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David Frawley's view point on India's secularism being anti-Hindu

- In India, secularism means the policy and practice of the state discriminating against Hinduism
- Besides anti-Hindu discrimination by the courts, state governments take the revenue gained from Hindu temple offerings and use it for their own purposes, which may include funding minority religious causes

India is the only country in the world today where the principle of secularism is invoked for regulating the practices and taking funds from the majority religion, while protecting and subsidizing minority religions.

Secularism in the West originally refers to a separation of church and state, rejecting church interference with state policies. Churches should not dictate state policies and the state should not dictate religious policies.

In India, on the contrary, the principle of secularism is used to justify state and judicial interference in the religious sphere – yet for one religion only, the Hindu.

India's judiciary makes decrees regulating Hindu religious festivals and deciding who is allowed into Hindu temples, but it does not regulate minority religious practices in the same manner. Besides anti-Hindu discrimination by the courts, state governments take the revenue gained from Hindu temple offerings and use it for their own purposes, which may include funding minority religious causes.

This is in spite of the fact that minority religions inside India represent majority religions outside of India and receive considerable foreign help, including through numerous NGOs. It provides minority religions a financial and political power far beyond their actual numbers.

Secularism in the West

Secular Western governments do allow tax breaks to religious groups. In the USA over \$ 70 billion in tax exemptions yearly is afforded to religious institutions, mainly to Christianity, the majority religion. Minority religions are not excluded from these exemptions but must work harder to receive them. For example, getting Hindu temples approved, in the few Western countries that recognize Hinduism as a legal religion, is much more difficult than getting churches approved.

If minority religions in the USA were to gain the special tax benefits and support that they receive in India, and America's majority religion of Christianity regulated like majority Hinduism, many American religious groups would try to become minority religions just to gain the benefits involved.

In many European countries, on the other hand, governments either provide direct funding to churches or aid in collecting church taxes, reflecting vestiges of favoritism for majority religions. This includes Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Sweden and Switzerland.

India, an Anti-Hindu State

In India, some claim that state governments can manage temples better than Hindu religious groups, even allowing atheists or non-Hindus on to Hindu temple boards. That states do a good job of managing temples is quite debatable. But it is not the right of the states to do so, and they do not attempt to for Christian or Islamic institutions, however poorly these may be run.

The fact is that no secular state worth its name has a right to regulate religious practices. If it does so, it should not be called secular but a religious state. In the case of India, the country might be better called an anti-religious state, specifically an "anti-Hindu state", as interfering only with the majority religion.

India is the only country that is exploiting, not defending its majority religion, and rewarding minority religions. It sounds more like a continuation of the old British Raj than a country that honors its indigenous traditions, which in the case of India are ancient, vast and profound. Relative to India's foreign affairs, the country has rarely defended Hindu interests the way secular Western countries like the USA watch over Christian concerns throughout the world.

India's secularism is also allied with socialism. Socialism works upon the principle of redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor. India's secular socialism, it seems, seeks to redistribute the wealth and power from the majority religion to minority religions!

Role of India's Media

And how does India's media view this problem? It has never exposed the hypocrisy of secularism in India. Quite the contrary, India's media portrays Hindus as a privileged majority, as if the laws benefitted them unfairly. It promotes anti-Hindu attitudes, and encourages government and judicial interference in Hindu affairs.

And when Hindus complain about the brazen discrimination against them, the media accuses Hindus of being intolerant. No religious group in the world today tolerates the kind of judicial regulation, state interference, and media denigration such as Hindus in India have to routinely face. Much less denigration has been blamed for fueling terrorism in Islamist groups.

Why do Hindus allow this?

The question is why Hindus allow such discrimination against their religion in a country where they constitute a decisive majority. One cannot imagine Muslims in Pakistan or Christians in the West acquiescing to such discrimination. The Islamic world is quite the opposite. Islam is promoted blatantly in Islamic countries, including the enforcement of Islamic law on all groups in the society. Other religions are marginalized or suppressed by governments said to be Islamic democracies or Islamic republics, not to mention overt religious states like Saudi Arabia that ban them altogether.

This Hindu apathy appears to be a hangover from the long period of foreign rule and is rooted in anti-Hindu policies by the dominant Congress party in decades past. It includes a lack of self-confidence, ignorance of the extent of the problem, or protecting benefits that some individuals or groups may receive from these discriminatory policies. Denigrating Hindu practices is part of a political strategy of appeasing minority vote banks, and trying to weaken and divide any potential Hindu vote.

Yet as long as Hindus do not create a mass grassroots level movement to reclaim Hindu temples from state management, and remove court interference in Hindu religious affairs, these biases are likely to continue. The current BJP national government, which is not under the compulsions of India's hypocritical secularism, should encourage such a national awakening, not only for Hindus but for true religious freedom in the country.