, to curb improper result such as financial expenses (d) cash for vote was prohibited (e) political party were not allowed to organize public feast and procession ten days before the election (f) to avoid heavy financial expenses for candidates, restriction was made on size and numbers of banners, flags and posters. Thirdly, to ensure peaceful election, the MPF also issued a guideline that (a) all party must against the use of rebel/underground forces/*gundatism* or violence means for political purposes, (b) parties should formulate manifestoes, policies and programs that could only be materialized.³⁶

Fourthly, on matter of selection of candidate, the MPF advised the parties to consider the following while choosing a candidate; (a) mature person with good reputation and trustworthy, (b) Diligent and faithful, (c) person who is not greedy after money and other material unjustly, (d) one who is free from alcohol and other intoxicating habits, (e) citizen who abide law and order, peaceful and a just person, (f) one who loves and works for the welfare of the individual and society.³⁷

Lastly, to pursue a common effort, the MPF issued guidelines that the candidate and the MPF in each constituency may work together to make a joint platform in sub-towns under the supervision of MPF's Constituency forum, as to help the candidates to introduce their visions, policies and manifestoes. The joint platform should not be organized by any other means except by MPF or in consultation with MPF. If any political parties are found violating of the common Agreement, the MPF would make public in the concerned constituency. Interestingly all political parties and their candidates welcomed the MPF guidelines rather than seeing them as a constraint. The

³⁶ Ibid., Pp. 16-17

³⁷ Ibid., P. 17

Church and the MPF had not only issued the guidelines for the election but were also monitoring its implementation. The MPF volunteers together with all the members of the Youth Department of the Churches were vigilant on all the election campaigns.³⁸ As the result of active participation and monitor of MPF, election campaign as well as the elections itself was conducted peacefully in all the areas .

In fact, with the establishment of the MPF, the Church widened its secular principles and objectives. On 12 October 2018, the MPF organized a State Level Joint platform for various political parties to express their party manifestoes and policy.³⁹ Thereby, this type of joint platform rendered not only to impart political education, awareness and debate on various socio-political issues but also facilitated a healthy competition, vibrant democracy, good governance and sustainable socio-political development. Such initiatives have made the smooth function of electoral politics in the state.

5.6 RELIGION AND POLITICS IN MIZORAM; CONTEMPORARY CONTEXTS

In a Christian dominated state of Mizoram, concept and practice of secularism portrays a completely different meaning and implications. Church in Mizoram can be described and categorized to some extent as; "a civil society which stands as an institution, that acts as a non-state space, sphere of autonomous, empowerment of citizens, trust-building associational life rather than subordinate to the state".⁴⁰ It can be described as

³⁸ Ibid., P. 18

³⁹ Zonet Zawlbuk, State Level Joint platform, (a local television program) organized by MPF, on 12 October 2018. Accessed on 12 October, 2018

⁴⁰ Rudolf, Susan Hoerber. (2000). "Civil Society as a Realm of Freedom," *Economic and Political Weekly*, 13 May. P. 1763

a socio-political platform, where people express not only their religious aspirations but also their political and social concerns.

Table - 3 Mizo view of Secularism.⁴¹

Sl. No	Views	Percentage of Respondents
1	As a strict separation between Church and State	12.5
2	As an exclusion of religion from the public realm	4.17
3	Not so strict separation (relative separation)	26.26
4	As an equality of all religions	44.17
5	No idea/ Cannot say	12.9

As per table - 3, It can be observed that the majority of respondents (44.17 percent) understand secularism in terms of equality of all religions. This perception of secularism indicates that the Mizos are less concerned with the normative notion and practice of secularism, that is the separation of politics from religion. Thus, it could be

⁴¹ Source, data collected through semi-structured interview schedules among 240 respondents of different denominations across Aizawl and Lunglei town areas of Mizoram in 2018.

established that secularism is viewed not in a sense of strict separation of sacred and secular, but rather as the existence of equal respect or equality of all religions.

Table - 4 Mizo view on the separation of religion and state.⁴²

Sl. No	Responses	Percentage of Respondents
1	There is a separation of religion and state	30
2	There is no separation of religion and state	18.75
3	Relative separation of religion and state	40.41
4	No idea / Cannot say	10.84

As per table - 4, it can be observed that there are mixed responses on the matter of separation of state from religion, majority of 30 percent of respondents viewed that there is separation of state and religion. 18.75 and 40.41 percent of the respondents argued that there is less separation or relative separation of state and religion. However, here relative separation could not be understood as contextual secularism, where state interfered within religious domain on account social reforms. Relative

⁴² Source, data collected through semi-structured interview schedule among 240 respondents of different denominations across Aizawl and Lunglei town areas of Mizoram in 2018

secularism here refers to the dynamic nature of interlinkage between state and religion in each other sphere. As every aspect of Mizo society is deeply influenced by religion, to isolate religion from politics is hardly viable.

Table - 5 Mizo view on the nature of the church-state relationship in Mizoram.⁴³

Sl. No	Responses	Percentage of Respondents
1	Cordial relationship	40
2	Un-friendly	19.17
3	No relationship	12.08
4	No idea / Cannot say	28.75

Based on the above table - 5, a majority of respondents (40) percent argued that there is a cordial relationship between Church and state. Therefore, in light of this interpretation, it could be observed that Mizos' understanding and practice of secularism is neither based on the concept of separation, but more or less on the friendly relationship between state and church. Rather than following a normative model of secularism, cooperation between state and religion dictate the trends of secularism in Mizoram. Thus, one could hardly observe and located the normative concept and practice of secularism in Mizo society and politics.

⁴³ Source, data collected through semi-structured interview schedules among 240 respondents of different denominations across Aizawl and Lunglei town areas of Mizoram in 2018.

In the face of rapid secularisation there is also a serious deterioration of Mizo society and politics, on account of increasing intensity of party politics, nepotism, corruption, drug abuse, HIV/AIDS and increasing gap of inequality among the Mizos. A range of questions has emerged as to, should Church withdraws itself from politics by saying politics is dirty and the church leaders should not be a part of it in reforming the socio-political system. In other words, various speculations and articulations had emerged as to what extent can Church be a part in bringing socio-political reforms and changes in contemporary Mizo society.

Indeed, Church in Mizoram had become more active in addressing socio-political issues, problem and challenges of the contemporary society. Various contemporary church leaders considered it inevitable to take part in a fast-changing socio-political environment. To reform the socio-political system of the Mizos, various arguments have emerged in the public realm, which raises questions on the relevance and accountability of Church towards imparting socio-political ethics, good governance and inclusive development in dynamic Mizo polity and society. Further, some argued to the extent that Church leaders had a significant role in politics and felt that a spiritual person needed to bring wisdom and righteousness in every aspect of society.⁴⁴ Thus, in this juncture, based on Biblical sanction and interpretation, Church in Mizoram has considered itself, as it was its obligation and responsibility, to reform the socio-political system from a religious perspective.

