



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Secular and its Cognate Terms**

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**ABSTRACT**

The objectives of the research include the investigation and analysis of the term secular, secularity, secularization and secularism. This is done in the backdrop of ever changing and challenging socio political global existential structure which encompasses and governs both public and private lives of individuals and societies. Although Western in origin these concepts are not unfamiliar in nonwestern worlds and have diverse and conflicting meanings. Secular pertains to this worldliness devoid of religion. Secularity is a condition of being secular which exists in thoughts, ideologies and practices that belong not to religion. Secularization is a historical, anthropological, and social condition which has remained engaged in removing religious influences from lifestyles of people. Secularism is assumed to be a belief system which gives no room to religion in human existential set up. The study explanatory, explorative and. This research finds that the secular and its cognate terms are now an undeniable reality and condition beyond Western borders. It recommends that the secular in any of its forms needs to be seen as an ideology opposite to religion.

**Keywords:** Religion, Secular, Secularity, Secularization

**Introduction**

Religion and secularism have since long vied against each other and have survived too due to multiple reasons, but during the past few years these contrary forces have yet again come into limelight. Of these two age old rivals, secularism has left its impressions in almost every nook and corner of the world to such a great extent that religion seems to have either disappeared or has gone into hibernation to resurface again. Whatever may be the case, secularism is around us whether we like it or not. Modernity, liberalization, materialism, industrialism, rationalism, individualism, etc., all are linked directly or indirectly to secular thoughts and perceptions. Secularism has entered so deeply into our lives that it has become an accepted and undeniable reality. The mighty opposite of religion is yet again prospering. In this backdrop, the present study attempts to know what is secular, secularity, secularization and secularism.

**Materials and Methods**

This is an explanatory, explorative research. "The term explanatory implies that the research in question is intended to explain, rather than simply to describe, the phenomena studies" (Given, 2008, p. 323). This type of research is used for causal explanations. The goal of explanatory research is the elucidation of processes at work by "using in-depth intensive analysis and a narrative presentation of the argument" (Given, 2008, p. 324). On the other hand, exploratory research refers to broad ranging description and understanding of "an area of social and psychological life" (Given, 2008, p. 327). Exploratory researchers are interested in enhancing and examining knowledge of things they are interested in. Flexibility and open mindedness is required for this type of research.

## Secular

The word secular is defined as "1 not connected with spiritual or religious matters . . . 2 (of priests) living among ordinary people rather than in a religious community" (Hornby, 2010, p. 1382). Similarly, it is "pertaining to the present world, or to things not spiritual; civil, not ecclesiastical; lay, not concerned with religion; (of clergy) not bound by monastic rules (as opposed to regular)" (Schwarz, 1994, p. 1560). Likewise, it is:

1 *a*: of or relating to the worldly or temporal . . . *b*: not overtly or specifically religious . . . *c*: not ecclesiastical or clerical . . . 2 : not bound by monastic vows or rules; *specifically*: of, relating to, or forming clergy not belonging to a religious order or congregation (Merriam – Webster's online dictionary, n.d.).

All these dictionary definitions share a commonality that secular is this worldly and has no connection with spirituality and religion. But the term is not just confined to these meanings:

This term, which issues etymologically from a certain notion of time, has come to stand in commonsense fashion for post- Reformation practices and institutions in the West that formally separate private religious belief (or nonbelief) from public life. . . Consider, too, the train of associations with the secular that betray the commonsensical meaning— "secular" can suggest a condition of being unreligious or antireligious, but also religiously tolerant, humanist, Christian, modern, or simply Western. And any effort at settling the term immediately meets its doom in the conflicts among these associations, conflicts epitomized by the recent phenomenon of an American neoconservative political agenda that simultaneously sought to legitimize Christian prayer in American public schools and to make secularization a central tenet of the regime change project in the Middle East. Indeed, today the secular derives much of its meaning from an imagined opposite in Islam, and, as such, veils the religious shape and content of Western public life and its imperial designs (Brown, 2009, p. 9, 10).

