General Editor: Sanjeev Sabhlok

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Articles

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From the General Editor's desk

The launch of this inaugural issue of *India Policy Update* (IPU) marks a shift in direction for the India Policy Institute (IPI) from debating forum to a think tank that aims to influence the design of good policy in India. No institution exists in isolation of its people. In the case of *IPU* I want to spend some time reflecting on where this initiative has come from. While it may appear that I am talking about myself, it is important to give you a sense of *IPU*'s context.

IPU is, to me, the natural progression of a consciousness that emerged in my mind in 1997. That year I kept thinking about what should be done to change India's socialist policies and colonial ways of governance. Being a mid-career civil servant with some experience of how India's governments work, I knew that no significant change could take place from within the bureaucracy. In February 1998 I finalised a view that a political approach had to be undertaken. But before a political party could be launched, key questions had to be addressed: What would it look like, and what would it advocate?

So I started a 'mock' political party that attracted a few people into a discussion and led to debates on india_policy@cinenet.net – a mailing list I created for this purpose (IPI and *IPU* derive their name from this list). As these debates grew, Antony Joseph purchased indiapolicy.org to host the documents, and Ajay Gandhi and M R Vikram created India Policy Institute as a Trust in Hyderabad in mid-1999. By mid-1999 IPI developed a draft People's Manifesto and a constitution of an ideal political party. It also published an important writing of Milton Friedman on India (with his personal permission) and of F.A. Hayek (with permission from the American Economic Association).

Then, unfortunately, I got caught up in serious illness (repetitive strain injury) in end-1998, a problem that persists today. That meant IPI floundered. I did organise an IPI event, a five-day seminar on India's liberal strategy in 2004, which attracted many eminent Indians. But I got immersed in Swatantra Bharat Party (which I left it in 2005) and in writing books. IPI went dormant.

In 2006 it struck me that the main missing link in reforming India's governance was the shortage of people to lead India. To address this gap I started a mailing list in 2007 purely for leaders. That initiative has now grown somewhat and will convert into a legal entity called Freedom Team of India (FTI). But FTI just won't be enough. We must involve people at all levels, including policy thinkers, and build a grass-roots liberal movement to take the message of freedom more widely. Changing India is not easy! A hundred things have to come together in consonance. A huge challenge lies ahead.

IPU is now ready to be launched with three main aims:
1. to disseminate good policy advice for policy makers in India;
2. to identify and encourage policy writers with liberal inclinations who may also (in some cases) act as advisers to members of the Freedom Team of India;
3. to discuss a potential movement (tentatively called *Adharshila*) to take liberalism to the grass-roots and to disseminate its key messages.

For *IPU* to become useful to Indian policy makers, and to become self-sustaining, many more writers are needed. And editors. I therefore welcome you to this issue and invite you to join *IPU* as a writer or editor.

Sanjeev Sabhlok

From the Editor's desk

Welcome to the first issue of *India Policy Update*.

In 2008, the worst ever financial crisis to have ravaged the United States since the Great Depression of 1930s, turned global in no time. It took a heavy toll on the entire world, with India being no exception. As went the global economic downturn, so did the funding for corporate expenditures which were deemed non-essential, including CSR programs.

The current global Financial Crisis has impacted Corporate Social Responsibility in India adversely. The crisis has hit the well intending business houses and their efforts at being socially responsible. Corporates, trying to restructure their resources, have cut a red line across the CSR budgets. CSR managers claim that managements have issued instructions to put on hold all new CSR projects. Budgets for many ongoing projects have also been curtailed. SME sector is the backbone of the Indian economy. The global financial crisis has led to the increasing need of the Small and medium Enterprises to participate in the wider movement for sustainable business growth and Corporate Social Responsibility, especially in a country like India.

A study by Rajat Panwar and Eric Hansen, of Forest Business Solutions, reveals that most Indian business houses feel that CSR was only possible if profitability was high. They have quoted an Indian manufacturer who said that "no social activity was possible without at least 25 per cent profitability".[1] Some activist and practitioners claim that the global financial crisis has helped strengthen the belief that CSR, for most Indian business houses, was never a very serious issue.

On the other hand international investment bank like Goldman Sachs's came out with its long planned announcement of new partners for its "10,000 Women" scheme which aimed to give business and management training to women in less-developed countries. But with the financial crisis how many more companies will come forward at corporate well meaning intentions? There is a need for more incentives for the corporate houses to follow a good business behaviour and be socially responsible in such a troubled business climate?

Shilpi Banerjee

Want to write for *India Policy Update*?

We welcome new writers on policy matters of interest to Indian citizens and policy makers. While we need articles around 1200 words in length, shorter or longer pieces are currently being accepted, as also writings published elsewhere in the past. In due course, only original work is expected to be published. Given resource constraints, *IPU* doesn't edit articles at this stage, but hope to do so in the future. No payments made to writers and editors at this stage, but this could change in the future.

Where to send your articles:

a) Join http://groups.google.com/group/india-policy-institute

b) Send your writings to the editor on that Google Group, or send them to info@indiapolicy.org.

c) IPU reserves the right to not publish material or to edit it suitably.

Sanjeev Sabhlok, Executive Director IPI

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[1] Rajat Panwar and Eric Hansen, CSR and the US forest product Industry: issues and stakeholders Views, Forest Business Solutions Team, Oregon State University.

