

Secularism and the Crisis of Secularization in India: A Taylorian Response

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Introduction

The place of religion in society has undergone a profound transformation during the last few centuries, most notably in the West. The situation in constitutionally secular India is rather different, for as it marches ahead economically, socially, and politically, India's different religions flourish and continue to exert influence. This raises the question as to whether modernity necessarily entails a decline in religion. Is the story of the West just one story amongst many? According to Charles Taylor, religious faith has a significant role to play, even in this epoch of disenchantment. He remarks: '[religion] is a powerful reality in today's world and one that is not about to disappear' (Taylor 2003, 115). Taylor sees the human aspiration for the transcendent as something fundamental to human being, even when, as in modernity, religion loses its public hold. The aspiration to 'go beyond', which Taylor refers to as a sense of 'beyond life', is a crucial plank in his argument in favour of the power of religion today. The emphasis placed on religion's communitarian and corporate dimensions is notable. Taylor's articulation of the collective and connective nature of religion challenges those who see religion as an individual experience (Taylor 2003, 4) and also helps to explain why communication with God becomes difficult when the community which provides the basis for that communication is absent. Thus, Taylor's argument flows from the dialogical nature of humans as well as the connective-collective nature of religion. The purpose of this paper is to argue, with reference to Indian secularism, that religion is a 'powerful reality in today's world and one that is not about to disappear' (Taylor 2003, 115).

The Shift of Modernity

Taylor, in his analysis of the present situation, argues that we (in the West) have moved 'from a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others' (Taylor 2007, 3). In other words we have become a secular society. Interestingly, Taylor's argument stems from the point of transformation rather than from the more conventional point of loss or decline. To the two understandings of the word secular in common use Taylor adds a third.

In the first case, secular refers to public spaces that ought to be religiously neutral. The second case refers to the overall decline in religious practice, or to the absence of religion in what is a materialist belief-system. The third meaning of the word secular, to which Taylor draws attention, 'consists of new conditions of belief; it consists in a new shape to the experience which prompts to and is defined by belief; in a new context in which all search and questioning about the moral and spiritual must proceed' (Taylor 2007, 20). The secular is not defined by religious neutrality or plurality, nor by the continual erosion of religion since the Enlightenment, which is what Taylor calls the 'subtraction theory', instead the secular is defined as the overall context that makes belief possible or more likely.

Conventionally secularization is defined solely in terms of the subtraction theory, hence in terms of loss, whereby the widespread belief in God is challenged by modernity in the form of science and reason, so bringing about the attrition of such beliefs. Secularism is what is left standing when these old beliefs fall away. To Taylor, secularization is not merely about the loss of old ideas, but is also about the shaping of new images and beliefs such as the concept of the brave seeker after truth, freed from childish illusions and facing the world as an adult. Taylor's book *Modern Social Imaginaries* charts much of the work that has been done in the modern world to conceptualise politics and economic life without placing God at the centre. For example, the evolutionary theory of Charles Darwin and the works of thinkers like Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Sigmund Freud,

alongside anti-religious forces such as communism, individualism, and materialism have dealt a blow to traditional religious belief and have shifted the world order from theocentrism to anthropocentrism. This is what is meant when we speak of the disenchantment and secularization of the world.

For Taylor, this is not the whole story. He grapples with the question of whether the present day departure from religion can be correctly interpreted as the distancing of humans from God. He is able to demonstrate that there is a growing religious sense amongst people. The centrality of religion in human life and culture has been reasserted in India, Israel, throughout the Islamic world, and in much of what is termed the 'developing world', demonstrating that the quest for the transcendent continues to hold a unique place in human consciousness. Taylor shows that even in the West, there is what he calls a *nova* (and even a '*supernova*') effect of a multiplicity of spiritualities which go beyond the bounds of established religions. As to the question of whether such movements are truly religious, Taylor answers in the affirmative, so demonstrating the fact that instead of talking in terms of loss, Taylor prefers to speak of transformation.

The Concept of Secularism

For years the notions 'secular', 'secularism' and 'secularization' have been used ambiguously by intellectuals, politicians, and theologians, which leads Taylor to comment that 'it is not entirely clear what is meant by secularism' (Taylor 1998, 31). Taylor remarks that while the concept of secularism has a Christian root, 'it is wrong to think that this limits the application of its formulae to post-Christian societies' (Taylor 1998, 31). Secularism does not merely mean a separation of state and religion, though such a separation may be a logical arrangement in order to preserve society's core values of individual and corporate freedom. Therefore, it is incumbent on us to conduct a brief examination of the emergence of secularization before proceeding to consider its implications.

