

**Introduction to Modern Indian Political Thought**  
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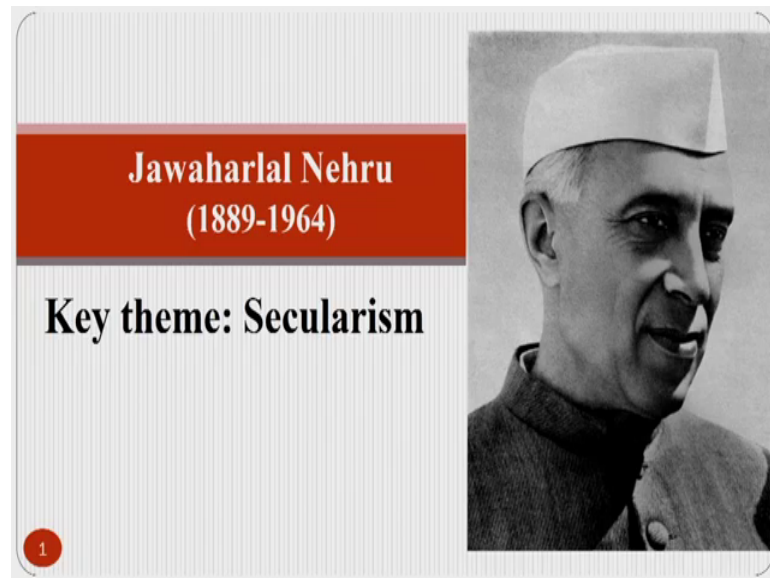
**Lecture – 20**  
**Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) Key theme: Secularism**

Hello and welcome friends, to this second lecture on Jawaharlal Nehru. In the previous lecture we have discussed his personal, political life some of his writings and how through discovery of India he was try also trying to find himself fit in or make himself aware of or familiar with Indian history its past and its philosophy and it is a civilizational evolution. And, we have also discussed his views on religion religious harmony and all.

Today, in this lecture we will focus on his views on Secularism and we will begin with very briefly his views on how to lay a foundation for modern India and how that foundation should not be guided by any religious, regional, linguistic or any a script warranty such as caste, ethnicity, race etcetera. So, he wanted to mould India or lay the foundation of modern India on only solid base of his philosophy of liberalism or the sole merit of individual and his worth and accordingly he should get or she should get certain rights and privileges which should not build on the basis of his or her membership to a particular community.

So, the relationship between individual and the state and the rights and privilege that is given on the basis of that relationship is given by given on the basis of individuals membership to the state and the citizenship has and its rights has nothing to do with his or her membership to a particular caste, community, religious or otherwise.

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**Jawaharlal Nehru**  
(1889-1964)

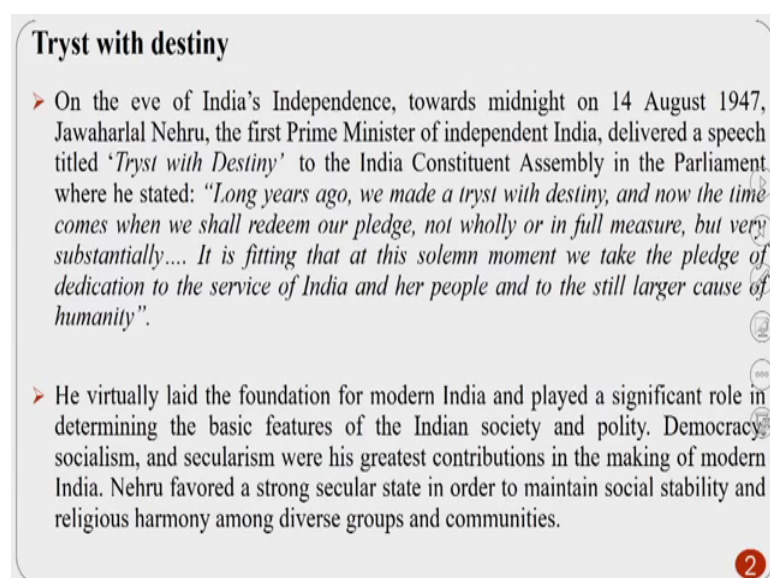
**Key theme: Secularism**

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A black and white portrait of Jawaharlal Nehru wearing a white Gandhi cap and a dark Nehru jacket, looking slightly to the right.