1.   Unplanned planning

By **Sanjeev Sabhlok**. This is an extract from the *Online Notes* for his book, *Breaking Free of Nehru*, published by Anthem Press in December 2008.

A former Indian civil servant, Sanjeev has a doctorate in economics from USA and now works in a government department in Victoria, Australia. His webpage: http://sanjeev.sabhlokcity.com/

One of the implications of the way free markets work is that planning for the future of an entire nation is not only futile, but badly counter-productive. We can plan our own little projects and even chart the uncertain course of our lives. And yet we know that we mould our future only to the extent we control it: there are too many factors outside our control. But shaping the future of a country is a different kettle of fish. It is impossible, and is best left to the freely adjusting forces of markets to create. A free society's government leaves its citizens entirely free to do whatever they think is best for them. It doesn't tell them what to produce or how to use their money. Given that free markets are perfectly capable of handling the most unanticipated changes and are beautifully 'designed' for change, why would anyone want to plan an entire country's economy, anyway?

We must learn to let well enough alone. A free society can put in place a good regulatory regime. A free society can even try to forecast what could happen in the future (see box below). But for a government to actually start doing something on the basis of such forecasts is dangerous; particularly if it intends to invest our money into government operated business. Wanting to plan a country's economic activity and to direct resources based on abstract planning models can condemn resources to destruction. As well, by damaging incentives in the markets, these misplaced resources and actions can drastically impoverish an entire nation.

Box 8
Forecasting and planning models

The best possible forecasts made by the most intelligent and capable human minds in the history of mankind have almost always been off-target by huge margins. And yet, tens of economists, like Don Quixotes, keep on forecasting business cycles, interest rates, inflation, and so on. When they are wrong, they write off their forecast as having suffered from an 'external shock'—a thing not anticipated in the equations of the forecaster.

It is the fate of such folks to get surprised by 'the East Asian Miracle' one day and the 'East Asian debacle' the next; by the 'great success of Russian planning' one day and

'the sudden collapse of the USSR' the next. I am a qualified economist, or at least my degree says so, but—or rather therefore!—I wouldn't wager two paisa on my ability to predict the future except at the broadest, and in a sense, intuitive, level.

Similarly, while computable general equilibrium (CGE) models are commendable works of economic logic which all economists should tinker with and use as an aid to macro-economic forecasting, they are not designed to throw useful light on a society's investment decisions. A good CGE model tracks what has already happened and even forecasts reasonably well for a year or two. But real economies diverge rapidly from there on. The unseen currents of change and innovation that rush about in a million directions below the surface of aggregated statistical indicators used in these models shift the model parameters in unpredictable ways. Social and political changes taking place outside of the economies being observed shock the models as well. No CGE model of 1990 could have predicted the impacts from the internet. Similarly, a CGE model of 1995 could not have predicted India's dominance in business process outsourcing, a dominance which arose from the failure of corrupt Indian officials' to block the export of value-added electrons. And to even dream that these models could have told us that Bangalore would become the hub of this Indian industry is an impossibility not worth considering, leave alone the possibility of these models predicting the dramatic events of September 11, 2001. Human models cannot predict the future. Period.

The problem is that not only past data, but even previous production 'functions', quickly become irrelevant. CGE models can supplement the in-depth knowledge of highly competent policy makers. These can assist in infrastructure decisions, for instance. But the blind use of such models to intervene in general investment will waste public resources.

God probably has a set of a billion simultaneous, conditional equations in n dimensions with a million variables each, into which trillions of angels continuously feed data about what each of us is thinking about or dreaming. And so God is perhaps

Socialists are quite gifted at rushing in "where angels fear to tread". The erstwhile USSR first started the madness of 'national planning' which lunacy then transmitted to India through Nehru. Nehru set up a Planning Commission in India almost immediately after independence, with the aim of orchestrating both public and private investment decisions. But long after USSR got out of its erroneous ways by spitting the dummy and completely collapsing as a nation, India continues to squander precious public funds into this fruitless exercise.

Planning is the visible display of socialist arrogance and megalomania. Misguided planners crunch numbers and imagine they see the future of the world in the palms of their hands! I am entitled to comment severely against such delusions of grandeur since I had these myself! In the mid-1980s I became a self-trained economist, having done an MA in Economics from Panjab University through a correspondence course. But there are serious pitfalls of being trained in economics in this manner. No mention was made of Hayek's significant work, for instance, and I barely internalised what the price system actually does. Mine was an amazingly half-baked degree. The reason I mention this is that as a result of this qualification, I foolishly imagined for a few years that it is quite reasonable to perform uncanny mathematical calculations to plan an entire economy. Very luckily, after learning economics first-hand for five years in the USA from outstanding teachers some years later, and then reviewing that knowledge in my mind from first principles, I have been separated from my delusions— even though I now possess the relevant mathematical training to understand and prepare sophisticated planning models.