Secularism in the West

During the medieval era there were frequent conflicts between the Church and State resulting in a clear demarcation of roles. According to Taylor the 'secularism of today builds on this original distinction, but of course also involves a transformation in it' (Taylor 1998, 32). The departure from religion that occurred in the West is deemed to have its starting point within Christendom itself. Interestingly, Gauchet comments that 'Christianity proves to have been a religion for departing from religion' (Gauchet 1997, 4). It has undertaken its own transformations to purify the faith, making it more dedicated and amenable to Gospel values and to changing circumstances. This eventually generated an individualist dimension to faith, so reducing its community basis. What we see in the West today is a culture that began with religious determinations, but which has now become free of these, possessing two dimensions, namely that of departing and liberating from the religious bond. The individual is important and everything turns around the individual, a process which Taylor calls the 'expressive individualism' of the present day. This has given a new model of freedom to society, along with a new social order and a dethroning of religion from its former elevated position in society. The rise of democratic rule, the concept of civil society, the consciousness of human rights, and individual freedom, have all accelerated the growth of secularism.

At the same time religion has a far more profound influence on human beings than the present secularization theories allow. Secularism began with the horrors of the 'wars of religion', which caused many to seek coexistence between Christians of different confessional persuasions. Several strategies emerged to achieve this:

a) The Common Ground Strategy: the purpose of this was to establish an ethic of peaceful co-existence and political order. The concept was both theistic and Christian, and was widely accepted as having its foundation in Natural Law. At the same time there was a downplaying of confessional dogma leading to a movement from theism to deism.

b) Independent Political Ethic: the second strategy is an independent political ethic which initially found favour with Grotius, who argued that concepts such as peace and obedience to the political hierarchy could exist independently of God, thus giving rise to an independent ethic. This ethic became more evident in the logic of Hobbes, who asserted that Christian demands have to be set aside to make the independent ethic acceptable. As a result Christian faith was perceived as inappropriate in the public sphere, and this led to an individualistic approach to religion. This withdrawal of religion to the private sphere is one aspect of what is referred to as disenchantment, whereby the vertical dimension of faith is replaced by the horizontality of human life. Thus, for Hobbes religion will exist only in the private sphere. Taylor sees in this theory 'one of the meanings of the principle widely accepted in the West today of the separation of church and state' (Taylor 1998, 35).

According to Taylor, both of these strategies are challenged when society becomes multi-religious, multi-linguistic and multicultural. Hence he would prefer 'a third strategy equidistant from, or perhaps a hybrid between, the two others' (Taylor 1998, 37). This he refers to as the overlapping consensus.

c) Overlapping Consensus: for Taylor, the advantage of the overlapping consensus view is that it lifts the requirement of a commonly held foundation and 'aims only at the universal acceptance of certain political principles', which, as he admits, 'is hard enough to attain' (Taylor 1998, 38). This approach mediates the view that a common political ethic can never suffice by itself, but requires a wider and deeper understanding of the good in which it is embedded. I would argue that this is not only the basis of Indian secularism, but also that this is the kind of secularisation that is required today.

'Secularism' and 'secularization' are not merely marginal features of modern life. In many ways they are central or constitutive categories defining the character of modern society. The words 'secularism' and 'secularity' derive from the Latin terms *saeculum* and *saecularis* designating a century or world age. Seen in this light, attention to the 'secular' implies a concern with the

temporal dimension of life, while secularism usually entails the belief that religion (and hence spirituality) is an essentially private matter, and ought to be kept out of the public domain. Secularism and secularization are concepts with Eurocentric associations, for it is in Western nations that secularism is seen to have originated. The development of secularization brought a radical change in society and culture, and imposed a break with the past. In this way secularism has become an ideological process of the de-sacralization of the world, which de-emphasizes spirituality in public life, while aiming at a more objective world.