The key words surrounding the term secular in the words of Brown include the post – Reformation, the West, the private religious belief and the public life, unreligious and antireligious condition, religiously tolerant, Christian, modern, Islam, and Western public life and its imperial designs. Rearranging the sequence of these key words can be helpful in understanding the secular in a better way. The secular seems to exist around, among, within and between the binaries like East and West, and Christianity and Islam (including other religions also). So the beliefs – religious and nonreligious, and the lives – private and public, can be secular and non-secular, and can also be unreligious or antireligious, and modernity may or may not lie somewhere around these binaries, beliefs and lives. The secular concept, ideology, thought, vision, reality, or condition seems to have influenced almost everyone in the global village with varying degrees. It may not be wrong to suggest that everyone here encompasses individuals, groups, states, nations, religions and so on. The secular, in this perspective, seems to be a condition which is being lived and promoted in comparison with religion. It is, therefore, not surprising when Atchley (2009) opines that secular atmosphere has grown so much around us that it even greets the traditionally religious people at their doorsteps, and they cannot escape this situation. But it has not just reached at the doorsteps, it has rather entered into houses and has made its permanent abodes because of its heterogeneous nature. This opposite of the religion has its own worlds and sets of values and meanings. With the passage of time, secular seems to have such a strong control over the lives of global denizens that it has become increasingly difficult to escape its powerful sway. If an important factor behind this remarkable shift is to traced, then one may find that it is the economic factor that brings even the traditionally religious people to the folds of secular because the secular world seems to have been controlling the economic means. Secular is so much around us that religion only appears to be a matter of choice under the given circumstances. Resultantly, secular (world) has been grasping more attention of the

people worldwide as compared to religion. If this situation is viewed from a religious perspective, it shows that secular world is being encountered not as a choice but as a necessity which could not be avoided. And once one is into the folds of this secular necessity, the chances of holding fast to religious principles may weaken.

Secular thus appears to be a pervasive force which seems to have sidelined religion if not overpowered it, completely. But this idea can be challenging because things everywhere do not happen in a similar fashion. The only similarity that the events happening around the world share is that things keep changing. It is, however, undeniable that secular is on the rise. Technologically connected global village might be an important reason behind this climax where the power and force of electronic and print media is busy day in and day out to spread its charms and magic to allure as many people as possible. Numerous other reasons can also be attributed to the spread of the secular thoughts, for example, the desire of personal independence, growing exercise of the reasoning powers, easy access to the pleasures of various sorts, and so forth. The secular (concept, ideology, thought, vision, or whatever idea it is attributed with), considering or regardless of degree and place, is as routinely encountered as is religion. Similarly, there is an understanding that the term "secular has become a central modern category - theologico-philosophical, legal-political, and cultural-anthropological - to construct, codify, grasp, and experience a realm or reality differentiated from the religious" (Casanova, 2009, p. 1049). Earlier, the secular appeared to be a condition which now seems to have turned into an undeniable reality. The journey of this secular condition and reality appears to be a continuous activity. Similarly, one's attention is brought to yet another fact that in this modern age the secular has so powerfully encompassed the reality that religion has completely been sidelined and "Consequently, the secular has come to be increasingly perceived as a natural reality devoid of religion, as the natural social and anthropological substratum that remains when the religious is lifted or disappears" (Casanova, 2011, p. 55). It shows how deep and vast are the thoughts and roots of secular. Secular ideas and the term secular are further explored by Thapar (2013) who considers them as a part and system of a mindset that has nothing to do with religion. This system separates the universe and human society from any divine linkage. Secular, it is believed, does not negate or deny religion but no importance is given to religion in the functioning of a society. It also believes that laws, societal ethics, and moral codes are constituted on need basis by men as well as women. So, if there is a need to amend laws, this could be done without taking assistance from divinity or divine laws. By this virtue, Thapar believes, secular laws can replace divine laws should they become oppressive. Furthering his ideas about secular notion, he is of the view that secular gives primacy to the civil laws whereby identities of any sort, for example, religion, cast, creed, race, etc. are subordinated to identities which the citizenship constitutes. These identities should, however, be governed by the equal rights, and duties and obligations of every citizen. Secular, in this way, ensures a smooth functioning of the state.

No involvement of religion in the functioning of the universe and human society may seem to be denial of religion, especially when primacy is not given to it. This could sound a secularly motivated view. But what if one reverses the statement and says that no involvement of secular in the functioning of the universe and human society may seem to be denial of secular, especially when primacy is not given it. Would it not sound a religiously motivated view? It will, definitively. Both the statements will look authoritative in terms of their impression and operation. Citizenship will thus be influenced by such authorities which is directly linked with power structure of the state which functions through a variety of means and ways. And such authority will consequently influence duties and obligations, choices, thoughts, relations, etc. of citizens. Likewise, for Crossley (2011), secular is the institutional separation of what is religious or public from the official or public affairs. This is done to reduce conflicts, which may possibly emerge between the two, and to ensure freedoms like that of conscience, expression, equality, and respect. This is done purposefully

so that none could impose his or her religious or anti religious ideas upon others. It is believed that the autonomy of people could be safeguarded in this way.

