
UNIT 12 SECULARISM*

Structure

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Secularisation and Secularism
 - 12.2.1 The Term Secularisation
 - 12.2.2 The Sociological Connotation of Secularisation
 - 12.2.3 Secularisation within Religion
 - 12.2.4 Secularism as a Value
- 12.3 The Secularisation Process
 - 12.3.1 The Struggle between the Sacred and the Secular
 - 12.3.2 The Church and the State
- 12.4 The Social Context of Secularisation Process
 - 12.4.1 Renaissance
 - 12.4.2 Growth of Science
 - 12.4.3 Expansion of Trade and Commerce
 - 12.4.4 Reformation
- 12.5 Secularisation in Contemporary World
- 12.6 Secularism in India
 - 12.6.1 India and Secularism
 - 12.6.2 The Meaning of Secularism in India
 - 12.6.3 Secular Concept and Ideology
- 12.7 Secularism in India
- 12.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 12.9 References
- 12.10 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

12.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you will able to:

- understand the meanings of the terms secularization and secularism;
- discuss the social and historical background in which secularization emerged as a social phenomena;
- analyse the peculiar nature of secularism which is adopted in India; and
- understand the problems and difficulties in the practice of secularism in India.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

You learnt about “Communalism” in the previous unit and how this issue emerged and deeply influences society in India today. Related with the concept of communalism is the concept of secularism. Here, in this unit we will discuss the

process of secularism which is called secularisation and the concept of secularism which is a value.

In our first section we will introduce you to the meaning of the term secularization and secularism. To be able to understand how these terms came to be used we would like to take you to the historical and social background of these processes. We will also show the nature of secularization in contemporary society in our next section. Finally we will be discussing the nature of secularism in India. For you to understand the peculiarities and the difficulties thereof, we would appraise you with various historical as well as contemporary dynamics in the practice of secularism.

12.2 SECULARISATION AND SECULARISM

You must have come across the word secularism and secularisation several times. We are sure you must have wondered what exactly they mean.

The terms secularisation and secularism have no definite definition. They have different meanings depending on various situations and perspectives. We will try and have a look at some of these meanings. First, we will try and understand what secularisation is all about and then we will go on to the term secularism which is an outcome of the process of secularisation.

12.2.1 The Term Secularisation

The word secular is derived from the Latin word ‘secular’, which means the ‘present age or generation’. The word secular came to be associated with the social process of secularisation.

Secularisation came into use in Europe, to describe the transfer of territories previously under the control of the church to the dominion of secular authority or the state. The distinction that was already prevalent in Christian conception between the sacred and secular (sacred as all that is supernatural, and secular as all that is mundane) was brought into the fore to assert the superiority of the sacred.

The term, however, was applied in a different way when the concept of secularisation acquired a more general, sociological connotation.

12.2.2 The Sociological Connotation of Secularisation

Social thinkers have used the word secularisation to indicate a process whereby the religious institutions and religious conceptions and understanding have lost control in worldly matters — economy, polity, justice, health, family, and so on. Instead, there emerged empirical and rational procedures and conceptions about the world in general.

Describing the process of secularisation, Bryan R. Wilson writes that in secularisation process “the various social institutions gradually become distinct from one another and increasingly free of the matrix of religious assumptions that had earlier informed...inspired and dominated their operation. Prior to this change, social action over a very wide field of human activity and organisation (including work, social and interpersonal relationships, juridical procedures,

socialisation, healing) is regulated in accordance with supernaturalist pre-conceptions. The process of structure differentiation in which social institutions (the economy, the polity, morality, justice, education, health, and family) become recognised as distinctive concerns operating with considerable autonomy. It is a process in which conceptions of the supernatural lose their sovereignty over human affairs, a pattern broadly identified as secularism. Conceptions of the supernatural are gradually displaced from all social institutions except those specifically devoted to this — these are increasingly circumscribed religious institutions” (Wilson 1987 : 159).