So, Nehru articulated such thoughts in his tryst with destiny much before that during the national movement also he along with Gandhi and Congress tried to mould national movement towards his secular politics and not a kind of revivalist religious politics as it was being argued by Muslim league or Hindu Mahasabha and many other religious organization and certainly after the independence Nehru tried to give it a official a status and that we will discuss on his views on religion secularism critique to Nehruvian ideals and how for his notion of secularism is relevant in contemporary India. So, in this lecture we are going to discuss some of these questions.

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**Tryst with destiny**

- On the eve of India's Independence, towards midnight on 14 August 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India, delivered a speech titled '*Tryst with Destiny*' to the India Constituent Assembly in the Parliament where he stated: "*Long years ago, we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially.... It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity*".
- He virtually laid the foundation for modern India and played a significant role in determining the basic features of the Indian society and polity. Democracy, socialism, and secularism were his greatest contributions in the making of modern India. Nehru favored a strong secular state in order to maintain social stability and religious harmony among diverse groups and communities.

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So, to begin with his speech of tryst with destiny which I hope you all and request you all to read and listen to which is widely available on net or also on YouTube there he expresses some of the cherished ideals of freedom fighters and what should be the basis of future India.

So, in this text on the eve of India's independence towards the midnight of 14 August 1947, Nehru delivered a speech which is titled Tryst with Destiny to the Indian constituent assembly in the parliament where he stated and I quote, "Long years ago, we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the place of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity".

So, this text or this speech of Jawaharlal Nehru which is widely read and perhaps one of the most influential political public speech in modern India here he substantiate the pledge or the ambitions, the ideals of nationalist movement and how once the freedom is achieved not completely as there are many challenges that has to overcome have to overcome and there was partition of the country as well which nobody desired and yet the circumstances compelled the leaders too compromised on that issue and there was the communal stripes communal polarization and social economic challenges.

So, Nehru is very clear even when there is the solemn occasion of independence he realizes the challenges or how that freedom is not complete, but very substantial and that freedom is to dedicate the state its resources and policy to the service of India and her people and there is also the universal strengths of thought in many of the Indian political thinkers including Gandhi or Nehru and he goes on to (Refer Time: 06:14) and to the still larger cause of humanity which transcend the geographical national boundary of India.

So, through this text with tryst with destiny he virtually led the foundation for modern India and played a significant role in determining the basic features of Indian society and polity. So, during his long years of 17 years as the prime minister, he has the defining influence in shaping the polity and a state and society in India and how he influenced the institutions and how he led the foundation of certain prominent institutions and developing the scientific rational temper we have discussed in the previous lecture.

So this key tenets of democracy, socialism and secularism were his greatest contribution in the making of modern India and his views on secularism we have also covered in the previous lecture. So, I request you to go back to the previous lecture and then follow what we are going to discuss today where we will focus more on his views on secularism. So, his views on democracy, socialism and secularism were his greatest contribution in the making of modern India. He gave a particular mould or direction to the polity in free India and three of the major tenets of such direction was democracy socialism and secularism.

Nehru favored a strong and secular state which is very different from Gandhian conception of decentralized state where he wanted power to flow from bottom to up Nehru had a very vision of a very strong and secular a state or interventionist state for social and economic transformation. So, Nehru favored a strong secular state in order to maintain social stability and religious harmony among the diverse groups and communities in India.

So, Nehru realized the role of state and its nature as a secular state not a theocratic state as Pakistan or some other countries where it is difficult when a state declares a religion as a state religion and then to maintain a society which is deeply plural or there are different religions and believers of different faiths to maintain harmony and peace in

such a society Nehru believed that a state which should be a strong state must have a secular character, but his understanding of secularism is very different.