This ideology emerged from the Enlightenment, but this does not mean that the Enlightenment philosophers denied religion completely. They sought to bind everything within the limits of reason. In this sense, we can say that it was a move to self-explanatory and self-supporting life, which set aside the concept of transcendence, and is linked to the emergence of Protestantism, individualism and secularization. According to Peter Berger 'Protestantism cut the umbilical cord between heaven and earth' (Berger 1973, 118). It also advocated personal responsibility for a person's own salvation, and this was further accelerated by Luther's advocacy of justification by faith, and the denial of the jurisdictional powers of the Church. Anthony J. Carroll writes that 'Weber's theory of secularization narrates a Protestant account of modernity' (Carroll 1965, xiii). Carroll continues by stating: 'Indeed, the conception of modernity of which his understanding of secularization forms a part is strongly influenced by the Protestant Reformation' (Carroll 1973, 57). The coming of Protestantism is even named as the dress rehearsal of secularization. Taylor understands the Protestant Reformation as central to the secularization movement because it involves the 'abolition of the enchanted cosmos and the eventual creation of a humanist alternative to faith' (Taylor 2007, 77). Harvey Cox claims that it is a paradox that, while secularization is an 'irreversible' historical process having 'its roots in the biblical faith itself, secularism is an 'ism', and a 'closed world view' which 'menaces the openness and freedom that secularization has produced' (Cox 1969, 15-32). In other words, secularism itself can pretend to be a

religion, not only in the sense of secular exclusive humanism, but also as a state ideology.

What is Secularism in India?

The founding fathers of India never intended secularism to be understood as irreligious atheism but merely as a means of coexistence between faiths. Secularism in India is expressed as a 'state doctrine', but not as in opposition to the Indian way of life, which is deeply religious. In the opinion of Amartya Sen, a secular state need not stay clear of religion but it must ensure a basic symmetry of treatment for all religions (Srivastava 2008, 22). Sen writes that

In this view, there would be no violation of secularism for a state to protect everyone's right to worship as he or she chooses, even though in doing this the state has to work with and for religious communities. In the absence of asymmetric attention (such as protecting the rights of worship for one religious community, but not others), working hard for religious freedom does not breach the principle of secularism (Sen 2005, 296).

The Indian concept of secularism advocates a non-sectarian attitude towards religion, and encourages the process of dialogue and interdependence among faiths, which is different from the French model, where there exists a radical separation between politics and religion in the name of progress and the rights of the universal human. In contrast, the Indian model finds its foundation in the idea of unity in diversity, being the product of an amalgam of secular humanism and neo-Hindu revivalism. The secularist and democratic ideologies of Jawaharlal Nehru and Gandhi were of crucial importance to the formation of India as a secular state, though it is to be noted that the word 'secular' was included in the Indian constitution only in the 42nd amendment in 1976. The challenge for India is to formulate a philosophy with spiritual values.

The Nehruvian Idea of Secularism

Nehruvianism defines the consensus that under girded the emerging Indian state. Nehruvianism visualized a secular democracy not in opposition to

religion but aimed at the distancing of religion from public affairs. In fact, many commentators such as Ashis Nandy believe that religion in India cannot be cordoned off from politics because it informs all aspects of an Indian's life. This is what Gandhi meant when he referred to religion's involvement in politics. Nehru himself had a rationalist and individualistic approach to religion, thinking of religion as something that impaired development in India. From the multicultural thrust of Nehru's nationalism came the ideological matrix out of which the secular narratives of the nation were constructed. Nehru tried to provide a secular past for India in order to show that religious and cultural tolerance was at the bottom of Indian civilization. According to Prakash, Nehru promoted the idea of India as a

secular entity, not a Hindu nation, that had cradled a variety of religions and sects through centuries, and had acquired a degree of unity while surviving conquests and conflicts. His *Discovery of India* was a documentation of this unity through history; and for him the nationalist movement was designed to free this unity so that India could join the world-historical march towards modernity (Prakash 1990, 389).

The policy of the Congress party headed by Nehru was to create a vision of the equality of all religions. It could be summed up in the Sanskrit words *sarva dharma samabhavana*, which means that all religions should be treated equally. Nehru, believing that secularism was the sole basis for an integrated nation, said that secularism does not mean the 'absence of religion, but putting religion on a different plane from that of normal political and social life. Any other approach in India would mean the breaking up of India' (Sarvepalli 1980, 331). In 1961, just a few years before his death, Nehru elucidated his view on secularism, in the following terms: 'We talk about a secular state in India. It is perhaps not very easy even to find a good word in Hindi for 'secular'. Some people think it means something opposed to religion. That obviously is not correct ... [India] is a state which honors all faiths equally and gives them equal opportunities' (Sarvepalli 1980, 330). It is to be noted that Nehru never tried to define secularism in terms of the coercive policy making of an autocratic state. It is this fact that differentiates Indian state secularism from that of France.