The definition of secularisation is greatly bound by the definition of religion. As long as religion is defined in, not so abstract terms and is defined substantively as beliefs, attitudes, activities, institutions and structures pertaining to the supernatural, it is possible to assess the extent of decline of religious influence. But if we were to define religion in functional terms, as some sociologists have done, as any set of beliefs, ideas and activities that perform indispensable functions to the society it is very difficult to employ the term secularisation, because when we use the term secularisation we are discussing the process that leads to the decline of supernaturally oriented activities and beliefs in all aspects of life. And a distinct separation of various institutions in the society.

We can see the separation of the supernatural belief from secular activities by the way we approach and understand disease for instance. We don't always have a supernatural explanation to understand disease and illness. We have scientific and empirical explanations instead.

These changes have, in fact, affected even religion itself.

12.2.3 Secularisation within Religion

One aspect of secularisation is that religions modify their doctrines and practices in response to the changing needs of their members and in-response to changes in society.

For example, in 1976, the Episcopal Church in the United States of America officially allowed women to become priests. And. in England it was only recently that the Church allowed women to become priests, causing much controversy. We can see how the Church responded to the changing situation and the position of women in society.

Secularisation in religion is usually accompanied by increase in attention to public issues. Secular and profane activities have become as important as the sacred. Thus we find religious institutions getting involved with running of modern hospitals and secular educational institutions or engaging in philanthropic activities. Religion in industrial societies often reflects the pragmatism of our age, and in doing so, is increasingly moving away from the supernatural.

So far we have discussed what the term secularisation meant in its various situations and aspects. We still have not talked about the term secularism.

12.2.4 Secularism as a Value

Secularism was an ideological goal of the new political philosophy and movement after the French Revolution. Still later in 1851 George Jacob Holyoake coined

the term secularism. He declared it as the only rational basis of political and social organisation. Holyoake questioning the religious basis of civil society, recommended secularism as state ideology which promotes human welfare by material means and makes the service of others its duty.

Secularism as a progressive ideology was a necessary qualification for a liberal, democratic, state of the post French Revolution. These connotations are applied even to a modern democratic state now. A modern state by its definition and liberal and democratic policy makes no distinction between groups, classes etc. within society, irrespective of religious affiliation. The political philosophy on the part of the state required that the state shall not impose any religion on people and did not prohibit practice of religion by a section of the people.

Thus, with secularism as an ideological goal, the proponents of this ideology consciously denounce religious orthodoxy as the basis for social organisation and advocate civil values.

The development of secularism as an ideology was partly an outcome of the process of secularisation in Europe. And in many modern states it has been adopted as a state policy, without really going through a historical process which was in evidence in Europe at the time of the emergence of the phenomenon of secularism.

Let us go back into history and see how the process of secularism developed.

12.3 THE SECULARISATION PROCESS

In this section we will discuss the process of secularisation which essentially came about as a result of the struggle for supremacy between the church and the state. The social background to this struggle in a way shaped this secularisation process too.

12.3.1 The Struggle between the Sacred and the Secular

Secularisation has occurred throughout history. Though uneven, it was discernible from the very early times. In primitive societies it was often seen that supernaturalist apprehensions and explanations were intermingled with empirical knowledge and rational techniques. Magical means were mixed with pragmatic procedures. Slowly, the process which Max Weber phrased as the 'disenchantment of the world' removed the natural phenomena of their magico-religious meaning as man acquired more matter-of-fact and empirical and rationalistic orientations.

In fact, some sociologists see the seeds of secularisation in the very development of monotheistic conceptions religions, which rationalised and systematised the concept of the supernatural. These monotheistic religions like Judaism and Christianity steadily extinguished random magico-religious beliefs and introduced a more, universalistic conception of an increasingly transcendental and universal deity. In this process, these monotheistic religions heralded a process of systematisation or rationalisation which is an element of secularisation.