Many of you may come across this conception that in a position to Gandhi who talks about Sarva Dharma Sama Bhava that is equal respect to every religion or all religion, Nehru is a western conception where he want a kind of separation of politics from the religion. But, Nehruvian understanding of religion and also secularism is far more complex than this simplistic differentiation of Nehruvian notion of secularism which is a kind of separation from of state and religion to Gandhian notion of secularism which is equal respect for all religion. That we will discuss in a minute, but nonetheless Nehruvian understanding of state which should be a secular state is essential for maintaining harmony and peace in a society which is diverse in terms of its religious practices and belief systems.

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**Nehru's Views on Religion**

- Religion has been and continues to be a defining feature of Indian life and society. The traditional character of society with its pluralistic, medieval, feudalistic and caste-ridden base has left Indian divided, hierarchized and without a strong unifying force. Although, it had a strong tradition of toleration and accommodation of religious difference, the question for leaders like Nehru was, should religion be a guide of morality and ethics in modern politics?
- Nehru's general outlook towards life was not controlled by religious beliefs and practices. He developed a kind of scepticism towards all forms of organised religion from the very beginning and this is clearly manifested in his numerous writings and speeches. It was rather difficult for him, with all his rational and scientific training and temperament, to adhere to the superstitions and dogmas of religion, whether Hinduism, Islam, Christianity or any other religion.

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But, before discussing about Nehru's notion of secularism it is also necessary or desirable perhaps to understand his views on religion. So to look at religion and especially in India where religion has been and continues to be a defining feature of Indian life and society. So; so much of religiosity which governs all spheres of individual and collective life in India so, it is almost inevitable that all the thinkers and public intellectuals or the leaders, political leaders has to engage with this notion of religion.

And, in some of the thinkers we have discussed him Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Tagore to Vivekananda to Aurobindo Ghosh and Gandhi we have this scene how they engaged with the question of religion and role of religion in the public, political life. And, for many of them the religion is the basis for the morality or a particular worldview and of course, there are differences in their interpretation of religion, but they all engaged with the issue of religion and role of religion in India's public political life. So, and this we see in our contemporary times also here there is invocation of religion and religion as the basis of formation of nationhood or giving certain rights to certain communities protection of certain communities and a lot of debates that is going on in our contemporary India as well.

So, religion continues to have a kind of defining power Indian life and society. However, the traditional character of society with pluralistic, medieval, feudalistic and caste-ridden base has left India divided, hierarchized and without a strong unifying force. So, for many of these modern political thinkers their task was how to unite India which is divided on so, many lines; caste lines, linguistic lines, regional lines, religious lines. Now, they thought of unifying this India on the basis of nationalism, but what should be the characteristic of that nationalism. So, that nationalism be based on certain religion or it should have a secular character.

So, Nehru along with congress and Gandhi despite of using the religion certainly in Gandhi vocabulary or terminology he used a lot of words and concepts which derived from a particular religious tradition, but Nehru is a different articulation of religion and its role in public political life. So, they were also trying to constitute or to imagine a nation or nationalism which should be able to unite India and therefore, Nehru, Congress and many other leaders try to construct a nation without any attachment to a particular religion and religious tradition.

However, there have been many as we have discussed in Savarkar certainly the Hinduism or Hindutva for him as the basis of Indian nationalism certainly Muslim league or Jinnand Iqbal min thought about Muslim or Muslim religious tradition as the basis of Pakistan. So, there were those who argued about unifying India on the basis of religion and religion, caste leads to hierarchy and social divisions that needs to be overcome, but how that can be overcome and that becomes some of the greatest concern of modern Indian thinkers.

So, despite of the religiosity in India we also had a strong tradition of toleration or what we call accommodation of religious differences, but the question for these thinkers then was should that tolerance which has a negative connotation of it; it is like we do not agree with you, but we tolerate you, it is a kind of certain patronizing approach towards the other or the different. So, we have this strong tradition of toleration or accommodation of religious differences, but the question for these thinker said that should religion be a guide of morality and ethics in modern politics.