The Gandhian Perspective on Secularism

Gandhi's view of secularism differed from that of Nehru in not requiring religion to be removed from the public sphere, whereas this separation was essential for Nehru. Gandhi's version of nationalism was the major non-secular alternative to the Nehruvian secular matrix. Gandhi believed that it was only through the recuperation of religion that India could truly enjoy emancipation from the colonizer. Gandhi's secularism, if we can call it so, was based on a non-violent idea of tolerance. For Gandhi, tolerance was a duty. He asks for a rethinking of tolerance in the light of his famous principle of *ahimsa* (non-violence) and *Satyagraha*. For him, this is a form of self sacrifice by the majority for the sake of minority. This Gandhian principle was deeply informed by his religiosity to the extent that his every action was influenced by his religion. In other words, religion was a constitutive principle by which the worth of all worldly goals and actions could be judged. Gandhi believed that 'no Indian who aspires to follow the way of true religion can afford to remain aloof from politics' (Parekh 1989, 100).

Taylor speaks in terms of a political reality that could go hand in hand with the culture and religion embedded in every society, and this can be seen to accord with Gandhi's view that it was the moral responsibility of citizens that ultimately determined the character of the state (Parekh 1989, 124). Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that it was Nehru's position on religion, religious conflict and the significance of the process of secularization, allied to Gandhi's conjoining of politics and religion, that enabled India to become secular in her outlook, while its people possessed the fundamental rights of freedom of conscience and the freedom to profess and practice any religion.

Secularism and Tolerance

Secularism in India is to be understood as the disposition of tolerance towards people of different religions. It is even said that the Hindu religion is accommodative and advocates the coexistence of plural religions. It is also

claimed that Hinduism is tolerant, and that secularism is inherent in Hinduism to such an extent that any Hindu state would be secular by nature. But can tolerance really be a substitute for secularism? Tolerance always implies a negation, for in the toleration of the minority the majority may breach the boundaries of inclusiveness by patronising the other, so emphasising their otherness. We need to deconstruct tolerance, since at the bottom of the term there is something intolerable, namely the option to not tolerate. In a society where tolerance is exercised there exists a lack of reciprocity where one is the giver and the other the receiver; thus tolerance comes to be seen as a liberty granted rather than as a right.

The second real danger lies in the fact that while appealing to believers to keep the public sphere free of religion, the modern nation-state has no means of ensuring that the ideologies of secularism, development, and nationalism themselves do not begin to act as faiths intolerant of other faiths. Suffering may be inflicted on people by the state itself in the name of ideology.

The Crisis of Secularism

The rising tide of religious fundamentalism has called our attention to this spectre of suffering imposed in the name of ideology. In the Indian context Hindu nationalism offers an example of this, whereby some Hindus have become politicized and exploited for political ends thus threatening Indian secularism, which, as we have seen, until now, has largely produced a peaceful coexistence between faiths. Although Hindu nationalism in India should be understood within the larger context of the struggle and debate over the secularism of the postcolonial Indian state, its origin can be traced to the colonial time itself. After independence, secularism was accepted as a constitutional principle without really transforming the then prevailing communal circumstances, and this inaugurated communalism's continuation. This growth of fundamentalism was intensified when the Indian National Congress lost dominance and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a Hindu

nationalist party, with the support of *Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangha*, (RSS) founded in 1925 by M.S. Hedgewar, rose to power. Hindu nationalism (Hindutva) is aimed at awakening the Hindu nation and restructuring India in order to control the Muslim and Christian minorities. Its activities culminated in the pulling down of the mosque in Ayodhya on 6 December 1992. This action raised further questions in the minds of many regarding the secular nature of India (Bhargava 1998, 418). At the same time the excesses of secularism threaten to produce the phenomenon of desecularization in India. In particular, the failure to appreciate the limits of rationalization fuelled by the ideology of secularism worries Indians and other modernizing societies.

Both of these changes are a challenge to Indian secularism. On the one hand, there is its secular nature with its freedom of religion and on the other hand this is threatened by the rising tide of fundamentalism and by the threat of desecularization. It is at this point that Taylor offers a useful corrective with his identification of a sense of 'beyond life' at the centre of human religiosity which is the essence of transcendence in human experience (Leon 2003, 80).