To unravel the complex factors and agencies contributing to the process of secularisation is difficult. In Western history (European history), the dissociation of religion and politics — seen in the separation of the Church and the state implies secularisation. Let us see then, how this separation came about.

12.3.2 The Church and the State

In Europe, from the very early times, the Roman Catholic Church exercised immense power in over all aspects of life.

The conversion of Emperor Constantine (306-37 AD) and socially influential classes, gave the Church an immense recognition and opportunity to enter the secular world. Emperor Constantine had established Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire.

Box 1

Constantine ascribed all his successes in war to Christian God. He is said to have had a dream in which God instructed him to paint the first two letters for Christ in Greek on the shields of his soldiers. Constantine did so and consequently won the battle. It is said that he converted to Christianity after this and made Christianity the state religion. His troops then on had the Christian monogram painted on their shield.

There was also the idea that the Church was not only meant for the salvation of souls for eternity, but also had a mission for this world — to establish a kingdom of God on earth. The clergy were not only involved in other-worldly aspects of life, but were also involved in the secular life.

Later, the theology of St. Augustine and the establishment of the Benedictine order, which recommended ‘useful work’ sought to establish the Church in its relation with the secular world. As Weber noted, labour became an essential component of the Christian way of life.

The organisation of the Church became increasingly formalised and systematised through the development of canon law and administrative agencies. This development became particularly crucial in the background of a centralised, segmented nature of emerging feudal society. In the face of these tendencies, the Church maintained a fundamental unity.

The organisational unity combined with its involvement with secular aspects of life enabled the Church to have immense influence over the social and political life. In a highly stratified society like medieval Europe where the society was divided into aristocratic haves and the poor, the Church played little role in condemning this highly stratified order. In fact, the Church was so interwoven with the feudal system that it became a property holder. The clergy became lords of the land with political jurisdiction.

These circumstances gave rise to the question of where and with whom did the authority lie? With the Church or the secular state?

The kings and commoners who were equally tired of the oppressive nature of the church struggled to get rid of the control of the Church and religion from political affairs, as well as affairs of everyday world.

The forces that set themselves in opposition to the Church and its power came to be known as secular. While the struggle against the Church and the process which eventually led to the decline of religious authoritarianism replaced it with a rational and scientific outlook. This has been termed secularisation.

The secularisation of society is not just an outcome of this struggle between the Church and the state, but is related to all other facets of social change.

In our next section, let us look into the social context in which secularisation took place.

Check Your Progress I

- i) What is the literal meaning of the term secular? Use three lines for your answer.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

- ii) Write five lines on the political philosophy after the French Revolution.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

- iii) Who was the first Roman Emperor to convert to Christianity? Use four lines for your answer.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

**12.4 THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF
SECULARISATION PROCESS**

In this section, we will be discussing the various facets of social change. At the time of secularisation in Europe, the society was waking up from the medieval slumber to whole new areas of change. There was growing rational-empirical inquiry. There was Reformation in the Church and Renaissance in the arts and learning.

12.4.1 Renaissance

Between the 14th and 16th centuries, many people in Europe who could read and write began to take less notice of what their rulers and priests told them and to work out new ideas for themselves. They also became interested in the arts, and learning of the ancient Greeks and Romans. This new way of thinking and rediscovery of earlier knowledge, led to an exciting period in history known as the Renaissance, a French word meaning rebirth.

Rational enquiry was the essence of this movement and this was evident in art, architecture, music, literature etc. Renaissance period emphasised on classics as contributing to thought and learning. Renaissance was a time when people became curious about the world they lived in. Rich men built libraries and universities and with the invention of the printing machine, books became more easily available not only to priests and scholars but also ordinary people.

By the end of the 16th century, Renaissance which started in Italy, with its awakening in learning and art spread to other parts of Europe. This was also the period which saw the growth of science.