Church in Mizoram had organized various types of religious-based educational program and impart political education within the Mizo society and politics. Thereby,

⁴⁴ C J. Zova. 2018. Mizoram Development Ladder (church and politics), Vanglaini Newspaper, 24 Feb 2018.

implicitly or explicitly inculcate religious ethics in society and politics. During 1992-1998, the Synod constituted a Synod Social forum and organized various seminars on political education in various places. Various Biblical topics, ranging from Nehemiah to Nazareth Manifesto,⁴⁵ government belongs to God and the concept of the Kingdom of God that referred to the prevail of God's realm and authority over humankind's sphere, were taught to inculcate religiously oriented principles in politics and bring political reform in a dynamic society and politics.

The Seventh State Legislative Assembly elections 2018, witnessed a blatantly used religion. In order to bring a radical change in Mizoram politics and to introduce better governance in the state, there was a huge crusade spearheaded by a group of distinguished persons. As a consequence, new religiously centric parties such as Zoram Exodus Movement (ZEM) and Zoram Democratic Front, (consisted of majority of retired pastors) a part of Tanrual Pawl also known as Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) was formed. Subsequently, Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP) and Mizo Peoples Conference (MPC) joined hands together along with ZEM. The ZPM argued that despite the up-gradation of the present state, since thirty years back, inclusive development and the people-based government had been hardly actualized. Nepotism based on political parties and party politics has dominated politics. Therefore, in these circumstances, several religious leaders have entered the political field and actively participated in politics, with an intent to reform state politics based on Christian principles. They argued that even if their party came into power, they would not hold any important position or portfolio, but regard it as their religious duty and responsibility

⁴⁵ The sermon of Christ has been considered as Nazareth Manifesto and most of the Mizo theologians interpreted the relevance of this gospel in the contemporary Mizo socio-political milieu and also considered it as a canon for good governance, for further reference, see., The Holy Bible, (2007), Luke (4:16-20) Bible Society of India. Bangalore.

to guide the political realm accordingly to Christian principles.⁴⁶ In a similar tone, Vanlalhnema, a Presbyterian Church elder and an ex-Principal of Government Hnahthial college, argued that although some people felt that church leaders should not interfere in politics, on the contrary, he argued that there was nothing wrong with the involvement of church leaders in politics.⁴⁷ Therefore, with these recent developments in Mizoram, it could be observed that there was a tendency to de-secularise and reform the political system according to religious values, norms and impart religious ethics within a secular (political) realm.

Since religious identity and issue had been a central issue of politics in the last general assembly election 2018, various political parties appeal the voter on religious lines to get the support from church members. The electoral politics revolved around accusation and counter-accusation among various political parties on the question of religious-related issues. The Congress and ZPM claimed that the MNF, a part of the North East Democratic Alliance, (NEDA), an alliance under the leadership of BJP work together with BJP and was a threat to the sustenance of Christianity in Mizoram.⁴⁸ Laldhuhoma also stated that MNF has sunk within the influence of BJP.⁴⁹ On the contrary, the MNF counterclaimed against the charges and argued that MNF was just a part of NEDA (which is a part of NDA, the non-congress grand alliance in Northeast India) where MPC and ZPM party were part of it, not an alliance of BJP.

Several religious persons such as pastors, elders and evangelists have emerged in the political field and expressed their thoughts on the deterioration of the socio-

⁴⁶ Rev. Darchungnunga & Rev. Dr. Kapenga, Tunlai Politics- a Pastor Pension-te Inpuanna (Testimony of Retired Pastors in Contemporary Politics, Vanglaini Newspaper, Aizawl, 3 & 4 December 2017.

⁴⁷ Excerpt from an interview with Vanlalhnema, on 12, February 2018, at Hnahthial.

⁴⁸ Laldhuoma, MNF leh BJP a thawkho, Vanglaini Newspaper, 5 November 2018

⁴⁹ Laldhuoma, MNF hi BJP tui puiaid a pil mek, Vanglaini Newspaper, 2 August 2016

political system. Based on various Biblical texts, they argued that since the time of the Old Testament, the Lord has been concerned with the unjust ruling or governance. Therefore, based on Bible texts, "Thine, O LORD is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and the earth is thine; thine is the Kingdom, O Lord and thou art exalted as head above all,"⁵⁰ has become a popular slogan in justifying the entry of religious person in contemporary state politics.

Apart from religious issues, various political awareness messages, such as not to sell their votes on account of money (cash for vote), excessive demand on a political leader, a false promise made by candidates, intense party politics and corruption were discouraged by Churches. People were also requested to pray to God before the selection of a candidate and not to merely consider election as a secular aspect but also as divine intervention in reforming the political milieu.⁵¹ Further, on Dec 2, 2017, Synod Revival Committee also organized mass public prayers in various places of Mizoram. Rev. Lalzuithanga, Synod Moderator, said that sin has deeply penetrated upon society and politics. Therefore, to govern by God desires and willingness the above-noted sins have to be wiped out from society and politics.⁵² Articulation and mobilization based on religious values and sentiment had dominated state politics

The 2018 State Assembly elections, clearly mandated the Mizo National Front, a party with its slogan for my God and country, (*Pathian leh kan Ram a tan*) has a tremendous impact upon the general Christian population of the state. The loss of

⁵⁰ The Holy Bible, (2007). (1 Chronicle 29:11), Bible Society of India, Bangalore.

⁵¹ Rev. Lianzuala, C. Pathian Ram leh Politics (God's Kingdom and politics) Vanglaini Newspaper, 6 March 2018

⁵² Vanglaini Newspaper, Aizawl, 3 & 4 December 2017

Congress government in the 2018 state election was to some extent on account of Mizo Church electoral campaign or mobilization through various awareness program such as "*Ram chu Lalpa ta ani*" (Land belongs to God). The awareness program focuses more on the responsibility of people in the coming election indicated the Mizo Church was against the Mizoram Congress government policy, particularly towards state government policy on the Mizoram Liquor Prohibition and Control (MLPC) Act, which allowed the opening of a wine shop and sale of liquor. Such religious articulation and appeals in a Christian dominated society has a tremendous impact on state politics.

Albeit, Mizoram follows the non-establishment norm, in-depth analysis of contemporary state, society and religion manifests that there is a close interlinkage between religion and politics. Despite the ruling MNF claims that state is exempted from Citizen Amendment Act, (CAA) 2019, various Non-government organizations, such as Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), Mizo Students Union (MSU) political parties, Church and YMA has strongly protest against the CAA, assuming that the CAA is against secular principles and is a threat to Mizo culture.⁵³ Further, Lalthanhawla, an Ex-Chief Minister and the president of Mizoram Pradesh Congress Committee further comment that CAA is an instrument for creation of Hindu *Rashtra* in India.⁵⁴ Thus, the concept and practice of secularism is a fluid concept where there is an intense relationship between politics and religious issues. Contrary to normative secularism, which is broadly understood as a separation between Church and state, secularism in Mizoram depicts a close relationship between religion and politics, rather than a

⁵³ Vanglaini Newspaper, December 3 & 10, 2019

⁵⁴ Vanglaini Newspaper, December 7, 2019

demarcation of religion and politics, where both the elements of religion and secular intervened within each other sphere. No doubt, in a Christian dominated state of Mizoram, there is an inextricable linkage between politics and religion and religion played a dominant role in matters concerning the socio-political issue of the state. Thus the normative understanding of secularism has hardly any implication in contemporary Mizo society and polity.