Intellectual Scepticism about Secularism

According to Rajeev Bhargava, we need to create a proper theory of secularism to be able to justify the separation of religion and state politics, and yet still see how the two are related. Bhargava offers two theories. The first of these is a form of political secularism which has two features; one being the exclusion of religion from politics, the other an espousal of the principle of neutrality. Political secularism is non-communitarian in character, merely offering the possibility of living together, but not necessarily of living together well. The second theory he offers is that of ethical secularism which, while it may be better, is difficult to practice. Political secularism while it may be less attractive, is more achievable, according to Bhargava. However, the fact that ethical secularism is pluralistic in character means that it can

accommodate both secularism and communitarianism and this makes it worth exploring (Bhargava 1998, 487-488).

Ultimately, the reason for a secular state is that despite deep differences between religions, we all need to live together. There cannot be an absolute aversion to religion and politics. Therefore, what is required in a multicultural society is procedural neutrality, by which state policies should be justified without appealing to the presumed intrinsic superiority of any particular conception of the good life. At the same time, we must recognize that as Taylor has identified, a human being has the aspiration to go beyond 'ordinary life'. This means that ultimate ideals have space in the human mind. The growing threats to Indian secularism that have been identified make it all the more important that India embraces, once again, a secularism which may be inclusive of all of these aspects of society. To be secular does not mean to be part of a kind of reactionary movement against religion as is the case in the West - neither does it mean that the state has to withdraw from dealing with religions and religious communities completely. The principle of secularism must also be able to ensure the preservation of religious freedom.

India appears to have lost sight of its secular origins and objectives and has begun to act more and more along sectarian lines. Religion has been allowed to enter politics when it ought to have been excluded. The crisis of Indian secularism is the result of 'reason' being overpowered by what is referred to as 'identitarian' cultural practices. The rise of fundamentalism and the communalization of politics are both anti-secularist, and together have encouraged separatist and divisive forces to offer a recipe for national disintegration along with the failure of the parliamentary democratic system, and the Constitution. These forces have manifested themselves in ethnic conflicts and terror.

Incompleteness of Secularism and the Need to go Beyond

All of this has brought about a form of identity crisis amongst the minority populations of India. We bear in mind Taylor's warning that the fading of

political identity will become the starting point of social fragmentation. Thus, the key issue is: how can Indian secularism absorb religion as the distinguishing factor of identity both of the majority and of the minority? How is India going to maintain its secular nature and keep space for every religion? Are we able to respond to these fundamental issues from the Taylorian perspective of embracing the collective and connective nature of religion, while, at the same time, recognising '*nova*' and '*spiritual super-nova*' effects which we may think of as religious pluralism? (Taylor 2007, 300).

We have seen how Indian secularism is essentially premised on a rationalist framework that subordinated religion to reason. What is now required is some form of mediation between religious and nationalist identity which can avoid sectarianism by going beyond the authoritarian secularism of our time in order to embrace all categories of people. In other words, the notion of 'secularism' needs to be redefined according to the needs of the time. We must tackle the consequences of the rise of the notion of the self emancipation of the human which implied the sacralization of the secular. As noted earlier, even an excess of secularism may be a cause of conflict in the world. What is required is a strong foundation and exclusive humanism cannot provide this as, according to Taylor, exclusive humanism without reference to transcendence frustrates the human endeavour. High standards need strong sources. These strong sources need to be identified to point people towards the Taylorian notions of 'beyond life', to the collective connective nature of religion, and to the *nova* and *supernova* effects that are features of our post secular age.

Exclusive Humanism: The Denial of Beyondness in Human Life

Taylor identifies the shortcomings of exclusive humanism, seeing the need to embrace the 'beyond life'. He notes that while certain kinds of possibilities and impossibilities have come about in our secular age, once 'this humanism is on the scene, the new plural, non-naïve predicament allows for multiplying the options beyond the original gamut. But the crucial transforming move in

the process is the coming of exclusive humanism' (Taylor 2007, 19). This new moral-cum-spiritual outlook views the process of human flourishing exclusively in worldly terms, without any reference to God, divinity, transcendent goods or after-life. For many people, this human flourishing has become the ultimate goal of human life.