12.4.2 Growth of Science

As we mentioned earlier, the medieval European society was characterised by the overriding influence of the church. Even learning was mostly of the religious variety. The Renaissance period saw the beginning of rational enquiry. It marked an area of description and criticism in the area of learning.

This development of detachment in observation and experimentation introduced new assumptions about the nature of the world. The rational and systematic, empirical knowledge questioned the supernatural conceptions of the world and gave an awareness to man's capacity to harness nature.

This was the period which saw the Copernican Revolution. It was generally believed that the Earth was stationary and the Sun and other heavenly bodies moved around it. Copernicus, with the help of detailed explanation demonstrated that the earth moved around a fixed sun. This findings of Copernicus shattered the very foundations on which the old world rested. The divine origins to heaven, earth and life were now being questioned.

This period also saw the growth of various disciplines of science. William Harvey discovered the circulation of blood. This led to the rethinking about the human body. In Physics, Galileo Galilei, Johannes Kepler, and subsequently Issac Newton shattered the earlier metaphysical thoughts of the universe. In short, the growth of science and the application of science reduced man's dependence on religion and the divine interpretation of the universe.

12.4.3 Expansion of Trade and Commerce

The 15th century AD also signalled a shift from the subsistent and stagnant economy to a dynamic and worldwide system. This expansion in trade was due to some extent, because of the initiative taken by the European states to develop and consolidate their economic and political power. The monarchy of Portugal Spain, Holland, and England sponsored overseas discoveries, trade and conquest

‘Trade with the Orient so far was carried on land and Italian cities had a monopoly in this. In a bid to destroy this monopoly and to seek new ways of reaching the East, the Portuguese and other pioneers in navigation took to sea voyage. You must have heard of the historic voyage of Vasco da Gama, who landed on the Indian west coast in 1498. Christopher Columbus made a similar voyage in the hope of finding a sea route to India and instead reached the shores of North America.

Britain, Holland followed Spain and Portugal and soon India, South East Asia, Africa and West Indies and South America came under the economic enterprise of these countries.

European markets were flooded with new commodities, spices, textiles, tobacco, cocoa, quinine, ivory, gold, silver, and above all human slaves from Africa. One of the most important results of this expansion of trade and commerce was the growth of middle class. This class, which included merchants, bankers, shipowners, became an influential and politically powerful group.

Besides these radical changes which were taking place, there emerged a break in thought and ecclesiastical organisation, which is called ‘the reformation’.

12.4.4 Reformation

In the 16th century, there was a movement within Christianity to purge the medieval abuses and to restore the doctrine and the practices that the reformers believed confirmed with the Bible. This led to a breach between the Roman Catholic Church, and the reformers whose belief and practices came to be called as Protestantism.

One of the principle initiators of this movement, Martin Luther King, questioned the practices of the Roman Catholic Church and called for a debate. The Papacy took this as a gesture of rebellion and proceeded to take steps against Luther as a heretic. Martin Luther refused to repent unless proven by Bible or clear reason. He believed that salvation was a free gift to persons through the forgiveness of sins by God’s grace alone and received by them through faith in Christ. Luther was protected by kings and princes partly out of religious conviction. But mainly because they were interested to seize the Church property and to assert the imperial independence.

The obvious result of Reformation was the division of Christendom into Catholic and Protestant denominations or sects. These strengthened the growth of modern national states. Reformation introduced radical changes in thought and organization of the Church and, thus began the trend of secularisation. The Protestant conception of the divine made God personal. God thus receded to the personal realm. Worldly personal activity was encouraged as a sign of faith in God.

As we already mentioned, there was a complex web of factors which contributed to the emergence of secularisation process. In our above discussion, we have given a few trends or happenings in a context in which secularisation occurred.

Now that we have discovered the history behind the concept and phenomenon of secularisation, let us see what it means in the contemporary world.