5.7 RETHINKING SECULARISM IN MIZO POLITICS AND SOCIETY

Although the political system of Mizoram is formally based on secular principles of the Indian Constitution. Secularism as an ideology of separation of Church and State can hardly be located in Mizo society and politics. The socialization process which was initially based on Christian principles has brought a pattern of secularisation that aligned with a Christian perspective of drawing a boundary between the secular and religious. In other words, the secularisation of society was limited and confined with a Biblical trend of interpretation and separation of the temporal and sacred realms rather than based on a normative rational secular perspective.

Thus, in the context of Mizo society and politics, the core theory of the secularisation process can be contested. In contrast to normative secularisation theory, albeit one finds a relative secular differentiation at institutional levels, it hardly accompanied either by a process of religious decline and confinement of religion to the private sphere. In other words, one can observe that rapid secularisation (read as modernization) of society, is followed by the increasing intensity of religious activities in the society. Therefore, secularism in Mizo society can be best perceived as William N Singh described "reversed secularism", where churches promise to correct and guide the political culture of the state, a trend that challenged the universal understanding of

secularism. While the church is closely aligned with the state, the concept of separation of state and religion is practiced differently. In the Mizo context, reverse secularism dictates political idioms and social affairs in Mizoram.⁵⁵ Therefore, if the standard indices for satisfactory secularism are the delinking of religion from state, society, public policy and politics then obviously, it is doubtful that a contemporary pervasive Mizo religious society could hardly materialised it.

Particularly, in the Christian dominated State of Mizoram, the understanding of secularism does not refer to the confinement of religion to the private realm. A state may be secular (legally), but at the level of society, Mizo society is far from being secular or neutral. B. Lalsangkima, an Associate Professor at the Department of Economics, comment that in a state like Mizoram, where almost a hundred percent of the population is Christian, secularism hardly implied the exclusion of religion from state and society. He further argued that churches in Mizoram should render advice to the state government on various matters.⁵⁶ The church is the largest organized institution, pressure group and a guardian of Mizo ethics with its members being both a member of the church and state has a tremendous influenced upon society and politics. Thus, the concept of secularisation and secularism understood as demarcation or confinement of religion to the private sphere has remained a practical problem in Mizo society and politics.

⁵⁵ William, N Singh. (2012). Politics of Divine Edict and Reverse Secularism, Economic & Political Weekly, Vol, XIVII, No 52. December. P. 24

⁵⁶ Excerpt from an interview with B Lalsangkima, Associate Professor of Govt. Hnahthial College, on 12, February 2018, at Hnahthial.

Table - 6 Mizo view on Church-state cooperation and inclusive development.⁵⁷

Sl. No	Responses	Percentage of Respondents
1	Church-state cooperation facilitate inclusive development	53.75
2	Church-state cooperation does not facilitate inclusive development	11.67
3	Partially agreed that Church-state cooperation facilitate inclusive development	22.5
4	No idea / Cannot say	12.08

As per table - 6, it can be observed that the majority of 53.75 percent of respondents do agree that cooperation between Church-state in various developmental aspects, could facilitate a more inclusive and sustainable development in the state. Furthermore, a close relationship between state and church could lead to identify their common interests and lightened each other burden in various development of policies and programs.

⁵⁷ Source, data collected through semi-structured interview schedule among 240 respondents of different denominations across Aizawl and Lunglei town areas of Mizoram in 2018.

Table - 7 Mizo inclination on the State-church separation.⁵⁸

Sl. No	Responses	Percentage of Respondents
1	Favored State-church separation	28.34
2	Un-favored State-church separation	36.67
3	Partially favoured State-church separation	17.91
4	No idea / Cannot say	17.08

Based on table - 7 data, it can be observed that the majority of respondents 36.67 percent as against 28.34 percent were un-favored in the separation of church and state. 17.91 percent of the respondents have partially favored the separation of state from religion. In this backdrop, it could be observed that there a mixed reaction in regards to the separation of religion and politics indicated that the Mizos inclination on separation of religion and politics is blurred and at a state of ambiguity.

⁵⁸ Source, data collected through semi-structured interview schedules among 240 respondents of different denominations across Aizawl and Lunglei town areas of Mizoram in 2018.

Table – 8 Mizo view towards linkage of Christian ethics and state administration.⁵⁹

Sl. No	Responses	Percentage of Respondents
1	State administration should be carried out according to God's Will	52.5
2	Religion should not involve in state administration	13.75
3	Cannot determine	15
4	No idea / Cannot say	18.75

As per the above table - 8, a majority of respondents (52.5 percent) as against (13.75 percent) agreed that state administration or politics should be directed and carried out according to God's will. Based on the above data, it could be argued that religious ethics hold a significant place in political domain of the state. However, in a state with two major denominations (the Presbyterian and Baptist church) domination, an absence of check and balance could contain the democratic space of minor

⁵⁹ Source, data collected through semi-structured interview schedules among 240 respondents of different denominations across Aizawl and Lunglei town areas of Mizoram in 2018.

denominations or other religions, concerning their freedom of belief, expression and practices.

Table - 9 Mizo view on the relationship between various denominations in Mizoram.⁶⁰

Sl. No	Responses	Percentage of Respondents
1	Peaceful/harmonious relationship	33.34
2	Un-peaceful/dis-harmonious relationship	17.08
3	To some extent, there is peaceful and harmonious relationship.	35.83
4	No idea / Cannot say	13.75

Based on table - 9, it can be observed that there are mixed responses concerning the relationship of various denominations and sustenance of peace/harmony within a Mizo society. A majority of 33.34 and 35.83 percent of respondents as against 17.08 percent of respondents argued that there is a peaceful and harmonious relationship between various denominations in Mizoram. Thus, it can be observed from the above data that the existence of various denominations in the state does not hamper the peaceful co-existence and relationship of various denominations in the Mizo society.

⁶⁰ Source, data collected through semi-structured interview schedules among 240 respondents of different denominations across Aizawl and Lunglei town areas of Mizoram in 2018.

Table -10 Mizo view on presence of denominational difference and discrimination in Mizoram.⁶¹

Sl. No	Responses	Percentage of Respondents
1	Discriminated	15.42
2	No Discrimination	59.16
3	Some times	16.25
4	No idea / Cannot say	9.16

Based on table - 10, it can be observed that 59.16 percent of respondents argued that they have not confronted any discrimination based on denomination or religion. Thus one can view that various denominations have a peaceful coexistence and tolerant to each other's practices and belief system.

Table - 11 Mizo view on state neutrality towards different denominations.⁶²

Sl. No	Responses	Percentage of Respondents
1	Neutral	20.42

⁶¹ Source, data collected through semi-structured interview schedule among 240 respondents of different denominations across Aizawl and Lunglei town areas of Mizoram in 2018

⁶² Source, data collected through semi-structured interview schedules among 240 respondents of different denominations across Aizawl and Lunglei town areas of Mizoram in 2018.