So, for them the politics is not just an end in itself politics for them or acquiring power through politics is for larger good of India or still the humanity, but for that and there is a need to connect politics or political programs with the question of morality and ethics. For many like Gandhi and others thought about religion as the source of such morality and ethics and therefore, certainly in the logic of Gandhi the conception of religion is very different from say in Savarkar or in Iqbal where there is a kind of beliefs in ones religion, but accommodation or mutual coexistence with other or different religions.

But, for Nehru the role of region or scientific temperament and others becomes the basis for such questions of morality and ethic. So, he also tried to then conceptualize morality and ethics beyond the resources of religion which turned out to be more religious or which is turned out to be more dogmatic, superstitious and based on organized ritualistic kind of propagation and it suppresses its one follower.

So, there is a hierarchy within a religion. So, intra hierarch intra religious hierarchy or inter religious hierarchy or domination is something Jawaharlal Nehru was trying to grapple with and he thought reason or constantly thinking or pondering upon such issues of ethics or a spirituality which remains a vital force in his thinking and thought and many in many of his speech and writings he drill upon this question of a spirituality, ethics and morality, but what should be the basis of such morality ethics and a spirituality or the human needs that should be the work of constant use of mind or constant reasoning and for what purpose that is that should. So, Jawaharlal Nehru was trying to base his conception of ethics and morality on the basis of reason and not religion.

So, Nehru general outlook towards life was not controlled by religious beliefs and practices. He developed a kind of a skepticism towards all forms of organized religion from the very beginning and this is clearly manifested in his numerous writings and a

speech including his autobiography and also the discovery of India. So, it was rather difficult for him with all his rational and scientific training and temperament to adhere to superstitions and dogmas of religion. Whether Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and other religions.

So, Nehru considered reason or science as the surer basis for conception of morality and ethics than superstitious belief or dogmatic belief in any practices or organized form of religion. So much so even he subjected Gandhian ideals of non violence and Satyagraha to this rational inquiry and critique and realized that as a viable or appropriate method of achieving independence in India. So, he did not have a blind or uncritical acceptance of any ideals or any forms of practices or belief system.

So, Nehruvian understanding of religion is not a kind of rejection or complete rejection of religion he accept some tenets of religion as self inquiry which allow one to think about the larger questions which science or rationality fails and there is a kind of dialogue between Gandhi, Nehru and Tagore also and all of them were trying to conceptualize a notion of ethics and morality which should be appropriate for the modern life or the modern individual and there we also find in Nehruvian conception he comes closer to Tagore in his rationalistic or scientific or look then to Gandhi and yet intuitively he was also follower of Gandhi and perhaps he said a closer or intimate relationship with Gandhi and his thought and ideals, but he subjected even that to the critical or rational inquiry and that becomes a matter of his a criteria, a heuristic principle for him to subject his decision and look at the world more objectively rather than through the prism of any dogmas or superstitions or belief systems.



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- Nehru's agnosticism and scientific temper could not but make him a non-religious man. His secular spirit inspired him to establish a secular society based on justice, liberty, and equality. He said, *“Our ardent desire is to see people of India united together so that we may frame a constitution which will be acceptable to the masses of Indian people.”*
- For him Secularism was not only a political doctrine, but a social one of revolutionary character which embraced all religions and all communities in India. It means a social structure where individual would not be subjected to some hierarchical position in society on the basis of one's faith or religion. It means a certain mental attitude on the part of the individuals and groups towards the members of other religious groups. Inter- group and inter-personal relations are not supposed to be affected by religion and religious considerations.

So, Nehru's agnosticism which is like not complete rejection, but not also complete belief in something. So, he developed a agnostic approach to religion or any form of organized religion. So, Nehru's agnosticism and scientific temper could not, but make him a non religious man and he claims himself as not as a Hindu, not as a Muslim or as a Christians, but he developed a kind of indifference or agnostic approach to the religion and yet he was deeply engaged with the a spiritual questions, the question of humanity or humaneness in him also forced him to engage with the question of a religion at the deeper level, at the fundamental level.