12.5 SECULARISATION IN CONTEMPORARY WORLD

It is true that religion has ceased to have a kind of hold that it had in the medieval society. We no longer define our world in mystical religious terms. It seems that religious institutions ceased to be central in society. But this secularisation has not occurred uniformly all over the world. We must remember that the events we described and discussed are specific to Europe and those changes had some effect on other countries. At the same time this process of secularisation does preclude the endurance of certain religiosity and emergence of new expressions of religion. The patterns of religiosity vary, and despite indicators of secularisation, spiritual survivals and new religious initiatives do occur.

Numerous new religious movements have emerged in recent decades and these may seem to be even responses to general secularisation: since they provide meaning, purpose, association, and support for a particular section of the people. Secularisation, as we said, is conspicuously a long-term historical occurrence in Western society.

Activity 1

To what extent is secularisation and secularism prevalent in India? Read newspapers and magazines, talk with other students and knowledgeable individuals before putting down your answer in your notebook.

Other religious systems did organise and systematise mystical and pagan beliefs, but they did so in different ways. Hinduism and Buddhism unlike Christianity, according to Bryan Wilson have tolerated more primitive supernaturalism than eradicating them. Besides, the long-term historical process of secularisation and the extension of rational principles to all areas of social life were less intense in non-Western countries like in Asia or the Middle East. Industrialisation and technological application to some extent rationalises and routinises framework of social life. Yet, so many religious and magical practices persist alongside, leading to paradox of magical practice alongside sophisticated industrial techniques.

The course of industrialisation has followed different paths and occurs in different forms than one which is available in the West. In our next section we will discuss the Indian experience of secularisation and secularism.

Check Your Progress II

i) questioned the practices of Roman Catholic Church.

ii) Match the following:

A	B
Vasco-de-Gama	Revolutionized physics
William Harvey	Sea-route to India
Copernicus	Protestantism
Martin Luther	Blood circulation

12.6 SECULARISM IN INDIA

In this section we will discuss how secularism is viewed in India and its practice. We are aware by now, that the historical process of secularisation has not occurred in India quite the way it did in Europe. But Indian situation generated its own conditions which made our national leaders feel a need for a secular ideology. Let us see how! But first let us try and understand what secularism means in India.

12.6.1 India and Secularism

India, as we all know is a home of many religions and is a multi-religious society. Religion plays an important role in the lives of Indians. Passions and hatred are whipped in the name of religion. Religious conflict and communal violence has become a part of our social scenario owing to the multi-religiosity of Indian society.

This situation puts into focus the fact that when a society has many religions the task of governance is that much more difficult.

Our leaders have responded to the situation by strengthening the values of secularism. The secular ideas are enshrined in our Constitution as well.

12.6.2 The Meaning of Secularism in India

In our preceding discussions, we have seen how secularisation in the West was a result of the secularisation process whereby the pervasive influence of religion in everyday life has lost its influence.

In India, however, secularisation and secular has been used in the context of nature of the state. It has been conceived in this way keeping in view multi-religiosity of the society and the religious conflicts thereof. In India, the term secularism implies that the state will not identify with any one religion but is tolerant of all religious practices. As Nehru declared in 1950, “the Government of a country like India with many religions that have secured great and devoted following for generations, can never function satisfactorily in the modern age except on a secular basis”.

The secular idea was adopted during the freedom struggle to unite the various communities against the colonial power. The maturing of secular concept is closely linked up with the development of nationalism during the long course of the freedom struggle. Later, the secular concepts were incorporated in the Constitution. And, for Nehru, the imperative of secularism was not only for detachment of religion in public life but progressive and modern outlook. It also meant that all the citizens enjoyed equal rights and statuses.

“Secularism, nationalism, and democracy are therefore, mutually reinforcing ideals that were sought to be emphasised by the post-colonial state in India” (Bhattacharya 190 : 178). K.M. Panikkar in explaining the content of the secular state in India stresses on this point:

“It (the secular state) eliminates from the body politics all ideas of division between individuals on the basis of its policy what Aristotle terms “distribution justice” that all communities must share as they must share the duties and responsibilities of being a citizen”.