The term secular, Chelioti (2013) believes, is defined by the principles like free will, freedom of choice and decisions, and their consequences faced by humans. In yet another view, secular is considered as "a concept that brings together certain behaviors, knowledges, and sensibilities in modern life" (Asad, 2003, p. 25). If one attempts to synthesize the two arguments, the secular would emerge to be a system of life whose behaviors, knowledges and sensibilities are determined by free will and freedom of choice which leave no margin for the religion to play any role in the modern life cycles. Asad's (2003) understanding of secular is however important in that he alludes to a condition which is neither linked with nor delinked from religion. But there can also be conditions where secular and religious are fused together, both overtly and covertly, and vice versa.

Almost all definitions and explanations of the word secular allude to a common point that it emphasizes rationality over religiosity. The departure between rationality and religion that is observed in secularity is also found in the term 'humanism,' when Said (2004) throws light on the core of humanism by stating that it is the secular notion which shows that the historical world one lives in is constituted not by God but by men and women alike so it could be understood in a rational way as had been formulated in *New Science* by Vico.

### **Secularity**

The term secularity is believed to be "1 something secular," and "2 the quality or state of being secular" (Britannica online dictionary, n.d.). Almost similar view is expressed here that the "state of affairs might be referred to as "secularity", " (Torpey, 2010, p. 281), which results from secular – ideas, thoughts, ideologies, concepts, and practices, and this is the reason, perhaps, that it has been maintained that secularity "tends to become increasingly the default option, which can be naively experienced as natural and, thus, no longer in need of justification" (Casanova, 2008, p. 2). The notion that secularity is the default option does not sound unfamiliar and illogical as its naturalness, as Casanova suggests, has spread, and received acceptance in almost every segment of different global societies to the extent that the presence of its other – religion – in any of its form make people wonder at its existence, especially when secularity, for them, is on the rise. It is thus no surprise to read when scholars "conceptualize "secularity" in terms of the cultural meanings underlying the differentiation between religion and non-religious spheres" (Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt, 2012, p. 875). This reflects that religious and non-religious spheres both have acquired cultural meanings. The non-religious spheres acquiring cultural meanings is not surprising but the religious sphere acquiring the cultural meanings seems surprising as religions are considered heavenly, and they were once heavenly in origin; religion, therefore, should have been far above the cultural classifications. With the growth and popularity of ideas, be they secular or religious, people become accustomed to cultural aspects of things, and they hardly bother about the roots of such notions which they live under.

The impartation of cultural meanings to secularity is not the work of an individual but that of a state or a nation or a group of influential people. Thus, secularity in itself and in relation to an individual seems linked with the nation. For example:

Secularity and the idea of the nation are concepts pertaining to the way we imagine the modern social world in a social and political sense. These ideas are translated into the symbols of religion and citizenship that both refer to a moral set of ideas about truth and living together and are used to evoke the imaginary that inspires them. These symbols are then translated into governing strategies and are perceived as real and having real consequences by individuals and social groups (Ivanescu, 2013, p. 13).

Ivanescu's views indicate the power that the concept of secularity has acquired. It seems to have been spreading like a force as powerful as religious. It has its own symbols and values that link individuals with other individuals, groups and hence the power structure. Individual(s) and the power structure, however, may not be in accord with each other yet the secularity in its new private forms might be flourishing. The whole act, i.e., secularity seems to be like an ideology which "is a part of the symbolic realms, related directly to the imaginary. Ideology exists and is reproduced through unconscious acts, while people are not aware of its essence" (Ivanescu, 2013, p. 14). This ideology seems to result from the 'modern social imaginary':

By social imaginary, I mean something much broader and deeper than the intellectual schemes people may entertain when they think about social reality in a disengaged mode. I am thinking, rather, of the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations (Taylor, 2004, p. 23).