We need to hark back to Hayek's paper at this stage. Hayek showed that anyone who tries to interfere with free markets faces a Herculean challenge. How can this person or organisation obtain even a crude approximation of the local knowledge, the detailed knowledge, of what is happening out there in the economy in each person's head? Planning would need detailed knowledge of the "kind which by its nature cannot be entered into statistics and therefore cannot be conveyed to any central authority in statistical form" (Hayek). As Hayek further explained: The statistics which such a central authority

would have to use would have to be arrived at precisely by abstracting from minor differences between the things, by lumping together, as resources of one kind, items which differ as regards location, quality, and other particulars, in a way which may be very significant for the specific [local] decision. It follows from this that central planning based on statistical information by its nature cannot take direct account of the circumstances of time and place.
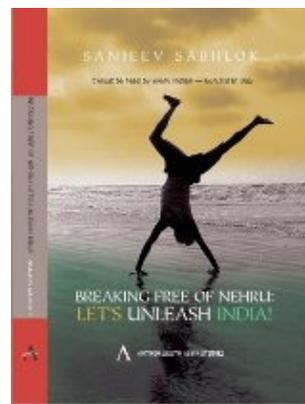
In other words, a central planner cannot even begin to understand what is happening in the real world at the level of detail necessary to plan. And if the planner doesn't know all the relevant circumstances, how can the planner decide what needs to be done by each of us at each point in time? How can the planner's decisions possibly be optimal? Instead, these decisions are guaranteed to be misallocations, thus squandering our limited resources. As such, no economist worth his salt should associate with the Planning Commission.

The only saving grace is that Mahalanobis, who strongly influenced Nehru's Planning Commission, particularly its second Five Year Plan, was not an economist, a mere physicist and statistician. It seemed certain to him, with mathematical equations crackling like electricity inside his head, that mathematics would tell him how India should be run. Actual economists like Milton Friedman who tried to advise Nehru were completely ignored. The good economist B.R. Shenoy left the Commission during its early years. The great economist Jagdish Bhagwati who warned against the centrist approaches was also ignored, and so he left India. The Commission's secretariat then became the citadel of clairvoyant pseudo-economists and ill-trained IAS officers who have been happy to 'manage' its astrological functions. They go to work each day and use the services of their local parrot to pick a card from among those laid out on their desks—that is how they decide where to invest public funds.

I have two recommendations at this stage. Indian physicists should in future try to focus on physics; and India's bureaucrats should do bureaucratic things. Neither should dabble in the seemingly obvious area of economics which is surprisingly difficult and takes a lifetime to master— being in the end a specialised art form. Gandhi, with his great intuition about right and wrong, saw through the hoax of planning very early. He wrote in a message to Amrit Kaur on 19 June 1939 on the

National Planning Committee set up by Nehru in 1937, as follows: "the whole of planning is a waste of effort… It has appeared to me that much money and labour are being wasted on an effort, which will bring forth little or no fruit".

In supporting socialism and 'planning' our Planning Commission has significantly enhanced poverty in India and reduced our freedoms. While Indian socialists are better behaved now after almost bankrupting us in 1991, an end to socialist arrogance is nowhere in sight. I now call upon to our astrological leaders sitting in the Planning Shop in a fairly abrupt manner, thus: Ye Planners of India, shut down your silly Planning Shop and go home! You've done enough damage to India to last your lifetime. Go home and rest your feverish brain. A free economy can undertake all the 'planning' it needs in the most unplanned and elegant manner through the freely available services of the Invisible Hand.

2.   Secularism in the Indian Democratic Curry: a policy analysis

By **Dipinder Sekhon**. This paper was prepared by Dipinder in January 2008.

Dipinder, an engineer from IIT Delhi and former CEO of KritiKal Solutions Pvt Ltd, is currently pursuing studies in London School of Economics. He is a member of the Freedom Team of India.

"O! Dispenser of India's destiny, thou art the ruler of the minds of all people
Thy name rouses the hearts of <u>Punjab</u>, <u>Sindh</u>, <u>Gujarat</u>, *the* <u>Maratha</u> *country, in the* <u>Dravida</u> *country,* <u>Utkala</u> *and* <u>Bengal</u> *…"*

- English translation of India's National Anthem (initial part)
The <u>underlined</u> terms refer to some states, regions and communities in India

The paper is divided in three main parts. The first part sets up the background and framework in which secularism plays itself in India, including definitions and concepts required for policy analysis. The second part looks at some specific *event slices* from India's history since its independence in 1947 and analyses them from the point of view of policy change. Finally, the paper concludes by taking a holistic look and making some comments on the overall pattern. The paper also points out limitations of this analysis and recommends future directions.

I. Background, Framework
In this section, we will try to understand what people mean by *secularism,* and how it manifests itself in terms of *policy* in an entity like India. We find that both the concept and its manifestations are multi-dimensional. We identify and define key elements (actors, institutions, coalitions) in India which influence secularism related policies in India.

A. What are Secularisms?
The use of plural Secularism's' in the title of this subsection is deliberate; to stress the fact that secularism is a multi-dimensional concept and it is important to understand which dimension one is referring to when analysing it in a particular context.

Secularism invokes multiple meanings, interpretations and sentiments. Perhaps what is common in all is clear *opposition to religious fundamentalism*, including its influence on policies and governance. One way of defining secularism is to say that it is the *separation of religion from state* or governance/public life. It considers religion as an individual's private affair. This is a technical definition, and has its genesis in the western history, dealing with power struggles and power distribution between the church and modern nation states. In terms of implementation, it means that

the institutions of religion (eg Church) do not have any direct default role in governance, and policy formation within a secular nation state. It does not say anything per say about the attitude of the nation state and its policies towards religion; whether they pro actively promote and support religion and religious sentiments or whether they remain indifferent to it or are something in between.