One of the consequences of such a state policy is that holding of public office and government service should not be dependent on religious affiliation.

Yet at the same time the citizens enjoy the right to freedom of religion and worship, as a fundamental right. Although the Indian Constitution speaks against any principle of religious discrimination, it cannot prevent the state to legislate in favour of any oppressed community which includes the minority community. Thus minorities enjoy a right to cultural and educational rights.

The secular idea! enshrined in our Constitution has a peculiar mix of ethnic identities and common citizenship. It tries to ensure pluralities within a democratic nation-state.

This inbuilt contradiction in our polity makes it very difficult for the secular ideal to be practiced in reality. Let us go back into history and see how the secular ideal has been adopted and the problems which besetted this concept.

Activity 2

Do you think religious parties in political arena should be banned? Give reasons for your answer. You can discuss this with others in your study centre and your councillor.

12.6.3 Secular Concept and Ideology

Prior to the British intervention in Indian politics there existed no conflict between religion and politics. In fact, as Dumont observed: 'Religion here is constitutive of society. Politics and Economics are neither autonomous domain nor are they contradictory of religion, they are simply encompassed by religion'. recalling Dumont, T N Madan feels that "religion and secular cannot be separated, in other words, religion cannot be in any meaningful sense privatised" (Madan, 1981: 12).

However, the coming of the British made some change. The British state maintained an attitude of neutrality. Further, the British introduced the concept of equality before law, irrespective of caste and creed. Alongwith this break in tradition, modern education became an important factor of change.

An important element in the political awakening in India was the growing liberalism which came with modern education. The Indian middle-class was the major beneficiary of British education and one of the first to initiate a nationalist struggle against the British.

The nationalist feeling was carried down to the masses by the extraordinary growth of the vernacular cultures. This vernacular growth at the same time was not allowed to be chauvinistic because the nation as a goal was kept in mind. "Much of the power of the Indian nationalism came from its use of forces, idioms and symbolism of religion, especially Hinduism" (Kaviraj, 190 : 195). .

The secular ideology of the national leaders by keeping religion at a distance was challenged by the likes of B.G. Tilak, Aurobindo Ghosh, Lajpat Rai. The Congress faced a dilemma whether to allow the mobilisation of the masses using religious symbols etc. or not, for it could alienate the Muslim community.

By 1920 the leadership of the Congress passed into the hands of Mahatma Gandhi. He openly declared the necessity of religion in politics. Although deeply rooted in Hindu popular ethos; Gandhi believed in pluralism and equal respect for all religions. In spite of Gandhi’s efforts to unite Hindus and Muslims, the excessive usage of Hindu symbols alienated the Muslims. There grew extremist tendencies both among Hindus and Muslims. Nationalism became polarised with the setting up of Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha and the militant socio-religious organisation called the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).» Instead of nationalism based on territories, these communities now struggled for nation on the basis of religious identity. Sudipto Kaviraj writes: “precisely because of long familiarity with other communities identities and the relative newness of identity of nation” there was a need for creating a feeling of nationalism through various means (in this case through religion, mainly) to face the British Colonialism.

India was partitioned in 1947 into India and Pakistan amidst communal riots. In 1948 there was the tragic assassination of Gandhi. This gruesome tragedy impressed upon the Indian leaders the need for a secular ideology to keep politics and religion separate.

Check Your Progress III

i) Write a few lines on the meaning of secularism in India.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

ii) openly declared the necessity of religion in politics.