This social imaginary where connects people with each other; it sets its own standards and sub-standards depending upon the mental levels and the classes of the society they belong to. Thus, secularity that finds its reflection through the social imaginary varies from place to place and person to person with one commonality that religion has no value or place in their circles. This variance in social imaginary shows that there are social imaginaries which live people, and which are lived by people around the world. In this process, the religion and its associative teachings, principles, values, and symbols, however, might be moulded to fit one's designs, desires and expectations entailing the birth of new and new imaginaries within and outside the religion. This act might also be viewed like secularization of religion. Furthermore, secular and secularity are thought to be a step towards enlightenment and modernity which together, in the views of Harvey (1990), ushered in a movement that is called secular, and this movement has attempted to make knowledge and social organization more clearer and render them less sacred so that human beings could be liberated from the chains of sacredness. This is perhaps, in the words of Alexander Pope, 'the proper study of mankind is man.' Thus, it encouraged and appreciated, in the name of human progress, all those things which worked for the human excellence like human creativity, scientific discoveries, and all individual pursuits towards excellence. These ideas were welcomed by the thinkers of the Enlightenment movement who believed that the project of modernization could be achieved through these humanistic pursuits. Too much trust, therefore, has been put in the popular concepts like equality and liberty with faith in the intelligence of the human beings and the universal reason. The obsession with rationalism and universalism became so popular that it resulted in the belief that

'A good law must be good for everyone,' pronounced Condorcet in the throes of the French Revolution, 'in exactly the same way that a true proposition is true for all.' Such a vision was incredibly optimistic. Writers like Condorcet, Habermas (1983, 9) notes, were possessed 'of the extravagant expectation that the arts and sciences would promote not only the control of natural forces but also understanding of the world and of the self, moral progress, the justice of institutions and even the happiness of human beings' (Harvey, 1990, p. 13).

Secularity, hence, appears to be an epoch-making movement in itself. Ivanescu (2013), therefore, is of the view that as chief characteristics of the modern age is secularity, so the modernity and secularity are interlinked. And this linkage or union considers religion as an obsolete phenomenon. So, the modernity and secularity have together closed their doors at religion, and religion because of this attitude has become a private matter and has been left only to be practiced on special occasions. Hence, the modernity and secularity have become full time and thoroughgoing conditions and practices while religion has turned into an occasional activity that comes rarely in the lives of modern men. A different view on

secularity is presented by Silliman (2012) for whom secularity is a belief system with its own justifications. Although it does not deny the belief system of religion, yet religious beliefs become implausible in the views of increasing number of people. Furthermore, secularity gives more importance to individual as compared to the concepts related to the theistic construction of the universe. In other words it puts a challenge to the naïve beliefs. These thoughts establish a link between rationality and belief with an impression that beliefs should not be irrational if they are to benefit humans and human life. It further raises the need of questioning what has since long been unquestioned. But there is a question that is it possible to understand beliefs on the basis of pure reasoning. If so, whose reasoning would be considered comprehensive and unchallengeable. Will it not have the controlling power like beliefs and so on and so forth, and if so, what difference will remain between a belief and reason / reasoning? In yet another sense the notion of secularity denotes an individual *Weltanschauung*, an areligious habitus shared across certain groups in society. It is most likely reinforced by secularist state politics, but at the same time transmitted through socialization and sustained by the belief in humanist, rationalist or liberal moral values and/or a late-modern notion of independent selfhood. These “cultural” dimensions give secularity a certain independence from secularist political agendas, but still position it within a pluralist ideological field where it negotiates its position in society vis-a-vis different kinds of religious ideologies (Schroder, 2011, p. 44, 45).

The discussion so far on secularity shows that it has acquired a wide currency worldwide and has not remained monolithic. It has appeared in multiple forms. For example, there is ontological secularity and political secularity which are explained by Prosman (2011) for whom ontological secularity is concerned with the freedom of the world and human’s ability to know it. He believes that the appearance of a scientific attitude in modernization has changed the relationship of man and the world and that instead of the speculative understanding of knowledge, rational thoughts are now concerned with the inside nature and the regularity of the world. The implication is that the relationship with the world does not remain static rather it changes from the knowledge of belongingness to the learning of mastering this world. On the other hand, Prosman believes that political secularity is concerned with the relationship of religion to the different areas of society and the state. With the growth of this type of secularity the social institutions gradually become free from religious beliefs. Thus in the modern sense this type of secularity appears to be a social ordering where religious role in civil matters is either limited or is absent at all. So the moral and social lives do not participate orderly in the society but are considered as independent domains.