Ask an average educated educated Indian "what is secularism?", and more often than not you will hear back "*freedom to practice any religion*" or "*giving equal respect to all religions*" or something similar. These meanings do not say anything per say about the role of religious institutions in governance. However, in a multi religious polity like India, to ensure equality for all religions, one obviously cannot allow institutions representing a particular religion to draft and implement 'national' policies. So in this sense, it implies separation of state from religion as well.

Secularism plays out in India in the way of 'celebrating religions', their various festivals, colours, cultural values and rituals. It is common for the President and Prime Minister to issue greetings to people of the country, on various religious festivals through state owned television and media. Or for schools to include religious prayers in everyday assembly. The concept of *unity in diversity* and celebrating the cultural differences as different coloured flowers in a garden now has deep roots in many sections of Indian population. The Indian nation state emerged by promoting and celebrating an identity of multiculturalism and pluralism.

So, we see that there are different definitions of secularism even among academics. And even these definitions are pretty broad and leave a lot of room when implementing or drafting policies. When we move forward from definitions, and from academic world to the real world, things become even more complex and confusing. This is because, people - politicians, public servants, citizens - choose to use interpretations and meanings which suit them at a particular point in time, and sometimes it is in their interest to keep the issue confused. Further, secularism is deeply intertwined with concepts like religion, culture, castes, classes etc which are inherently complex and difficult to define and understand, and exist with very wide variety of variances and varying degree of importance among people. And in a democracy like India, public opinion and common people - often not sophisticated enough to comprehend the fine differences of these definitions - are important; very important when drafting, implementing and interpreting policies.

Secularism in the western sense has never really been in question in India. Everyone accepts, understands and supports that state has to be run and governed by democratically elected representatives of the citizens; religious leaders and representatives do not have any direct legal authority on state governance and issues. There is no dispute in this matter. However, if many people in a democracy are deeply religious, and consider religion while make their decisions and choices, it is natural for religious institutions and leaders to exercise substantial influence on public life, state and governance - through the democratic process ! In such a situation, whether all religions, and people practising these religions really enjoy equal rights and freedom in India? To what extent is India secular in this respect? This is precisely what this paper tries to analyse.

B. What is Secularism 'policy'? Its tangible manifestations in India
There is nothing like a unified 'secularism policy' in India. However, the concept of secularism is extremely important and influential, and manifests itself into various policies and events, and in day to day conduct of the state. The term finds itself references in the constitution of India which acts as a directive for policy makers. It has been popular in political and public debates ever since India's independence in 1947. In this subsection, we try to look at concrete forms in which 'secularism policy' manifests itself in India. We begin with a brief review of demographics and governance structures in India.

India : Unity in Diversity, Governance
India's population today is about 1.12 billion, with estimated ~ 80.5% Hindus, 13.4% Muslims, 2.3% Christian, 1.9% Sikhs, 1.5% Buddhists, 0.4% Jains, others (Jews, Zorastrians, Bahais) etc. It may be mentioned however that Hinduism itself is extremely diverse, and is composed of people speaking different languages, following different kinds of worships etc. It is without a single central hierarchy of institutions. India is the most ethnically diverse country in the world. It is also the largest democracy. In terms of governance, India is perhaps closer to entities like EU than typical 'nation states'. It was born heterogeneous and the process of homogenisation (in the ethnic sense) witnessed in many other nation states was skipped ! The most homogeneous thing about India is its heterogeneity. The constitution of India recognises 22 languages in its *eighth schedule,* and Government of India is under obligation to take measures for the development of these languages. India is a federal republic, with 28 states and seven union territories. Constitution clearly separates legislative powers between state and centre through subjects listed in *union, state and concurrent lists.* Residuary powers are with the

centre and the balance of power has shifted gradually towards the centre since independence. Marriage and Divorce, Education are in the concurrent list which means both centre and state can enact laws in that regard; in case of dispute, centre is supreme. Other subjects like 'Land rights', police are exclusive state subjects.

Domains, Documented Policies, Implementations and Interpretations, Manifestations
In India, secularism has manifested itself in various domains like Education, Minority Rights, Marriage and Property Laws, Conversion Laws etc. In fact, in all issues which affect common people, and their religious sentiments and conduct.

The analysis of secularism policy changes depending on whether we are discussing documented laws and policies, or their day to day implementation and interpretation. The way in which the same 'national policy' is translated, implemented and interpreted by the different state governments, and further down in the districts and villages can vary widely. Different elements and frameworks will be applicable for policy analysis depending on the *level* of focus : the geographic resolution, and time stage in the policy cycle. When trying to analyse implementation of policies, we have to focus on individuals (politicians, bureaucrats, policemen, judges) and institutions, and the extent to which they have the capacity to tweak policy implementations and colour them motivated by their own ideologies and vested interests; in other words the amount of 'play' they have within the grooves. We also need to understand how these different elements are interconnected and interdependent. For instance, relationships between politicians in power and bureaucrats, between politicians in opposition and bureaucrats, between public activists, civil society, business community, interest groups and elements in government, interacting with each other in the democratic process, and how this affects secularism and related policies and domains. Most interesting are implicit or explicit *coalitions of people* cutting across these various diverse elements, working in tandem towards common goals.

