Politics of Cultural Revival and Secularism in India

*Maruthi N.
**Dr. Swamy H

Modern India is witnessing profound changes partially due to global influences and partly- economic, historic, cultural, social and domestic forces. The changing religious and socio-political, milieu has been the forerunner of the cultural revival that is being witnessed in India in the areas of cinema, politics, fashion, social practices, religion and alike. This trend of increased sense of belongingness and pride about one's own culture and traditions has the potential of nation building and can transform India into a super power if at all channelized judiciously with progressive ideology. Cultural revivalism is not new to India or any other county but what has to be taken care of is the complexities it involves the way in which the cultural revivalism is harnessed to match the Indian ethos, and the process and effects it has on the multicultural Indian principles like that of secularism. The intended effect it seeks to bring out and the unintended effects it has brought about has both positive and negative effects, have far-reaching consequences and may also give rise to several other complimentary effects like communal outrage, religious fundamentalism, feeling of insecurity, domination, and identity crisis in the Indian society especially in the context of secularism.

Key Words: Secularism, Cultural revival, Multicultural, Communal

Modern India during the 21st century is witnessing new changes and challenges due to several local and global factors. India as a nation has been shaped and reshaped partially by these local political social economic cultural factors and global forces like that of globalization. The colonization of India by the British for about more than 300 years has brought about crucial changes to the Indian way of life which includes Indian society, culture, economy, customs and traditions, religion, education, justice system and many more areas. Colonialization of India by the British was not only political but was also a systematic domination and had a profound impact on the Indian social system as well. The colonial administration systematically Dig into the roots of Indian civilization through various agencies destroying the very fabric of Indian social system and corrupting the Indian knowledge system. This well planned and executed destruction was systematically brought about directly by the colonizers and also sometimes indirectly by the people colonized by them i.e. the native Indians due to ignorance or greed.

Changes brought out by the British colonial administrative system ranged from various forms Including the direct intervention of colonial state and sometimes its various voluntary agency like that of missionary activity. In the course of time the true self of India was lost. Colonialism, it is argued, denies history to the colonized, in the sense that it deprives the subjected of their cultural

rights and identity and arrests its uninterrupted trajectory of development. The colonial countries have lost much of their cultural artefacts, as evident from the collections in the various museums in Europe. This transfer of cultural retracts affected by colonialism as greater significance than as an example of colonial plunder. For they form part of a denial of cultural identity and the creation of a new one. The change of place names during the colonial regime, for instance, deserves some attention. It denoted a loss of identity and the formation of a new one, a forced identity. The irretrievable loss of the indigenous knowledge systems is a part of this process. The cultural changes that colonialism tried to bring about were premised on the inferiority of the indigenous culture, which as a part of the process of hegemonization is either marginalized or destroyed. Simultaneously no efforts were spared to privilege the colonial. In education, literature, and medicine and in fact in all systems of knowledge such a displacement occurred. The revisionist history in relation to India argues that the colonial rule did not represent a fundamental break, rather it marked a continuation of prior indigenous regimes in ways more than one. The continuities are marked in two ways. First, the British intervened in the struggle for power, 'not as outsiders with new procedural principles and purposes but contingently as part of the political system of the subcontinent, but possessed of substantially more resources to Deploy for the conquest than others'. Secondly the Europeans achieved on a larger and more ominous scale what the Indian local rulers have been doing for the last century and responding to this conquering thrust Indians became 'active agents and not simply passive bystanders and victims in the creation of colonial India'.

Even after more than about 76 years of partition based on communal grounds India has not been able to recover from the evil effects of communalism and it is recurring and recurring till now.   Though India adopted secular principle as early as 1976 to the Indian Constitution itself, the secular issues or the Communal problems are yet to be resolved. Indian state characterized as 'Soft State' by Gunner Myrdal in his Asian Drama. And it remained towards communalism as well. The state remained not only soft towards communalism it encouraged it, if it paid political dividends. controversies and their relationship with politics, economy and society. India, despite partition on the basis of religion, resolved to be secular state promulgated its constitution in 1950 accepting equal rights for all citizens irrespective of caste, creed or race. It was undoubtedly a great step forward. Thus citizens were, prioritized over religion and ethnicity. Citizenship and not religion became the fundamental category. the same time all citizens were given the right to profess, practice and propagate their religion under Article 25 of the Constitution. Gandhiji, wrote in 1942, "Religion is a personal matter which should have no place politics." He even went further and told a missionary: "If I were a dictator, religion and would be separate, I swear by my religion I will die for it. But it is my personal affair. The has nothing do with it."1 However.", our politician have completely adversed this approach. They mix religion politics with vengeance and throw away values in the air. Religion without values like justice, equality, compassion, love, non-violence, truth and sensitivity to other suffering is mere ritual and if such empty ritual and not values are associated with religion which our politicians do, it can be very deadly.