So, his secularists esprit inspired him to establish a secular society based on the notion of justice, liberty and equality and he said our ardent desire is to see people of India united together and not divided on religious lines, caste lines, linguistic lines or any other lines so that we may frame a constitution which will be acceptable to the masses of Indian people and this acceptability of constitution if it is based on a particular religion or a particular tradition or it caters to the need of a particular community then it will not be acceptable to the masses of the Indian people every section of Indian society.

So, therefore, the tasks of constitution is something which should be acceptable to the every section of of Indian society and through that he envisioned a kind of unity or India's can be united together only on the basis of a secular constitution or a secular a

state and secularism therefore, for Nehru was a creed as a basis for the establishment or for the shaping the polity and a state and its institution in modern India.

So, for him secularism was not only a political doctrine or a belief in the political nature of political aspect of this question about secularism, but a social one of revolutionary character which embarrassed all religions. So, there is no rejection, there is no undermining of religion, but a kind of critical approach to religion where certain dogmas certain superstitions and irrational practices and beliefs needs to be criticized or challenged and yet he wanted a state which should stand itself from all form of religion and should not prefer or promote any particular religion or creed.

So, for him secularism was not only a political doctrine, but a social one of revolutionary character. So, think of a society which is deeply religious and he want that society to develop a kind of united force or a kind of solidarity which should be based on complete freedom of equality, liberty and justice. So, opportunity should be given to everyone without any consideration to their belonging or their membership to a particular caste or a community or a religion. So, and that he wanted not just to be limited to the state and polity, but it should encompass all sphere of society as well so, therefore, the secularism for him it is a revolutionary character which embraced all religions and all communities in India.

It means a social structure where individual should not be subjected to some hierarchical position in society on the basis of one's faith or religion it means a certain mental attitude on the part of individual and groups towards the members of other religious groups and communities intergroup and interpersonal relations are not supposed to be affected by religion and religious consideration. So, he wanted to construct a society not just a state and polity on the basis of secularism for him secularism should be the basis which will bring egalitarian society into existence from a deeply hierarchical feudal, caste ridden society in India and for Nehru secularism is not just about religious domination and countering religious domination of one community over the other, but it also entails removing all kind of hierarchy be it between men, women or be it on the basis of caste.

However, his own conception of secularism takes different shape when many of his followers which we can also called Nehruvian their understanding of Nehru's secularism was reduced to protection of mannerism which leads to a lot of criticism of his model.

But, for Nehru secularism is also about bringing radical transformation in society to remove any kind of hierarchy or divide which is on the basis of religion or caste or gender and interfaith or in interpersonal relationships that individuals shares in the society should not be guided by any religious beliefs or irreligious beliefs or the space for those who do not believe in religion.

So, for Nehru the role of religion in society or the secularism is towards transforming a society into a more egalitarian society devoid of any hierarchy on the basis of caste or religion.

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**Nehru's conception of secularism :**

- According to Nehru, Secular philosophy meant neither irreligion nor only material well-being. It contained spiritual elements also. His concept of secularism has mainly four aspects.
- **The most essential feature** of secularism, according to Nehru, was the granting of **equal status to all religions** in India. He believed that the right to perform religious ceremonies should certainly be guaranteed to all communities. No religion should have any special privileges, and no community should be deprived of its legitimate rights on the basis of religion. *"I find it difficult to appreciate why political or economic rights should depend on the membership of a religious group or community. It can fully understand the right to freedom in religion .."* To him it meant equal respect for all faiths and equal opportunities for those who profess any faith.

So, now if you look at this conception of secularism we find according to Nehru secular philosophy neither mean irreligion, right something we need to emphasize and for in contemporary debates the usual critique and very often you hear that secularism is automatically mean or seen as anti religion or anti religion or irreligion, but for Nehru secular philosophy mean neither religion nor only material well being or just the scientific or (Refer Time: 27:08) outlook to life and society.