C. Elements influencing policy change : Actors, Institutions and their coalitions in various policy subsystems in the Indian democratic process
This subsection introduces the key elements - actors, institutions, coalitions, subsystems - which influence secularism related policy changes in India. These have been referred to in the next section while analysing specific policy changes and events.

Legislature : Constitution, Parliament, State Legislatures
India is a republic and its polity is run on the framework laid down in the Constitution of India, which came into effect on 26th January 1950. The basic structure of the constitution cannot be amended and amending other parts is a difficult affair usually requiring a 2/3rd majority in the Parliament. The Parliament has a bicameral structure and consists of *Lok Sabha* ("House of the people") and *Rajya Sabha* ("Council of the states"). *Lok Sabha* consists of representatives directly elected by citizens of India. Members of Rajya Sabha are nominated by legislative bodies of the state. States in turn themselves may have bicameral legislatures.

Executive : Bureaucracy and Police : IAS, IPS
Government policies are made by the cabinet (on expert advice of the bureaucracy). The policies are implemented by the civil servants or bureaucrats, which report to the cabinet ministers through a hierarchy. The Indian civil service has been provided for by the constitution. The key element of the civil service , involved in policy drafting, recommendations and implementation is the IAS (Indian Administrative Service). IPS (Indian Police Service) is responsible for policing and law enforcement. The civil servants enjoy high level immunity and protection, as a constitutional provision (from pre independence era). This is believed to be a reason for general loss of accountability in the service. Politicians have the power to transfer bureaucrats and re-appoint them to a new geography or to completely different roles.

Judiciary : Supreme Court, Lower Courts
India has a three tier judiciary with a Supreme Court, 21 high courts and a large number of trial courts.
Supreme court is the ultimate interpreter of the constitution and can even strike down union or state laws which contravene the constitution.

Political Parties : Congress, BJP, Communist Party, Regional Parties
Indian National Congress and BJP (*Bhartiya Janata Party* or Indian People's Party) are the two main National parties. Congress is a 'secular party' and has been part of the central government for the longest period since independence. BJP is usually associated with Hindu nationalist ideologies. It is typical for other parties to call themselves 'secular' and highlight that BJP is not. State politics has been dominated by several other regional parties, including the Communist party of India (CPI).

Religious institutions : *RSS*, *Sangh Parivar, Muslim Personal Law Boards etc*

RSS (Rashtriya Swyamsevak Sangh or National Volunteers Organisation) is a powerful hindu nationalist organisation, with grassroots presence. The BJP, *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (World Hindu Council), *Bajrang Dal* (Army of *Hanuman*), *Vidya Bharti* (Educational Institutes) and many other organisations with similar philosophies together call themselves the *Sangh Parivar* (Family of Associations). All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLM) is a body to protect continued applicability of Muslim Personal Law (based on *Islamic Sharia*) in India. It does this by liasing with and influencing the government, and guiding general public about crucial issues. It has suffered defections in the form of separate *Shia* and *Women's* boards.

Media : English, Hindi, Vernacular

India has a relatively free media and it has a powerful influence on public opinion, and hence on the overall democratic process. Depending on the region and category of people, different kinds of media are likely to more influential. For eg, civil society and urban middle and higher classes are likely to be influenced more by the English language based media, while poor people in villages and smaller towns are more likely to be influenced by regional local language based media.

Industry, Business Community

The industry and business community in India usually likes to stay at a distance from issues related to religion etc. It is in its interest to support governments which follow developmental policies, and refrain from divisive politics.

Citizens and Common People

They are the most important elements of the Indian (and ideally any other) democratic system; and are constantly wooed by politicians and interest groups through various policies, and events. They are together most powerful and also perhaps the most gullible. They often find themselves amidst conflicting information coming from different coalitions and media.

Coalitions and policy subsystems [ACF]

The actors and institutions listed above constantly interact, collaborate and compete with each other in various policy subsystems which ultimately affect decisions, policy formation and changes, and nature of implementations and manifestations of policies at local levels. Depending on the *level* of focus, different actors institutions and coalitions become relevant for policy change analysis. We can talk of coalitions based on religious identities and communal sentiments composed of political parties, religious institutions, individual citizens and individuals and institutions in bureaucracy, police, judiciary and business. Such coalitions may exist explicitly or more often implicitly. Individual actors and institutions align themselves with coalitions with which they identify (on religious lines eg *Hindutva),* or along with coalition with which they see see a greater chances of their vested interests succeeding (political, business, career etc). There are coalitions based on ideologies eg coalition including civil society and others defending secularism.