The ontological and political secularity both seem to connect the world and an individual with an impression that the world – in its macro as well as micro senses – leaves a tremendous influence on an individual who resultantly influences the world. Authors like Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt (2012) have also tried to classify secularity, but they have, firstly, attempted to explain “multiple secularities” which to them emerge from the basic differences between religious domains and the domains that are social and which may be characterized as nonreligious. These social domains are institutionalized and given legitimacy through guiding aims, so the secularities emerging from these areas depict diverse structures of meanings which produce various other competitive and influential kinds of secularities. The multiplicity of these secularities where witnessed particular social problems worldwide, it also offered solution to those problems.

There are four kinds of 'multiple secularities' which are mentioned in the following table:

Implicit focus	
Centralized	Decentralized
Type 1: Secularity for the sake of individuals	Type 2:

			Secularity for the sake of balancing/accommodating diversity
	Life World-related	Guiding ideas: Freedom, individuality	Guiding ideas: toleration, respect, non-interference
<i>Definitions of the social</i>	System-Related	Type 3: Secularity for the sake of social integration/national development	Type 4: Secularity for the sake of the independent development of institutional domains
		Guiding ideas: progress, enlightenment, modernity	Guiding ideas: rationality, efficiency, autonomy

Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt, 2012, p. 890

Of these four types, 'secularity for the sake of individuals' with maximum freedom and individuality as its aim worldwide seems to have been on the rise. This freedom and individuality if maximized in one's private affairs and displayed in public and gets popularity and practiced too then it may affect the freedom and individuality of those who are religious. As long as both secularity and religion do not collide, they may coexist.

### Secularization

Secularization is considered to be a "process of removing the influence or power that religion has over sth" (Hornby, 2010, p. 1382), and according to another source it is "the act or process of secularizing, the condition of being secularized" (Britannica online dictionary, n.d). This condition is perceived to be historical, anthropological as well as social. For example, Schroder (2011) takes secularization as historical fact whose influence has considerably reduced the influence of religion and its related institutions in the society. Anthropologists, however, reject this secularization process but its influence on history and localities cannot be denied. The process of secularization cannot be considered unidirectional because its influence and sway over the lives of people has increased manifold. This indicates that religious control has been declining and there has been a rise in secularization. Similarly, it is considered that secularization usually refers to actual or alleged empirical-historical patterns of transformation and differentiation of the institutional spheres of "the religious" (ecclesiastical institutions and churches) and "the secular" (state, economy, science, art, entertainment, health and welfare, etc.) from early modern to contemporary societies (Casanova, 2009, p. 1050).

Whether the patterns of transformation are actual or alleged, their actuality cannot be denied by the available or hidden historical accounts. It cannot, however, be denied that secularization has sine long been on the rise and it has deeply permeated into the lives of people. The patterns of secularization are thus the patterns of existence which prevail everywhere. These historical transformative processes thus allude to another aspect of the concept of secularization which is not Westernization, rather

It means having to come to terms with these changes in our own societies. Therefore, one of the choices we confront today is that in the functioning of our societies we can either reinforce what we imagine were the religious modes of earlier times, or else, introduce a secular mode as being more appropriate to the society in which we currently live (Thapar, 2013, p. 4).

Interestingly, the term, despite its widespread usage and accommodation worldwide, was once thought to be a myth, for example, "the paradigm of secularization was increasingly interpreted as a modern myth (principally inspired by the West) that, like the classical modernization theory, is based on cultural biases and is unsuited to analyses beyond the Western world" (Wohlrab-Sahr and Burchardt, 2012, 877, 878). This myth however seems to have turned into an undeniable reality as secularization has almost surrounded us. Ivanescu (2013), while discussing the growth, importance and presence of secularization, is of the view that religion is now a bygone force and secular is its powerful counterpart. Because of all pervasiveness of secularization Ivanescu further believes that it has become a 'collective imaginary' which varies in details from place to place but people engage with it somehow or the other and that bespeaks of its popularity. And "Secularity represents the way secularization and the secular are dealt with, in that the secular is the domain where secularity and secularization have meaning (Ivanescu, 2013, p. 19). While tracing the roots of secularization Ivanescue (2013) finds that the growth in industrialization and capitalism paved the way for excessive rationalization of the basic necessities of life which was the driving force behind the two. The rationalization thus made its presence felt at the structural and the level of consciousness. The way economy dependent logic prevailed and became popular amongst masses its influence also spread and embraced by public in every level of society and it has provided a good and overpowering foundation to any of its alternative.