2	Not neutral	34.16
3	No idea / Cannot say	45.42

Despite, majority of respondents argued that they have not to face any discrimination based on denomination or religion (as shown in above table - 10). Based on table - 11, it could be observed that (20.42) percent of the respondents argued that the state is neutral towards different denominations. Whereas the majority of respondents (34.16) percent argued that the state is un-neutral towards different denominations. Therefore, state nepotism towards particular denomination and vested interest on some particular denomination could be a detrimental factor that could upset the cordial relationship between Church and state and sustenance of close-knit homogeneous society.

Table - 12 Mizo view on Church and socio-political reform.⁶³

Sl. No	Responses	Percentage of Respondents
1	Agreed that Church could play a significant role in socio-political reform	38.34

⁶³ Source, data collected through semi-structured interview schedules among 240 respondents of different denominations across Aizawl and Lunglei town areas of Mizoram in 2018.

2	Disagreed that Church could play a significant role in socio-political reform	5
3	No idea / Cannot say	56.66

Based on the above table - 12, it can be observed that majority of Mizos (38.34) as against 5 percent still believed and have faith in the Church and viewed that the church could be an instrumental to bring reform and changes within the Mizo socio-political aspects.

To sum up, the above data indicated that the Church in Mizoram not only facilitate various social services but also play a tremendous role in the socio-political process of the state. Secularism portrayed a different picture where state-church have a cordial relationship and the private-public dichotomy is absent. Secularism is understood not as exclusion and privatization of religion from the public realm, but where both religion and politics freely interfaced within each other realm. The majority of Mizo were inclined of non-separation of church and state, believed that cooperation between state and church could facilitate an effective socio-economic development. Therefore, in light of the above interpretation and understanding of the relationship between religion and politics, secularism as practiced in Mizoram hardly resemble with the normative theory and practice of secularism.

Thus, rather than understand secularism within a limited notion of State-Church separation, secularism could be understood from Mizo socio-political cultural context,

where it is understood not as separation of religion from politics, but as the cordial relationship between religion and politics in the governance of the state. In the context of Mizo society, acknowledging the role of Church in various aspect of social development over decades, a cordial relationship and cooperation between church and state could facilitate to form of wide-area of common interests and cooperate on various issues, could not only relieve each other burdens in socio-economic development, but also facilitates a more inclusive and effective way to address various social, economic and political crisis of Mizo society. Considering the significant role of the church in the socio-political life of the Mizo, a cordial relationship between church and state has a better perspective to effectively promote the welfare and inclusive development of Mizo society.

In brief, the cordial church-state relationship or engaging religious ethic in politics is compatible and consistent with secular democratic politics, as long religious values are translated into shared public language and are fairly justified publicly. The role of religion does not imply anti-secularism as long it is subjected to democratic deliberation and promotes democratic values and norms, such as individual rights, socio-political ethic, social harmony, social justice, inclusive participation and development of the whole society. Thus, the Mizo notion and practice of secularism could provide a new space to generic concept of secularism, not only from recognition of religious ethic, but also from the perspective of cooperation between state and religious institution (cooperative secularism), where the interface of religion and politics promote and strengthened the democratic values and norms.

Secularism is not exempted from certain dilemmas, in the midst changing socio-political milieu, growing discrimination among various denominations and increasing intensity of social problems. Churches in Mizoram must cope with the present context

and construct a relevant epistemological and empirical approach to address the problems and challenges of the present realities.

CHAPTER - 6
CONCLUSION

The last chapter comprises the summary of this study that had made concerning the general concept and practice of secularism and in particular to a pervasive religious society of India. It provides a critical insight on contemporary concept of secularism, which has been a complicated issue. In other words, rather than locate secularism within its limited notion of separation of state and religion, it attempts at examining the crisis and flaws within normative secularism and rethink secularism from its wider perspective. Further, it ends with a brief evaluation of each chapter, concluding remarks and provide epistemological insights for further research

Contemporary concept and practice of secularisation and secularism broadly understood within its limited secular credentials such as institutional differentiation between religion and secular, the separation of the public and private realms and the assumption of withering away of religion in modern society have been an issue of practical problem and debate globally. Existence of multiple narratives on the concepts and practices of secularism, varying degrees of separations, interpretation of secular and religious spheres and the dynamic nature of religion and politics has made the concept of secularism more blurred and confusing. What was considered and constituted as a secular and public domain has become fluid and contested issue. Particularly, in a pervasive religious society, the understanding of the secularism as a modern structure of separation and exclusion of religion from politics have deprived inclusive participation rather than enhancing the public realm. Thus, both the theoretical and practical implications of the modern concept of secularism need a critical rethinking and contextualized in its methodological and epistemological perspective to promote a comprehensive and inclusive public realm.

In a contemporary multicultural society, normative concept and practice of secularism understood within its limited notion of mere separation of state from religion, religious freedom, the differentiation of public (secular) from private (religious) realms and the confinement of religion into private sphere has failed to address the contemporary diversified religious society. Therefore, contemporary secularism need to be viewed from its wider democratic attendants, such as equal religious rights (not in the form of identical equality), recognition and protection of minority rights, citizenship rights and internal democratization within religious groups.

General assumption of secularism as an independent public domain devoid of religion has been a recurring contested issue. Particularly, in contemporary multicultural society, the narrative of secularisation and secularism as a specific set of socio-political pattern, characterized by a bifurcation between the secular and religious realms, assumption of secular as a common ground of existence and independent ethic, free from the religious influence has been constantly questioned and challenged, with an evidence which pointed to not just the prevalence of religiosity but the increasing intensity of religious politics in public domain, religious articulations, movements and politicization of religion in both the Western and non-Western societies and politics. This has to some extent not only refuted the normative notion and concept of secularisation process and secularism but failed to sustain and provide an inclusive solution to the aspiration of contemporary multicultural society.

Ironically, a concept such as secular which was earlier referred to some periods or era became an element for the development and structuring of dualism in modern society. The contestation of religion and politics can be speculated if secularism is understood within its wider comprehensive domain rather than confinement of religion

to private domain. In other words, the misunderstanding of secularism, can be avoided if it is seen in the ways that are consistent with the promotion of basic democratic values and ideals. Thus rather than confining religion to private sphere, the incorporation of positive aspect of religion can contributed in building an inclusive public domain.

Recently, a variety of social theories ranging from the market-based theory of religion to the post-secular theory have emerged to diagnose the relationship between religion and politics. On one hand, exponents of the revised version of secularisation theory argued that the failure of the secularisation theory was mainly due to the critique of normative secularisation theory which heavily relied on selected political cultural of Western society rather than taking into consideration various parameters, such as social and economic conditions of societies. On the other hand, a critique of normative secularisation theory argued that the degrees of security level is determined by religious market. The former version of the secularisation theory believed that the importance of religiosity persists strongly among vulnerable populations, especially those living in poorer nations, facing personal survival-threatening risks. The latter version emphasized that supply-side factors, notably denominational competition and the state regulation of religious institutions, shaped levels of religious participation in the United States and Europe.¹ This has implied that normative secularisation theory to some extent has been irrelevant or failed to explain the dynamic nature of religion and politics.