Consider the following subsystem as an example. A political party in opposition at the centre aligns implicitly with religious institutions and consistently tries to communalise policy issues. This is with the goal of inciting public opinion against the party in power, and for political gains in upcoming state or central elections. The civil society and advocacy coalitions of liberals, business and other communities opposes this, which is most vehemently reflected and debated in leading English language national media. Local media whose customers are local people, delivers content coloured with slightly different sentiments and undertones, in the local language. Amidst all this, some decisions are made and policies formed by the party in power. It has to keep in mind its interest in the next state and central elections. Some of these elections would be influenced by liberals and those who uphold and understand secular principles enshrined in the constitution, while others would be influenced more on religious lines. The bureaucrats implementing these policies use their power and jurisdiction to twist, turn, delay, expedite, colour things according to their own implicit/explicit coalitions, based on their vested interests and reporting position at a given point in time. This finally results in delivery of those policies to common people at the local level. They react in a certain manner and the cycle repeats, in the Grand Indian Democratic Process!
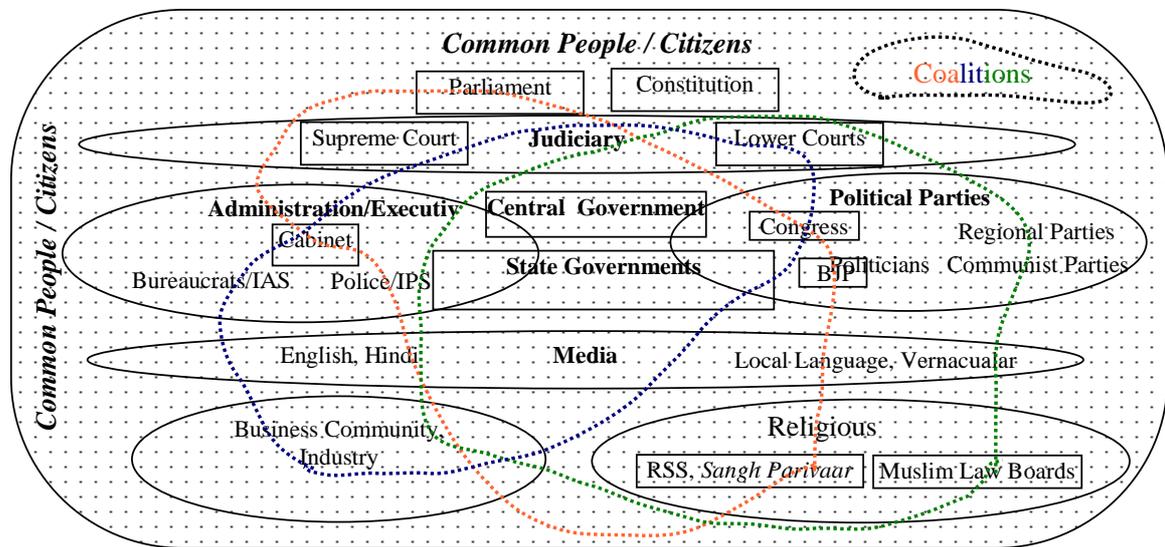
Fig 1 : The Grand Indian Democratic Curry

II. Events, Policy Changes and Analysis

This section looks at specific *event slices* from history since India's independence in 1947 and analyses them from the point of view of policy change. The events have been chosen on the basis of their importance for secularism 'policy' in India. No single policy framework can explain all events, so we invoke different frameworks depending on the *level* of focus and nature of events, and try to develop an evolutionary view [JOHN P]. The overall background and framework is the *grand democratic curry* as developed in the section above.

A. Constitution : Resisting punctuations in the secular equilibrium

Event Slice

The constitution of India, in its preamble today says that "India is a secular, socialist, democratic, republic". The words "secular" and "socialist" were inserted in 1976, during emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi. Earlier, the ideal of secularism was defended, practised and enforced by Nehru and Congress party which was the ruling party for most of the time since India's independence. At the time of Independence, the issue of secularism was heatedly debated and secular principles were upheld staunchly by Gandhi and Nehru. Gandhi's assassination in 1948 by a Hindu right wing fanatic Nathuram Godse underlines the intensity of the forces involved. The constitution was adopted on January 26 1950, and laid the foundations for building a secular republic. The day is celebrated every year throughout the country as the *Republic Day,* one of the three National days, the other two being the Independence Day and Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary.

Analysis

Reading the constitution and its amendments, things appear simple and linear. India was born secular. This was explicitly enshrined in the preamble of the constitution in 1976 and has been so ever since. So the secularism 'policy' at this level has changed incrementally without any reversals ! The perplexity - immediately evident when one peeps outside the constitution at the real world events - is not so much the incremental nature of policy direction, but the absence of any punctuations. [PUNCTUATED]

To understand this, we need to focus on the institution which can amend the constitution of India; which is the parliament of India. It requires 2/3rd majority to amend the constitution. India has been repeatedly seeing coalition governments for many years now, and no single party commands a large majority. Power share has gradually moved from the Congress party to BJP, Communists and regional parties. While the power of the hindu right might be rising, it is far from gaining majority at the national level. Note, that even the BJP has liberal leftist elements within it. Thus the continuance of secularism policy at National level - in particular in the constitution - is no surprise.

Why did India choose to be secular at the time of Independence? Why did the constitution upheld secular principles from the beginning? Simply because it could not have been anything else, if it had to integrate and unify the diversity of people who had together dreamed of a unified independent Nation in the subcontinent. While most fundamentalist Muslim elements did succeed in partitioning India and moved into Pakistan, the relatively liberal muslims along with all hindus and people from other religions formed India. The fundamentalist hindu elements could not succeed (they were never

powerful enough in terms of representation) to form a *Hindu Rashtra* (Hindu Nation). The congress party led by India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru and father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi understood the importance, indispensability and the beauty of creating a nation where different faiths could co-exist, flourish, mix and evolve without fear. This led to the birth of a secular constitution and a secular India.