In Taylor's estimation, humans have acquired an autonomy characterised by the absence of a transcendental outlook that is the very yardstick of modernity. If, in the past, an external source was the foundation of the moral life of human beings, in our secular age people no longer have any external source determining their actions. This could be expressed as 'a culture fractured between religion and areligion' that has accelerated and multiplied the options in all directions (Taylor 2003, 105). Taylor thus identifies modern freedom as 'the rise of an exclusive humanism, that is one based exclusively on a notion of human flourishing, which recognizes no valid aim beyond this' (Taylor 2003, 19). The question before us is whether 'people recognize something beyond or transcendent to their lives,' or whether they are satisfied with mere human flourishing which has no reference to any sense of transcendence or beyondness, beyond life.

Sense of Beyondness and Collective Connective Nature of Religion

Concerning human existence and the unique nature of humanity that unifies the eternal and the temporal, the finite and the infinite, Soren Kierkegaard wrote:

A human being is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self? But what is the self? The self is relation that relates itself to itself or is the relation's relating itself to itself in the relation; the self is not the relation but is the relation's relating itself to itself. A human being is a synthesis of the finite and infinite, of the temporal and eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short, a synthesis. A synthesis is a relation between two (Kierkegaard 1980, 13)

This Kierkegaardian rendering of human nature as the synthesis of the temporal and the eternal, the finite and the infinite, or a relation between the two, offers an insight into the ontological nature of the human being. In

Taylor's understanding too, one can observe this dimension in his stress on the aspiration of the human being to go 'beyond life'. In the modern world, people who believe in God, and those who no longer believe, are dissatisfied with the exclusive humanism of modernity and its rejection of transcendence understood as the transcendent other. Taylor perceives a hopeful situation in the persistence of theism, and in the aspiration of humans to overcome the denial of transcendence in exclusive humanism, a theory which tries to give a complete account of human life in human terms. However, the human aspiration to go beyond may not always be reflected in a religious form. It may take various forms, each of which may give meaning to human life, other than its own anthropocentrism. This has become a move to overcome a major implication of exclusive humanism - namely that the goal is one of pure human flourishing by the harnessing of a power no longer received from God but which is derived, purely, from human capacity.

Taylor thinks that these two tendencies are both equally dangerous because each denies any ontic meaning to our human existence and human actions. Yet, as Taylor asserts there is a dialogical sense of the human self formed through various relations (Taylor 1995, 231). This makes the human an ethical person. Taylor's idea of the individual is of one who is able to be an individual only through various interlocutors (Taylor 1989, 36). Moreover, the rejection of any ontological aspect in human activity will not only kill the individuality of the individual, but will also reduce the sense of good derived from human endeavours 'beyond our moral means' (Taylor 1989, 517). Taylor seems to think of the 'dialogical' structure of identity as another transcendental aspect of the human being (Taylor 1989, 38). In this way, Taylor brings to the fore his collective view of religion, seeing every human being as dependent upon others for their existence on Earth, both in terms of meeting biological needs and in order to experience the things that give higher meaning to life.

Here, Taylor is attempting to establish the moral basis of our existence and demonstrates that the anguish of the modern secular age is the disenchantment of modernity when measured against an earlier age of an

enchantment. There is no doubting the decline of religious faith in modernity, most especially in Western societies. Here the separation of church and state and the banishing of the Divine from the public sphere have reduced religion to an individual experience, denying the believer the corporate and communitarian dimension that Taylor perceives as both enabling and authenticating communication with God. Instead, everything is seen in terms of human flourishing and well-being. Yet, despite calling our age 'secular', Taylor's consideration of modernity perceives that human aspirations extend beyond, and find meaning in, human existence. He comes to the conclusion that religion and the quest for the transcendent cannot be entirely rooted out of society.

Conclusion

Therefore, we may conclude that there is a need for a secularism arising from an overlapping consensus that can meet the challenge of our present culture of multiculturalism and sectarianism. Taylor clearly establishes that the sense of the transcendent is something that cannot be wiped out of human consciousness and therefore a secularism that is porous, creative, and able to embrace and even celebrate difference, will be important in countering sectarianism and defusing conflict. However, the form of secularism found in the West is not what is meant here - it possesses an anti-religious bias and therefore needs to be more open and accommodating making room for the expressions of beyondness that Taylor identifies as essential components of the human experience. As it stands, Western secularism is an example of both the independent political ethic which Taylor found wanting and a salutary reminder to India of the dangers of the road which her society has already begun to travel.

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