¹ Norris Pippa and Inglehart Ronald, Sellers or Buyers in Religious Markets? Supply and Demand of Religion, in *The Hedgehog Review*, Critical Reflection on Contemporary Culture, Institute for Advanced Study in Culture, University of Virginia, Charlottesville. Spring & Summer, 2006, Vol. 8 No. 1 & 2. Pp. 92-93.

Furthermore, the post secularists argued that the inclusion of religion in the public realm is consistent with modern secularism and does not jeopardize the core theory of secularisation as long as it can be translated to a shared language and occurs in a way that it promoted liberal ideas and values. Although the privatization of religion within its sphere is part of what has been meant by secularisation, it is not essential to modernity. Religious exclusion in the public sphere (assumed as one of the parameters of modern secularism) should not be seen as a realm of empowerment and a threat to modernity, rather it depends on how religion becomes public.² The prevalence of religiosity in a contemporary society indicated that the assumption of the secular realm as an inclusive realm for human progress and development had been restricted and limited.

The argument about whether religious deprivation threatens society depends on how religion and politics interface and interact each other. For instance, if religion promotes comprehensive and inclusive liberal values, such as freedom of religion, equality, inclusive democratic participation, deliberation, tolerance, accommodation of minority culture and social justice then it is consistent with a modern democratic society. Democratic ideals and secularism are inseparable to some extent. Secular and its related concepts are multidimensional rather than a uniform standardized concept, secularism does not only concern with separation of politics from religion but also concerns the relationship of religion with another dimension of social, culture, ethnicity and identity politics. Therefore, in a contemporary diverse multicultural society and politics, it is difficult to demarcate what constitutes a religion and secular

² Asad Talal, (2003). *Formation of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, USA. P. 182.

realms.

Moreover, since society and religion are dynamic and vary from one society to another, concepts and practices of secularism also vary. Therefore, to generalize or standardize the concept and practice of secularism could bring confusion and ambiguity within society and politics. There is no simple way to standardize usage by trying to ensure an association of each term with only one clearly defined concept. Rethinking secularism need not be understood within the limited Western normative concept of separation between State and Church. One could infer to some extent that the inclusion of positive aspect of religion within a public realm could provide a more inclusive and comprehensive platform for public debate and justification of religious-secular controversial issues. In brief, secularism cannot be understood as a straight forward notion of separation of religion and politics in a contemporary multicultural society but can be better understood within its wider concept and commitment it made towards promoting democratic values, norms and social justice.

Secularism is also a multifaceted contested concept that imply different meanings and implications at different junctures and cultural context. In the Western society, it means demystification of social and political issue from a rational point of view. In the non-western society, secularism does not imply a rigid separation, but a flexible separation which is not anti-religion or irreligious but a post-secular society, where both secular and religion penetrated upon each other sphere. There are various arguments on concept and practice of secularism around the globe. Some academician argued for a separation of religion from politics as they believed that the incorporation of religion in politics could undermine the independent public realm and democratic values. Others argued that religious values are significant as religion provides significant moral value for secular politics.

Modern assumption of secularism as a universal process of modernization and progressive human societal development from belief to unbelief and from traditional religion to modern secularity becomes deeply problematic once it is transferred to other civilization with a very different dynamic of structural relations between religion, society and politics. As a result of colonialism and globalization process in most of the South Asian states, the Western concept of secularism was internalized and constituted as a modern ideology of statecraft that seeks at separating the religion from public realms. As a result of this historical process, secular has become a mechanism not only to structure and organized the nature of relationship between politics and religion but also re-defined religious practice and identity both politically and legally. In the non-Western society and politics, where historical secular consciousness is absent and religious attachment still determined the socio-cultural life and identity, the process of imitation the Western notion of secularism (separation of religion from politics) has become an issue of intense contestation and practical problem in non-Western society and politics. In most of the South Asian societies where religious sentiment holds a dominant place in the lives of the people, one could hardly locate and resemblance the normative Western theory and practice of secularism. Therefore, secularism is more or less a contextual concept that depends on one socio-cultural context.

Considering the socio-religious and political milieu of India, secularism was adopted as the basic structure of the Indian Constitution to reform the society and bring a unified political system in India diverse religious society. Therefore, Indian secularism in contrast to the normative Western notion and practice accentuates relative separation of religion and state, where both state and religion penetrated upon each other's sphere. Secularism is not seen as an anti-religion or irreligious, but seen

within a contextual context, where the state maintains separation and interfered within the domain of religion on the basis of the attainment of some specific democratic values and norms.

Indian secularism can be seen as a multi-values concept that implied various meanings and implications on different contexts. Secularism in India can be understood from various perspectives. One way of understanding Indian secularism is to view from its historical sense where secularism was seen as an instrument of promoting religious tolerance and integration of diverse religious groups into an entity. The second way to understand Indian secularism is to view from its constitutional objectives of promoting and securing democratic values of liberty, equality, fraternity and reforming the traditional Indian society. The third way of understanding Indian secularism is to see from the dynamic legal-constitutional parlance, where the interface between law and religion defined the essential and non-essential dimension of religion. The penetration of law in the religious matters has to some extent distorted the notion of secularism. Thus, normative concept and practice of secularism broadly refer to the separation of religion from politics does not fit within the socio-political scenario of India. Indian secularism portrays a different picture, where both religion and politics are interlinked.

India declared itself as a secular state and secularism is regarded as the basic structure of the Constitution. However, in reality secularism has hardly actualized in society and politics. Apart from this, the existence of extensive disjuncture between constitutional provision and mass understanding of secularism, the politicization of religion on various issues, such as caste politics, religious minority rights, Uniform Civil Code (UCC) and Citizenship Amendment Act / Bill, had further intensified the debates and contention of secularism in India. The dynamic nature of legal-

constitutional interpretation of religion and secular realms in a pervasive religious society, is an issue of social and political problem to bifurcate religion from social system. The general assumption of secular as a rational public reason and religion as an irrational private reason in contemporary society hardly had any practical implication in Indian society and polity. Thus, the theory and practice of Indian secularism does not substantiate, as to what extent does secularism implies the separation of religion and politics at various ends, dimensions and levels.

In the contemporary socio-political milieu, politics have been reduced to the language of religion rather than to social inclusion and social justice. The upsurge of religious-based identity and nationalism in the multicultural state of India, with one particular religious' majority, constitutional arrangements are confronted with the challenge of new form of articulation of religion in the legal-constitutional system. In the Hindu dominated state of India, strong religious nationalism in the form of Hindutva politics with its apparent goal of reconquering the public space and reforming the Constitution in favor of the majority culture could have a detrimental effect upon constitutional secular objectives and upset the plural values. India till now is a secular country, considering the increasing intensity of religion in politics and the weakening of constitutional check and balance mechanism, it is uncertain for how long India could claim to be a secular country. The winner take all seem to have been actualizing in a plural society.