B. Attempts for bringing about a *Uniform Civil Code*

Event Slice
India does not have a uniform civil code (UCC) ie personal laws vary depending on religion. For eg. separate marriage laws apply to Muslims, Hindus, Christians and Parsis; a Muslim man in India can marry four women by law, while a Hindu cannot. There have several high profile cases and controversies in the judiciary, typically dealing with reforms related to women's rights etc which have brought this issue to the fore. Perhaps the most notable among these is the *Shah Bano* case, which led the Supreme Court to direct the Parliament to frame the UCC. This is on the basis of Article 44 of constitution which says that the state shall 'endeavour' to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code. However, the parliament has never managed to bring about a uniform civil code; there is no political unity on the issue. BJP supports the issue. Congress and most other parties oppose it. Civil society considers both pros and cons, and usually supports implementation of the UCC.

Analysis
Why couldn't the founding father's of the nation agree on a common uniform personal law for the nation? Because there were diverse groups, and a uniform code could not have been adopted without seriously hurting sensitivities of the other. Given the background of partition and formation of Pakistan, it was important to give Muslims in India the confidence that their interests will be protected, and their sensitivities respected. This was necessary for keeping the Nation together at that time !

Thereafter, until today, different coalitions have been advocating and opposing uniform civil code. Women's rights coalitions advocate change and reform in the current system of laws, and therefore support moves to bring about a uniform civil code. These voices typically gain momentum with some case like the *Shah Bano* in the judiciary, which suddenly gains lot of media attention, and then even issues not directly related to the case get involved. Muslim fundamentalist coalitions may try to gain mileage in the controversy by accusing those who are trying to bring about reform to be anti-Islam ! Amidst all these pulls and pressures, status quo has won and there has been no uniform civil code till now. Conscious of the directives in the constitution, Supreme court regularly takes the view that the government ought to make more efforts to bring about the uniform civil code. But the government, often finds it too difficult or politically costly.

C. Minority Appeasement : Presidents of India

Event Slice
The last three Presidents of India have been from minority or 'oppressed' communities - Shri K R Narayanan (1997-2002; *dalit* or lower caste), Dr A P J Abdul Kalam (2002 to 2007; Muslim), Smt. Pratibha Patil (2007 - ; Woman). Is it a mere coincidence that so many Presidents of India are from minority or *oppressed* communities. Difficult to believe, specially because there have been on most occasions contenders with equally if not more impressive *credentials.*

Analysis
The appointment is a complex political exercise in the grand democratic curry of India, and the end results depend on which coalitions nominate and suggest what kind of names and the running political *wave* at the time favours which 'kind' of person. The person itself and his/her credentials seem to be only secondary ! Dr Kalam's name was suggested for Presidentship by the BJP led coalition government in 2002. Earlier, Gyani Zail Singh (a Sikh) became the president in 1982, with support from Congress (Ref : Ethnic Violence against Sikhs, below). BJP - believed popularly to be anti Muslim, and congress facing the Sikh secessionist movement in early 1980s may have scored some points to change their popular image in these respects through the appointment of the Presidents. This *inverse effect* is interesting ! There are several other instances, where the government has been seen to be going 'over-secular' in the sense of appeasement of minorities. Historically, it was considered necessary to appease Muslims who decided to stay back in India against moving to Pakistan to assure them that their rights and sensitivities will be protected. Such appeasement (positive discrimination) policies are practised not just on religious lines, but also on the basis of castes (eg. Caste based reservations in higher education / *Mandal Commission*).

D. Education

Event Slice
Mr Murli Manihar Joshi, human resource and development minister in the last BJP led central government, tried to make several changes in the school curriculum and textbooks (2002). The most discussed among the changes was perhaps the *rewriting or 'saffronisation' of* history books. Many historians criticised the changes and saw them as deliberate hindu nationalisation of the Indian history. BJP allegedly also used the changes and the new history for its political advantage. Most of these changes were later *corrected/restored/'de-saffronised'* once the Congress led government came to power. There were cross allegations.

Analysis
The above events are almost self explanatory. The BJP led government brought about the changes to score a point with their hindu nationalist voters and related coalition, as well as to strengthen the coalition in future by tweaking the education system. This was opposed by the liberals, civil society and the 'secular' coalition of the country. With the change of government to a congress led 'secular' government, the changes were reversed.

E. Ethnic Violence and Role of the State

Event Slices
Indira Gandhi led congress government confronted and suppressed Sikh secessionist movement in the rich state of Punjab (1980s). This included operation blue star in June 1984, which involved army entering the holy Sikh shrine of the *Golden Temple.* Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her two Sikh bodyguards on October 31, 1984. This led to breakout of anti-Sikh violence and riots in many parts of the country, including in the capital New Delhi. Many Sikhs were killed and it is believed that the state apparatus (Government, IPS officers) supported the rioting mobs, by deliberating delaying use of control forces and not doing enough to prevent massacres. Some political leaders in the Congress are also supposed to have been directly involved in mobilising and inciting the rioting mobs.

2002 was perhaps the most shameful year for secular India. The hindu right - led and represented by the *Sangh Parivaar* - had been rising after 1980s. *Babri* mosque was demolished in Ayodhya (December 1992) and a BJP led government came to power at the center in 1998. A train carrying many hindu pilgrims caught fire in a town called Godhara in the western Indian state of Gujarat, in which several of the them were killed. The place where it caught fire was habitated mainly by Muslims. The news spread quickly, blaming the Muslims. As a backlash, around 2000 Muslims - including women and children - were killed throughout the state of Gujarat, over the course of next several weeks. There is widespread belief that BJP government in the State, led by Chief Minister Mr Narendra Modi, deliberately delayed action, and thus supported attacks against Muslims in the state. [NUSSBAUM]. The state politics is vitiated with religious hatred till today, and the hindu right wing forces have strong support in the state. The state has however done relatively very well in terms of development, and the voter is often presented a choice between development and secularism.