If the concept of secularization is seen in a wider perspective with its borders crossing the Western Zone and some factors behind its spread are located, then economy may emerge as a major factor. And religion might be considered as a hurdle in pursuits of various worldly gains. The charismatic quality of lifestyles worldwide and their seductive charms may also result in religious decline. Easy access to extra marital sexual activities might also be prompting people to do away with the principles of different religions. Torpey (2010), for this reason, perhaps, considers secularization to be a process having determinants and dimensions multiple and various. But whatever be the determining forces or factors behind the process of secularization there is no denying the fact that it resulted in the decline of religion and its institutions and that it has also resulted in privatization of faith. It has rather become a faith of its own kind.

The multiple determinants and various dimensions of secularization bespeak of its growth and they might vary from place to place. Significantly, the process alludes to declining beliefs and the privatization of faiths. The privatization of faiths suggests that they are either modified according to personal needs or are practiced or remembered in letter and spirit in one's privacy alone. The determinants of secularization despite their multiplicity share a commonality called modernization. Thus, the modernization and secularization appear to be two sides of the same coin. Here is another important aspect of secularism:

The umbrella term is the process of modernization, under which head are a group of cognate terms such as rationalization, bureaucratization and disenchantment; urbanization and industrialization; individualization, privatization and liberalization. All these processual terms are adjuncts of secularization and together they frame the analysis of empirical trends in belief and practice (Martin, 2005, p. 126).

This shows that secularizations are also multiple but despite this multiplicity all secularizations give little or no space to religion to interfere in their affairs. By leaving religion aside, secularization took its job of educating masses in whatever way it wanted. For example, "Once welfare and education (let's say) were under ecclesiastical aegis and the governing modality of thought was theological. Now welfare and education are independent spheres and theology has become a delimited sphere of our thinking" (Martin, 2005, p. 123). The governing frame of secularization in its multiplicities thus appears to be the social differentiation principle. On the other hand, Haebermas (2003) traces the line of



secularization and goes back to Europe where the word secularization was first used in juridical meanings when church property was forcefully used for the secular state and then the meaning was used for the cultural and social modernity and by this virtue the word secularization was used for taming the religion or the religious authority by way of a rationalization process which at first was authoritative and later on it became the public property.

Likewise, "In the European context, secularization is a concept overloaded with multiple historically sedimented meanings that simply points to the ubiquitous and undeniable long-term historical shrinkage of the size, power, and functions of ecclesiastical institutions vis-a-vis other secular institutions" (Casanova, 2006, p. 16). Similarly, "secularization became globalized through the process of Western colonial expansion entering into dynamic tension with the many different ways in which other civilizations had drawn boundaries between "sacred" and "profane," "transcendent" and "immanent," "religious" and "secular"" (Casanova, 2009, p. 1063). On the other hand, Reilly's (2011) study unfolds some other determinants of secularization which include the social differentiation principle, societalization, rationalization and worldliness. All these factors squeezed out religious influences from the personal lives of people.

The weakening of religious control over individual and society, no doubt, has resulted from modernization with huge influx of masses to the urban areas where humans felt and feel more secure, in terms of various aspects, as compared to their stay in rural areas. Modernization may be one factor behind the spread of secularization, but numerous other factors cannot be overlooked or underestimated. The 'internal secularization of religions,' as Reilly talks about, may or may not sound true with respect to all religions. Further, adherence to religion or deviation from it can be as much subjective as it is objective. Environment, therefore, if not conducive, may, weaken one's resolve to follow religious teachings. Lawlessness, for instance, might weaken religious bonds when one is prone to follow either one's own desires or what the majority follows and what the majority follows may or may not be right, so one falls prey to the temptations that such environment might produce. So, the dominant and prevalent mood of any society may also influence secular or religious sentiments and moods with deepening effects on the common psychology of people.