Critics on Indian secularism have argued that the normative notion and practice of secularism is incompatible to Indian cultural context and therefore needs a reassessment to address the crisis and flaws within Indian secularism. On the other hand, a group of secularists argued that constitutional secularism was unique and if it is best practice it could be an ideal notion to address the problem of the religious

diversity of Indian society. Another group of people argued that Indian secularism is blurred and fluid concept, that implied different meanings and implications at different junctures.

Both majority, as well as minority communities, are confused with the operationalization of Indian secularism. Secularism assumed as a principle of common ground of existence and independent ethic has failed to produce a platform for inclusive participation and bonding the diverse Indian society. This was mainly on account of a series of failures on important issues. This include the failure to evolve substantive secularism on the part of Constitutional provisions for demarcation between secular and religious realms. Apart from the constitutional crisis on secularism, an increasing intensity of legalization of every aspect of society has questioned the interface between law and religion. On one hand, the increasing penetration of legal constitutional institutions in defining the boundary of religious practices and belief system had a detrimental effect on religious autonomy and rights. The dynamic and inconsistent nature of legal interpretation on secularism and the absence of balanced equilibrium and consensus between the minority and majority aspirations have been the major factors that challenged the development of substantive and inclusive secularism in a diverse multi-religious society of India.

In a small state like Mizoram, a brief assessment of the relationship between religion, society and politics, reflects a unique pattern of secularisation process and secularism where there is hardly any distinction between secular and religious realms. The notion of separation between secular and religion albeit not unknown to the modern Mizos, secularism depict a different trait where there is a close relationship between religion, society and politics. Therefore, to isolate religion from politics is a

difficult task. The nature of secularism depends upon how Mizo understand the relationship between religion and politics, rather than in its normative sense.

In a Christian dominated state of Mizoram, the secularisation process can be understood in a bivalent path. One way is to understand secularisation from Christian pattern of socialization process within the historical juncture, as the product of early Christian missionaries' socialization process. The other way of understanding the Christian secularisation process in Mizo society is to view within contemporary role of Church in interpretation and bifurcation of the sacred and secular realms from Christian principles and perspective. Thus, the pattern of socialization based on Christian principles has a tremendous impact on the socio-cultural lives of modern Mizo society. This trend of the socialization process in Mizo society has also deep implication on the development of secularism in the Mizo society and politics.

Since the early history of Christianity, the Church apart from being an instrument of socio-cultural changes became an important institution that addressed the social and political concerns of the Mizo. Apart from promoting various social services, Church by its role in various aspects of Mizo society has legitimately dominated both the secular and religious spheres of the Mizo society. Thus, Church in Mizoram is not an abstract institution but more or less can be termed as a community of persons that expressed the social, political and economic concerns of the Mizo society.

Despite the swept of modernization across the Mizo society and the political system is formally based on a non-established secular norm. Concept and practice of secularisation and secularism as an ideology of withering away of religion and separation of church and state can hardly be located within Mizo society and politics. The secularisation of society was limited and confined to the religious trend of

interpretation and separation of the temporal and sacred realms rather than based on purely secular perspective.

As every aspect of the Mizo social system is deeply influenced by religion, religion does play an effective role in the society and political system of the state. Church in Mizo society can be best perceived, as an autonomous non-governmental institution that facilitate socio-political reform within Mizo society. While the Church is closely aligned with the state, concept of the separation of state and religion is fluid and dynamic. In the Mizo context, indigenous perspective and narrative of socio-religious culture dictate the political aspects of the State. The socio-political realm cannot be understood, if religion is excluded from politics. Secularism is neither understood as a temporal realm nor as a realm where religion should be outside the public domain. Indeed, a state may be a secular (legally), but at the level of Mizo society, it is far from being secular or neutral.

Furthermore, Church is the largest organized institution with its members being both members of the church and also the state, it inevitable resulted in the process of intermingling of both the secular and religious aspects of the society. Therefore, secularism in the Mizo context does not represent a rigid separation of religion and secular, but rather an inextricable link between religion and politics.

In a dynamic Mizo society, despite the assumption of decreasing the domain of the Church as a result of rapid secularisation of society, it is also followed by increasing intensity of religious activities. Amid deteriorating socio-political system and inroad of various social problems, such as the rise of HIV/AIDS, corruption, drug abuse, party politics, social disintegration and disparity within society, Church in

Mizoram has intensified its activities in various aspects and widened its scope to address the undercurrent problems confronted by society.

Based on recent data collected from field survey, a majority of Mizo respondents referred secularism as equality of religion, rather than a separation of church-state. In contrast to the normative understanding of the secularisation theory, a majority of Mizo respondents believed that religion was relevant and holds a significant place in their lives. Apart from the relevance of religion in Mizo society, a majority of the respondents also believed that religious ethics played a significant role in Mizo society and politics. Further, a majority of Mizos were also in favor of a close relationship of state-church and argued that cooperation between church and state could promote a more inclusive development of society. The cooperation between church and state could also be seen as an innovative means to identify common ground of interest and facilitate cooperation in various sectors. This could also lighten each other's burden in promoting inclusive socio-economic development of the society.

It can be argued that religious values are not seen as an obstacle in the socio-political context of Mizo society. Religious ethics are seen as a positive dimension that could play a tremendous role in the socialization of the Mizo social and political system. Contrary to the normative Western notion and practice of secularism, in a tiny state of Mizoram, close relationship or cooperation between Church-state is seen as a positive dimension to address the socio-political problems confronted by the dynamic Mizo society. This has been a unique traits that questioned the normative understanding of secularisation process and secularism. Thus, role of the Church in the socio-political process is not seen as an obstacle or against the development of democratic values. Rather, it is seen as a socio-religious institution that promoted socio-economic development, emancipation and informed citizenship. If the standard

background for satisfactory secularism is the delinking of religion from state, society, public policy and politics, then obviously, a pervasive Mizo religious society can hardly make it.

To sum up, the Church in the Mizo society can be best perceived as an autonomous non-governmental institution that facilitated a socio-political reform within the Mizo society. While the Church is closely aligned with the state, the concept of separation of state and religion is practiced differently. Therefore, to bifurcate religion from politics is a practical problem. Secularism which connotes a separation of religion from politics hardly has any resemblance in the Mizo society and politics. In other words, one could hardly locate the normative concept of secularism in terms of the separation of religion, society and politics. Indigenous perspective and narrative of socio-religious culture dictate the socio-political aspects of the State.

Modern concept of secularism could be understood within one's socio-cultural context rather than from a normative perspective. In precise, what constitutes a secular state does not depend on the separation of religion from politics but upon how one demystify and unpacks the relationship between religion and non-religion. Therefore, rather than understand secularism within a limited notion of State-Church separation, secularism can be understood within a wider definition that promote democratic values and norms.