Differences between the earlier Hindu-tinged nationalism and the recent Hindu religious revivalism

were considerable. Until the early twentieth century, "Hindu revivalism" had a strong regional context but now it has acquired a national character. They are born of cultural perceptions. This resurgence of religion-based culture and religio-political idioms, terms, etc., was, in the past, a democratization process of the nationalist movement. As opposed to this, Hindu revivalism in the 1980s was expressed by many widespread sects, groups, missionaries, and political organizations throughout India. The goal of recent movements is a "regeneration of dominant Hindu society based on a spiritual revival" that should occur at once and as such through the agency of the state power. Recent revivalists both in the Arabized northern India and the Dravidian land in the south tended to be fervently communalist, not nationalist. This strong revival of Hindu religious culture is seen by minorities as the rise of Hindu fundamentalism and has certainly created a lot of Anxiety among the marginalized community especially Muslims in Christians living in India. At many a times the way Hindu cultural revivalism is portrayed by various political party leaders and religious heads may also give this feeling to common people as well. This has also been partly responsible for the growth of religious fundamentalism and gaining a sense of insecurity among minority religions in India such as that of Muslims Christians. Culture expressions by the various communities are misinterpreted by the media and the political parties in order to gain moment for political and mass mobilization for achieving their selfish ends. most of the harm is done through social media by portraying cultural expressions as religious fundamentalism creating an atmosphere of suspicion and enmity various communities. An important question arises in this context of cultural Revival: can this cultural Revival be limited to private space or can be extended to the public sphere without destroying the communal harmony? Cultural Revival or the cultural expressions Sometimes a result of the resurgence of religious based culture has both impact on private public Spheres as well. There is an important and urgent need to take care of effects of cultural revivalism on the other communities. Being misinterpreted by social media and politicians frustrate the religious minorities who are already living in their own fear of oppression by the majority communities. Cultural revivalism also at most of the times the cultural revivalism leads to counter revivalism by the opposed or the other religious community in the fear of oppression or being marginalized takes the form of religious fundamentalism, Hate politics, communalism disharmony leading to violence, disturbances, targeting community leaders, religious heads, religious Institutions, cultural symbols giving provocative speech to mobilize the members of their own community.

Such tension between religious mobilization and democracy can fuel a "secularism trap," that is the breakdown of democracy due to the decision of either religious or secular elites to pursue maximalist demands related to the place of religion in democratic politics. This is the greatest challenge for any state especially as a Multicultural country like India with Several religious communities living together in the country for centuries and having their own cultural differences sometimes opposed to each other. the government is unable to successfully counter such recurring religious and communal tensions that exist due to mutual hatred and fear.

Contemporary India is now witnessing a post-colonial cultural resurgence, seen in the proliferation of local festivals, a revival of traditions and rituals, celebration of local arts, crafts and cultural symbols,

and multiple events around identity markers, renewed interest in believes values and symbols traditions, clothing, religious practices, religious mobilization, music, film, theatre, dance, food habits art, language, conduct Music cuisine and several others. The growing interest in heritage, intangible culture, tourism and branding around place-specific cultures are the varied responses witnessed in present-day India.

Religious revivalism is one of the major means of cultural revivalism in   India. This phenomenon can be found in almost all major religions. In order to mobilize the masses, the religious sentiments are invoked, like that of the Construction of Ram mandir, Protection of various religious customs and practices, renewed interests in pilgrimage to places of religious significance like kashi, haridwar, haj, Bodhgaya, etc, cow protection movement, celebration of religious festivals with renewed pomp and glory.

Religious revivalism can be considered as a counter-movement to rationalization, that is against the "demystification of the pressures of modernization; hegemonic movement; an expression within a given religion. In general terms, to the disciplines of science, economics, respectively. The term "revivalism" itself generates debate. Revivalism implies an attempt to restructure the past in a form relevant to contemporary concerns, and it is thus a general term which can be applied outside the religious sphere.

 Religion takes an interesting role in contemporary consumer societies. Religious groups produce commodities, or put positive values in some commodities, that can be bought by the religious consumer. Some groups are more involved in consumer activity than others and practices can vary from Hare Krishna devotees selling books or food at a university campus to Christian shops selling books and other artifacts to the Church of Scientology charging fees for each level of spiritual development or to New Age shops offering goods that can help the spiritual actor on his or her quest.