## **Secularism**

Secularism is defined as "the belief that religion should not be involved in the organization of society, education, etc" (Hornby, 2010, p. 1382). Another definition shows that it is "the belief that the state, morals, education, etc, should be independent of religion . . . system of social ethics" (Schwarz, 1994, p. 1560). Secularism, similarly, is "the belief that religion should not play a role in government, education, or other public parts of society" (Merriam Webster online dictionary, n.d), and by still another account it is "a view of life or of any particular matter based on the premise that religion and religious considerations should be ignored or purposely excluded" (Britannica online dictionary, n.d). First three definitions show it as a belief which gives no importance to religion in running the affairs of life. The belief is a very strong word which is "a strong feeling that sth/sb exists or is true; confidence that sth/sb is good or right" (Hornby, 2010, p. 125). It seems that the beliefs after their acceptance and propagation over a period convert into views of life which Hornby's definition of the term alludes to, that secularism is 'a view of life' which ignores or excludes religion from practical life. So, both belief and views come into practice through one's actions either partially or completely.

But secularism is not just a view of life, it is more than that. It seems to have shaped itself into worldviews, ideologies, modernity projects and cultural programs. For instance, Casanova (2009) believes that if a broader view of secularism is taken then its range encompasses a whole modern secular worldviews and ideologies which are consciously

held and elaborated explicitly into projects and programs of philosophy, history, modernity and culture. It might, also, viewed to be a regime of epistemic knowledge which is held unreflexively and may also appear to be structured as a normal modern reality. It may also appear into various historical forms and may also result in the separation of the secular state and the religion. Secularism is further explained in terms of statecraft principle and ideology in these words:

By secularism as statecraft principle, I understand simply some principle of separation between religious and political authority, either for the sake of the neutrality of the state vis-à-vis each and all religions, or for the sake of protecting the freedom of conscience of each individual, or for the sake of facilitating the equal access of all citizens, religious as well as nonreligious, to democratic participation. Such a statecraft doctrine neither presupposes nor needs to entail any substantive "theory," positive or negative, of "religion." Indeed, the moment the state holds a particular view of "religion" one enters the realm of ideology. Secularism becomes an ideology the moment it entails a theory of what "religion" is or does. It is this assumption that "religion," in the abstract is a thing that has an essence or that produces certain particular and predictable effects that is the defining characteristic of modern secularism (Casanova, 2009, p. 1051, 1052).

Of importance here is the 'freedom of conscience' of each individual which characterizes the structure of modern state as well as secularism as a principle. But the 'freedom of conscience' to what level and degree, and whose freedom of conscience more within the freedom of conscience principle are some of the important questions that arise here in relation to the state. On the other hand, besides the ideological and statecraft outlook, the notion of secularism according to Wilson (2006) is thought to be an environment based on the concepts which presume how religion, ethics, nation and politics are defined and related with each other. The core of the secularism discourse is that individuals and collective groups as human subjects are agents and that they make their own histories. The conceptual environment, first of all, seems to be created and provided by the state functionaries and then individuals or groups make and create environments of their own likes and choices. And it is here that one observes the freedom of conscience at work at different levels of societies where human subjects make their own histories and start living in them. Because "secularism posits the individual and collective human subject as the creator of the world in which he or she lives," and it "is not and can never be universal because different societies have created their own conception of what it means to be human" (Wilson, 2006, p. 199, 200). Furthermore, Calhoun et al (2011) are of the view that though secularism is defined negatively but its presence cannot be denied at all. Since it is something so there is a need to elaborate and understand it. And it also needs to be thought through in whatever form it exists. Some of the possible forms that it might exist in include ideology, worldview, position towards religion and the constitutional framework.

## **Conclusion**

Secular is neither spiritual nor religious because it is worldly and is linked with rationality. Rooted in the West, secular system formally draws a line of demarcation between private belief and public belief. It is also considered as an adversary of Islam. There is also a belief that secular may not necessarily be unreligious or antireligious, so it might be modern, humanist and religiously tolerant. Because of numerous associations and conflicting views and opinions, settling on a single definition of secular might not be possible. Secularity, on the other hand, refers to secular state of affairs which leave no space for religion to play its role in the lives of individuals, institutions and states. It is believed that modern age is characterized with secularity as modernity and secularity together have sidelined religion. Secularity has acquired different forms and is on the rise in different societies. Similarly, secularization also works to diminish or remove religious influences completely from societal functions and structures. Once considered a myth, it is now an undeniable reality. Industrialization and capitalism might have helped secularization grow

into a mighty and parallel system of thought, belief and action as opposed to religion. Excessive rationalization too seems to be a momentous driving force behind secularization. Secularism, likewise, is a belief system that religion is no longer essential for individual or societal existence as it believes that rationality sufficiently provides humans a sustainable course of living both private and public.

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