In fact, various misunderstanding and dilemmas of secularism can be avoided, if secularism is seen within a wider perspective. Secularism does not only concern with separation of politics from religion, but with the relationship of religion to another dimension of social, culture and ethnicity. In other words, religious value is dynamic and connected to various values, such as morality and cultural identity. Therefore, it is

difficult to bifurcate between religion and secular realms. The exclusion of religion from the public domain, might not only restrict the individual's equal right to participate in public discourse but also result in the denial of one's right to exercise his or her cultural identity. Thus, one could infer to some extent that the inclusion of religious ethics is not incompatible with modernity as long as it could be converted into secular shared language and promote democratic values. Rather than restricting religion into a private realm where it cannot interfere within the public domain, various aspects of religious values can contribute significant insights in enhancing the public domain.

There is nothing wrong in the cordial church-state relationship or engaging religious ethics in politics as long as religious values are translated into shared language and promote, socio-political ethic, social justice, harmony and inclusive participation within a multicultural society. Thus, the nature of indigenous concept and practice of relationship between religion, society and politics could provide a new space and dimension to the generic concept of secularism, where the interface between state and religion could promote more inclusive and comprehensive democratic values.

In a multi-religious state overlapping consensus is immanent as a result of varied views on religious issues and practice. Secularism must be seen as a mechanism that ensures a balance equation between democratic and religious values. The narrative of secularism can be understood as a comprehensive platform for inclusive dialogue and the development of shared culture. Thus, to argue that all religious ethics are irrational and thereby to confine religion in a private realm is inappropriate and unjustifiable. Moreover, secularism can also be understood as an ethical-politically appropriate pattern of relationship between religion and state, which stress emphasis not only on

equal respect for all religions but also facilitate internal democratization of religious community.

Secularism is not incompatible with plural values, protection and accommodation of minority rights and integrity of society. The development of shared language from a variety of cultural values can strengthen and enhanced democratic values of the multicultural society. In a liberal plural society, if contemporary secularism implies simply a bifurcation of religion and politics, without proper protection of religious rights, social justice and religious tolerance, then the ideal of secularism as an inclusive public realm could be threatened and lead to a situation where the majority religion would dominate the public realm and threatened the pluralistic culture of society. Therefore, rather than viewing the secular narrative as a separation of religion from politics, secularism can be seen as a mechanism that facilitated and promoted an inclusive democratic deliberation, participation and dialogue among various stakeholders. The cordial church-state relationship or engaging religious ethic in politics is compatible and consistent with secular democratic politics, as long religious values are translated into shared democratic public reason and are fairly justified publicly.

Concept and practice of secularism viewed from a wider perspective could provide a more substantive new space, where secular and religious could learn from each other, coexist, overlap, converge or diverge, thus providing new perspectives on secularism and the process of secularisation. Engagement of religious values does not imply anti-secularism or irreligious, as long as it promotes democratic inclusive values and norms, such as individual rights, liberty and social justice.

Secularism can be best understood from the commitment it made towards wider democratic antecedents. Contemporary contested issues, such as abortion, dress code, right to life and gender issues which can be considered within both secular and religious spheres can be addressed effectively, if secularism is based on principal of democratic norms, inclusive and shared values rather than view through straight forward limited notion of separation of Church and state. Thus, the pattern of Church-state relationship in a state like Mizoram can provide a new insight and perspective in understanding the contemporary secularisation process and secularism. However, secularism in Mizoram is not exempted from certain dilemmas. The growing discrimination among various denominations and state patronage towards particular denomination could act as a hindrance in sustaining the cordial state-church relationship and maintenance of a close-knit homogeneous society. In spite of various shortcoming and dilemmas confronted by churches in Mizoram, Mizo Churches needs to cope up with the present context and construct a relevant sustainable measure and inclusive approach to address various undercurrent problems and challenges confronted by dynamic Mizo society and politics.

APPENDICES

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE ON DEMYSTIFYING SECULARISM IN
INDIA: A STUDY OF SECULARISM IN MIZORAM

Dear Sir/Madam,

In connection to my Ph.D. research work under the theme of "Demystifying Secularism in India: A Study of Secularism in Mizoram." under the supervision of Prof. K V Reddy. Therefore, in this regard, I kindly request you to please spare some of your valuable time to participate in this research project designed to explore the various dimension of religion and politics in the contemporary State of Mizoram. The information gathered in this study will be kept confidential. The data will be reported only in aggregate and you will not be identified in any-way. Your participation could contribute a significant input and values for the study. However, if you find any question irrelevant, intrusive, insensitive, feel free to skip it. Moreover, if you can offer additional comments about the questionnaire in general or about a particular question at the end, it would be highly appreciated.

I shall be very grateful for your valuable response and offer my sincere gratitude in anticipation.

Thanking You.

Yours faithfully.

Robert Sanglora khawbung

P.hD Scholar,

Department of Political Science, MZU

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENT

1. Name _____
2. Age _____
3. Sex: _____
4. Locality _____
5. District _____
6. Denomination: _____
7. Occupation: _____
8. Marital status _____
9. Educational Qualification: _____

Q 1. What is your perception of religion? / Sakhuana hi engtin takin nge i ngaih?

1) Relevant / Significant /Awmzia nei

2) Irrelevant / insignificant /Awmzia neilo

3) Illusion / Ngaihruatna mai

4) Cannot say / Sawithei lo

Q 2. Do you agree that religious ethics plays an important role in the socialization of society? / Khawtlang nunah hian sakhuana hian nghawng a nei em?

1) Religious ethics played a role in the socialization of Mizo society / Sakhuana hian khawtlang nun a kaihru

2) Religious ethics does not play a role in the socialization of Mizo society / Sakhuana hian khawtlang nun a kaihru lo

3) Partially / to some extent, religious ethics played a role in the socialization of Mizo society / Eng- maw chinah

4) Cannot say / Sawithei lo

Q.3. Which factor holds most responsible for influencing your decision-making process? / Thutlukna i siam ah hian engin nge nghawng a neihber?

1) Religion / sakhuana

2) Community / Khawtlang

3) NGOs

5) None of the above / pakhat mahin

6) Cannot say / Sawitheilo

Q 4. Do you agree that Christianity has facilitated in demising of social inequality, in particular to gender equality? / Sakhuana hian khawtlang nunah inthluktlana abik takin mipa leh hmeichhia inkar inthluktlanna sukiangin in hria em?

1) Facilitate in demising gender equality /inthluktlan a sukiang

2) Does not Facilitate in demising gender equality /inthluktlan a sukiang

3) Partially facilitate gender equality / Engemaw chinah

4) Cannot say / Sawitheilo

Q 5. Beside regular preaching, what are the major role activities undertook by the church toward various social service sectors? / Pathian thu zirtir bakah, Kohhran hian mipui hmasawwna tan eng thil a nge hma alak?

1) Church impart skill development / thiamna kawngah

2) Church impart Health services / Hriselna kawngah

3) Church provide facilities for destitute / rehabilitation Centre services /Riangviate tranpuin

4) Church impart education services / zirna kawngah

5) Any other / thildang enge ?

.....

Q 6. Do you agree that Christianity has been a factor for the integration of Mizo society?

/ Kristianna hian Mizo khawtlang nunah impumkhatna a thlentu a niin i hriat em?