Nations, nationhood and nation-state formation are much more clearly connected to the existence of self-conscious national movements intent on expressing a distinct national culture and history which could not always, or even often, be congruent with the spread of some single indigenous language or ethnic group. In the postwar period, not only have we seen the resurgence of the supposedly resolved 'older' nationalisms and the prolongation of the phase of anti-colonial liberation struggles, but also the emergence of post-colonial nationalisms whose *raisons d'être* are new and distinct and cannot be simply ascribed to the distorting legacies of colonial rule. Such is particularly the case with South Asia—for example, Bangladesh, the national movements in Pakistan, Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka, and the secessionist struggles in India's northeast, in Punjab and in Kashmir.

Prevailing circumstances secularism in India as a generally state shared credo of life is impossible, as a basis for state action impracticable, and as a blueprint for the foreseeable future impotent. It is impossible as a credo of life because the great majority of the people of India are in their own eyes active adherents of some religious faith. Religion dominates every form of life in all the communities in all the religions all the things they do. It seems highly impracticable to separate religion from the everyday life people in India. And it is impotent as a blueprint for the future because, by its very

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nature, it is incapable of countering religious fundamentalism and fanaticism. Secularism is the dream of a minority which wants to shape the majority in its own image, which wants to impose its will upon history but lacks the power to do so under a democratically organized polity. In an open society the state will reflect the character of the society. Secularism therefore is a social myth which draws a cover over the failure of this minority to separate politics from religion in the society in which its members live. From the point of view of the majority, "secularism" is a vacuous word, a phantom concept, for such people do not know whether it is desirable to privatize religion, and if it is, how this may be done, unless they be Protestant Christians but not if they are Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, or Sikhs. For the secularist minority to stigmatize the majority as primordially oriented and to preach secularism to the latter as the law of human existence is moral arrogance.

 Since in our times politics takes precedence over ethics-political folly. It is both these-moral arrogance and political folly-because it fails to recognize the immense importance of religion in the lives of the peoples. Unable to raise the veil of its illusions, the modernist minority in India today is beset with deep anxieties about the future of secularism in the country. There is much talk these days in the highest political quarters about the need for stern legislative and executive measures to check the rising and menacing tide of majority and minority fundamentalism and revivalism, and this even as the so-called Hindu society continues splintering. An astonishing (or should one say impressive?) consensus among Indian Muslims about preserving the Shari'a, or "holy law," against what they consider the legislative onslaught of a godless state but others call the indispensability of a common civil law as a foundation of the modern state, was witnessed in 1986 in connection with the rights of Muslim divorced women (the Shah Bano case). State and society in India have since then become increasingly and violently communal, with communal politics being projected onto the national scene. However, abandoning our constitutional secularism is a cure guaranteed to accentuate the disease. Rather, what we need is a renewed commitment based on rethinking and a revaluation of the concept and its relevance for us today in the wake of revivalist trends of religion and culture. concept for our society is being questioned and its practical usefulness challenged, both by traditional conservatives, religious fundamentalists, and counter-culture radicals.

The cultural revivalism in any form in anytime in any place or in any religion in any country for that matter should be able to bring about a healthy competition among the various contenting religions in order to achieve the collective good of the community and the country as a whole. the cultural movements have to be engineer by the leaders or religious heads and the cultural representatives in such a manner that it doesn't hurt the feelings or create anxiety or create a feeling of marginalized to the other community. The need of the hour is the creation and fostering of a common national culture which represents the cultural distinctiveness of our country and the religions existing in our country it should be able to reflect upon the unity and integrity of the nation and solve the internal and external contradictions that can be seen in various religions of a country.

Any project of cultural revivalism has to seriously consider the various its after-effects of the cultural practices that can be renewed and has to be done followed by self-reflection of the issues that would be raised by the Revival or the resurgence of the cultural practices and counter Revival movement

that would take place in the country following the moment cultural Revival. Historical evidences have proved that cultural revivalism or resurgence of certain cultural practices of one religion acts as a catalyst to bring about various kinds of effects like that of fear of conversion, increased momentum to terrorism communal distrust, polarization of masses based on religion, rise of revolutionary leaders, disrespect to the law of the land, especially on the other religions of the country like that of the fear of domination anxiety among the youth, identity crisis or the search for new identity, Introspection of the existing cultural practices and their relevance to the present situation.

*Assistant Professor
Department of Political Science
Sri. H.D. Devegowda Govt. First Grade College
Paduvalahippe. H.N. Pura, Hassan
**Assistant Professor & Research Guide
Dos in Political Science
Davangere University
Shivagangotri Davangere

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