12.7 SECULARISM IN INDIA

After Independence, Nehru took upon himself the task of modernising the country through the spread and application of science and technology for the removal of ignorance, ill health and poverty. Nehru was not against religion but he was aware of how harmful religion could be to India. Hence he lost no time in enshrining the secular ideal in the Constitution. Religion was not debarred from public life but was distanced from the State. Undoubtedly, constitutionally and legally we are a secular nation. But the question we must ask ourselves is — is this secularism constitutive and an integral part of our country? We find that secular nationalism is a concept that we adopted from the West in the face of British Colonialism. The dire necessity of that time was to fight the British on a united front. Secular ideal was adopted to unite the various pluralities in the nation. Modern education and the English language helped propagate this ideal and through the vernacular it was carried to the masses. And a semblance of nationalism was forged and the British were ousted.

Pointed out to this kind of nationalism, Sudipta Kaviraj feels that “as long as the national movement faced the British, this urgency in political discourse in constantly spelling, naming, repeating the making of the nation was evident.

After independence was achieved, this ... urgency was allowed to lapse” (Kaviraj, 1990 : 198). He further adds that our leaders who inherited this nation failed to see a situation where later generations may not take this nation for granted.

The State with its elitist leaders failed to form a dialogue with various vernacular cultures (which was the case during the freedom struggle) to achieve this ideal of secularism. It remained aloof from the masses. However, it needs to be pointed out that the masses are steeped in religion with its myths legends and folklore. As such secularism would take time to fully influence social process in India, where there is a plurality of religions.

Apart from this neglect, we are faced with contradictions present in a liberal democratic systems like ours, where there is a great deal of uneven economic development. With this arose a feeling of injustice and deprivation which finds expression in various ways. Mobilising one’s own community on religious and ethnic lines is very often the practice. The State political parties on the other hand address communities to gain support. This only reinforces the primordial identities of community aid religion. And they know that the only way to bring about pressure on the authorities is to mobilise on criteria like language, ethnicity and religion. So, as we can see in a multi-religious, multi-ethnic country, secularism even with best intentions is difficult to achieve.

12.8 LET US SUM UP

Unit 12: Secularism, had the basic objective of understanding the origin and the process of secularisation. The term secularism emerged out of this process of secularisation. Secularism as a state ideology has been adopted by, practically all modern states.

India, too, has adopted secularism as its state ideology. This was done keeping in view the pluralistic nature of Indian society and the consequent conflict which are there among communities. The section on secularism in India, has attempted to analyse the nature and practice of secularism. We have discussed the historical background which saw the emergence of the concept of secularism in Indian polity. In our final section, we have discussed the dynamics involved in the practice of secularism. Secularism as an ideology is indeed, difficult to practice, in a country like India where religion is deeply embedded in our society. And our democratic polity makes concessions to this religious need of the communities.

12.9 REFERENCES

Mircea Eliade, 1987. *International Encyclopedia of Religion*, New York : Macmillan.

Davind E. Sills, 1968. *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, New York: Macmillan.

Conklin, J.E., 1984. *Introduction to -Sociology*. Macmillan : New York.

12.10 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- i) The term secular is derived from the Latin word 'secular' which means the present age or generation. The word secular came to be associated with social process of secularisation later.
- ii) The new political philosophy which came about after the French Revolution questioned the religious basis of political and social organisation. It recommended rational basis for political and social organisation. Secularism was adopted as a political goal. Holyoake hoped and believed that secularism as a state ideology promotes human welfare by material means and makes the service of others its duty.
- iii) Emperor Constantine (307-37 A.D.) was the first Roman Emperor to convert to Christianity. He declared Christianity as a state religion.

Check Your Progress II

- i) Martin Luther
- ii)

A	B
Vasco-da-Gama	sea-route to India
William Harvey	blood circulation
Copernicus	revolutionized physics
Martin Luther	protestantism

Check Your Progress III

- i) India did not witness the secularisation process as did Europe. As a reason secularisation did not occur naturally in India, secularism as a political goal was adopted. Specially since India is a pluralistic country with variety of religions, languages and ethnic background.

In India, the term secularism implies that the state will not identify with any one religion but is tolerant of all religious practices.

- ii) Mahatma Gandhi