1) Christianity integrate the society / impumkhat tu

2) Christianity disintegrate /impunkhatna ti chhe tu

3) Christianity partially integrate/ a then ah

4) Christianity neither integrate / Nor disintegrate

Q 7. Does the existence of various denominations act as a hindrance towards the integrity of Mizo society? / Kohhran pawl hrang hrang awm a vang hian Mizo te zingah inpumkhatna ati chhia em?

1) Existence of denominational difference disintegrate Mizo society. / inpumkhatna ati chhia

2) Existence of denominational difference does not disintegrate Mizo society. /inpumkhatna ati chhialo

3) Partially agree that the existence of denominational differences disintegrate Mizo society. / Engemaw chinah

4) Existence of denominational difference neither integrate / nor disintegrate Mizo society. / inpum khatna ati chhialo in a ti tha chuang bawk lo

5) Comment / Sawibel du I nei em?

.....

Q.8. Amid fast secularisation process and dynamic change within society, is the church losing or increase its domain? / Khawvel nunphung inthlakthleng karah hian, sakuana emaw kohhran a dal/kiam tial tial nge a ti chak tialtial in inhriat ?

- 1) Secularisation led to the decline the domain of church/ a kiam
- 2) Secularisation led to the increase the domain of church / a thang
- 3) Secularisation neither led to decline nor increase the domain of church /a pangai reng
- 4) Cannot say / Sawithei lo

Q 9. Do you agree that Mizo Church/religion has a tremendous influence on state politics?
 / Mizoram a kohhrante hian politics/Sorkar rorelna ah nghawng a nei em?

1)Religion/church influenced state politics/ politics/

Sorkar rorelna ah nghawng a nei em

2) Religion/church does not influence state politics /

politics/Sorkar rorelna ah nghawng a nei lo

3) Religion/church influenced state politics to some extent /

Engemaw chinah nghawng a nei

4) Cannot say/ Sawithei lo

5) Comment / Sawibel du I nei em?

.....

Q 10. Do you agree that church activities in various socio-political aspects promote democratic values and norms in society? / Kohhran hian socio-political ah a inrawl dan a hian democratic values le norms ah hmasawwnna a tlen em?

1) promote free & fair election/ election fel fai

2) promote good governance /sawrkarna tha

3) Does not play any role in promotion of democratic values & norms/ Hma a la lo

4) Cannot say / Sawithei lo

Q 11. How do you understand Secularism in India? / India rama sakhua zalenna hi engti takin nge i ngaih?

1) As a strict separation between Church and State /

(Kohhran leh ram rorelna inthren tawpna)

2) As an exclusion of religion from the public realm

(Khawtlang nun kaihuina a sakhua tello)

3) Not so strict separation (relative separation)

(ram rorelna leh sakhua inthen tawpna awmlo)

4) As an equality of all religions.

(Sakhua zawng zawng intluktlangna)

5) Have No idea

(Ngaidan ka neilo)

Q 12. Have you faced any discrimination based on your denomination or belief? / Sakhua rinna emaw kohhran dang nih vangin inthliarhranna i tawk toh em?

1) Discriminated/inthliarhranna tawk

2) No discrimination /inthliarhranna tawk lo

3) some times / Engemaw chang a

4) Cannot say / Sawithei lo

Q 13. Do you agree that there is a separation of religion from the State in Mizoram? / Mizoram ah hian sakhua leh ram rorelna a hranin a kal in i hrea em?

1) There is a separation of religion from State /

sakhua leh ram rorelna a hranin a kal

2) There is no separation of religion from State /

sakhua leh ram rorelna a hranin a kal lo

3) Relative separation / Engemaw chinah a hranin /

engemaw chinah a hran a kal lo

4) Cannot say / Sawithei lo

Q 14. What is your' view or observation on the present relationship between State and Church in Mizoram? / Tunlai Mizoram sorkar inrelbawlna ah sorkar leh kohhran hi entintakin nge an in kungkaih?

1) Cordial / inlaichinna tha

2) Un-friendly/ inlaichinna thalo

3) No relationship / Inkungkaina awmlo

4) Cannot say / Sawithei lo

Q. 15. Do you agree that Church-State cooperation in various developmental aspects has been an effective mechanism for inclusive and sustainable development of the society? / kohhran leh sorkar in hmasawwna kawnga thawhhona ah hian a huapzau leh hmasawwna tluantling thlenzawk thei turin i ring em?

1) Church-state cooperation facilitate inclusive development / kohhran leh sorkar in hmasawwna kawnga thawhhona ah hian a huapzau leh hmasawwna tluantling thlenzawk thei

2) Church-state cooperation does not facilitate inclusive development / kohhran leh sorkar

in hmasawwna kawnga thawhhona ah hian a huapzau leh hmasawwna tluantling thlenzawk
theilo

3) Partially agree that Church-state cooperation facilitate inclusive development /
Engemaw chinah

4) Cannot say / Sawithei lo

5) Comment / Sawibelh duh I nei em ?

.....
.....

Q 16. Are you in favor of the separation of church and state separation? / Kohhran leh ram
inrelbawldan hi inthen phawk se tha i ti em?

1) Favor State-church separation / inthen phawk se a tha

2) Un-favor State-church separation/ inthen a tha lo

3) Partially favor State-church separation / a thenah inthen se a thenah inthen lo she

4) Cannot say / Sawithei lo

Q 17. Do you agree that state administration should be run or carried according to God's
will? Kan ram rorelna a hian Pathian duhzawng a ro-inrel/inrelbawl dan hi tha i ti em?

1) According to God's Will/ Pathian duhzawng a ro-inrel/inrelbawl

2) No interference of religion in the administration of state /

Sakhuanna tello a inrelbawl

3) Don't understand/ ka hrethiamlo

4) Cannot say / Sawithei lo

Q 18. Do you agree that there is a peaceful and harmonious relationship among various denominations/religions in the state? / Mizoram kohhran pawl hrang hrang inkarah thawhhona tha a awmin i hria em?

1) Peaceful/harmonious relationship/ thawhhona tha

2) Un-peaceful/dis-harmonious relationship /
thawhhona a tha lo

3) To some extent, there is peaceful and harmonious relationship /
Engemaw chinah thawhhona a tha

4) Cannot say / Sawithei lo

5)Comment/Sawibel duh I nei em?
.....
.....

Q 19. Is state of Mizoram neutral toward various denominations/religion? / Mizoram sorkar rorelna hian mimal (particular) sakhuana thilah awnlam ah nei em?

1) Neutral / mimal (particular) sakhuana thilah awnlam a nei

2) Not neutral / mimal (particular) sakhuana thilah awnlam neilo

3) Cannot say / Sawithei lo

5) Comment / Sawibel du I nei em?

.....
.....

Q 20. Apart from government socio-economic programs, do Church has the capacity to impart socio-political reform in society? / Ram leh khawtlang inrelbawlna kawnga kohhran hian a siamtha theiin i hria em?

1) Agree / Aw

2) Disagree /Aih

4) Cannot say / Sawithei lo

5) Comment / Sawibel du I nei em?

.....
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