Analysis
In terms of role of the state in the violence, one has to understand the coalitions between politicians and IPS officers, and policemen they are leading who are finally responsible for delivering law and order ie the 'bureaucrats of the street'. And also the social fabric in which these coalitions exist and thrive. The anti-Sikh riots took place because for some reason the social fabric supported an anti-Sikh sentiment at that time. This gave an opportunity for the coalition composed of anti-Sikh elements in police forces, the executive, the government (at various levels) and in the ruling congress party to become strong; stronger than the corresponding liberal 'secular' coalition. Vested interests - as always - change sides and join the stronger group, making it even more stronger. This eventually led to the violence. The Gujarat riots can also be explained in the same manner, except that the core coalition this time was made up of anti-muslim elements and was geographically concentrated more in the state of Gujarat, rather than at the central level. The fact that BJP continues to win in the state, and that no party is coming out explicitly on a secular agenda (Congress's *hindi/gujrati/*vernacular election manifestos, differed substantially from the English manifestoes ! [NEEDHAM]), explains that the social fabric in the state is indeed leaned towards non-secular sentiments at the moment. This cannot be said to be true at National level though.

III. Conclusion
We find that secularism policy in India plays out in a variety of forms ranging from positive discrimination or minority appeasement on one hand to state abetted ethnic violence on the other. The specific events and policy changes beg different explanations, within the grand democratic process of India composed of various actors, institutions, ideas, coalitions and policy subsystems. To understand

what is written in the Constitution, one needs to focus on the institution of Parliament and the National Government, and to understand ethnic violence in a particular scenario eg the state of Gujarat, one needs to focus on localised coalitions in the given space-time context; remaining conscious of the overall democratic framework at all points in time. If we take this approach, and understand the meaning of secularism more in the Indian sense of "equal respect/freedom of all religions" rather than the western sense of "separation of state and religion", we begin to comprehend the seeming contradictions between various events, implementations and manifestations of secularism policy in India. We also learn that *framing the debate* in the political democratic scenario becomes extremely important - whether to approach an issue from 'over secular' minority appeasement ie positive discrimination side, or whether to present it in a 'right wing majority fundamentalism' flavour. Or maybe wrap everything in something completely different pivoted for eg on women's rights and reforms, and debated in the courts of law in the light of the constitution !

After a *slice-by-slice* analysis, lets take a holistic look at the key events related to secularism in India :

1947	India and Pakistan become Independent. End of British colonial rule. Partition and communal riots.
1948	Mahatma Gandhi assassinated by a Hindu right wing fanatic
1946-1950	Constituent assembly debates
1955	Hindu Code Bill
1976	The forty second amendment to the constitution includes "secularism" in its preamble for the first time
1984	Sikh secessionist movement climax. Indira Gandhi assassinated; anti-Sikh riots.
1985	*Shah Bano* judgement. Government passes Muslim Women's act.
1990	Implementation of Mandal Commission Report (quotas/reservations for lower castes). Wide spread protests by students and upper castes.
1992	Babri Masjid demolished in Ayodhya. Communal riots. *RSS, VHP* banned.
1998	BJP election manifesto supporting building of temple at Ayodhya; forms coalition government at center with secular allies.
2002	Godhra train incident followed by widespread "Hindu retaliation" Supreme Court upholds 1994 decision to maintain status quo at Ayodhya
2004	General elections. BJP out of power. Congress led coalition government at the center.
2007	Gujarat state elections. Narendra Modi (BJP) retains power with landslide election victory.

These events, and the future events in this series can be understood and predicted only on the basis of the the grand Indian democratic process. Ultimately, it is the Indian social fabric, and concentration of different hues and flavours at different points within this multicoloured social fabric, which will determine whether India manages to protect and strengthen its cherished brand of secularism and "unity in diversity". Common people in India are the ultimate masters and kings in the democratic process. They can exercise better choices if they understand clearly the difference between reformist and fundamentalist elements in religion, and between vested interests and those genuinely aligned to their ideologies; and if they avoid generalisations based on identities and learn to discern individuals and specifics. As the democratic polity of India evolves and educates itself, we will continue to see contradictory manifestations of secularism policy in India. The National conscience remains secular, though it continuously keeps questioning and so far reinforcing itself.

Critical self analysis, Limitations, future directions
There is a scope of including wider literature survey to understand individual events in greater detail and for comparisons with other countries and regions [JACOBSOHN]. Further, key events from South India and north-east India could be included to present a geographically more complete picture; though the events chosen in this paper expose a large variety of issues ranging from governance at National and local levels, from minority appeasement to ethnic violence, and from specific public events to documented laws and policies. The philosophical aspects of 'secularism' vs 'minority freedom' - "Can there be a perfect meeting ground?" - is an interesting direction which can be explored further. Perhaps the language of the paper can be made more literary and academic, and synchronised against

available public policy literature and terminology and models, to make it more widely accessible.

Key References, Further Reading
Most events, facts and dates in this paper can be traced to related essays and papers in [NEEDHAM].

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Acknowledgements

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