It contained a spiritual elements also and his concept of secularism has many four aspects that we will discuss one by one, but most important thing that we need to keep in mind here is that for Nehruvian conception of secularism it does not mean irreligion or absence of religion, but it engages with religion and create a state which is not guided by any of them and yet engages with those who which requires state interventions to prevent

domination of one religious community by the other meet majority or minority, but it has of course, different nuances which somewhat get left out in the post Nehru or what is called his followers conception or articulation of secularism.

So, in his conception of secularism the question of a spiritual as we were discussing what morality and ethics is also deeply embedded there and characterized his understanding of secularism and that is why he is not a atheist, but a agnostic. He dwells with a spiritual questions the question of ethics and morality and yet do not want to be guided by any particular religion certainly its organized form of religion. So, if religion is about religiosity or about developing a better self or about self inquiry or about developing a ethical outlook to society to community towards self or towards other then perhaps Nehru will agree to such conception of religion.

But, if it is about a kind of routine organized dogmatic structure of religion which creates hierarchy between one religion and the other or between within one religion between the priest the ulamas or the maulvis or the pundits and the followers Nehru has the problem with such conception of religion. So, in his understanding of secularism there is no absence or irreligiosity in the conception of secularism.

Now, to discuss these four aspects of secularism in Nehruvian conception of secularism the most essential feature of secularism according to Nehru was the granting of equal status to the religion. In other words the question of equality all religion all forms of belief systems or practices are regarded equal in the eyes of state according to Nehru. So, he believed that the right to perform religious ceremonies should certainly be guaranteed to all communities and no preference no preferential treatment in terms of organizing or believing or performing certain ceremonies or in certain beliefs and practices.

So, no religion should have any a special privilege and no community should be deprived of it is legitimate rights on the basis of religion. So, in other words the state and it rights it sanctions to the citizen is independent of their membership to a particular religion or not. So, a state treats all religion equally, in other words it does not make any discrimination only on the basis of their membership to a particular religious community. So, unlike Savarkar where we have seen the Hindutva the question of who is Hindu and therefore, the basis of Hindu Rashtra and their status in such Hindu Rashtra because they belong to a particular community is very different from Nehruvian conception of

individual or the role of religion. So, the question of equality becomes crucial in his conception of religion.

So, he writes I find it difficult to appreciate why political or economic rights should depend on the membership of a religious group or community. It can fully understand the right to freedom in religion. So, the freedom right to freedom in religion is something which he wanted to guarantee to every member or community without any consideration of their beliefs or faith. So, to him it meant equal respect for all faiths and equal opportunity for those who profess any faith or do not profess at all.

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➤ In modern plural society the concept of personal faith and personal conduct must be respected. Secularism is a federal principle applied to a federal society for the welfare of the whole. So, Nehru declared: “We are building a free Secular State, where every religion and belief has full freedom and equal honour, whose every citizen has equal liberty and equal opportunity”.

➤ **Second** feature of secularism according to Nehru is that the state should follow policy of **neutrality** in religious matters. In a letter to Ghanshyam Singh Gupta in October, 1945, Nehru clarified his point of view; ‘I am convinced that future Government of free India must be secular, in the sense that Government will not associate itself directly with any religious faith...’. Earlier in 1931, Nehru had drafted the Karachi Congress Resolution on Fundamental Rights which stated: ‘The State shall observe neutrality in regard to all religions’.

So, the question of equality is the crucial one in his conception of secularism. So, in modern plural society the concept of personal faith and personal conduct must be respected secularism is a federal principle applied to a federal society for the welfare of the whole and not few a particular group, but the whole section or the whole community. So, Nehru declared we are building a free secular state where every religion and belief has full freedom and equal honour whose every citizen has equal liberty and equal opportunity.

So, that is his conception of secularism here the personal conduct and personal belief is something which is respected or guaranteed by the state and the constitution and there is a no discrimination on the basis of any particular religion and religious community and the membership there thereof. Now, to look at the second feature of secularism according

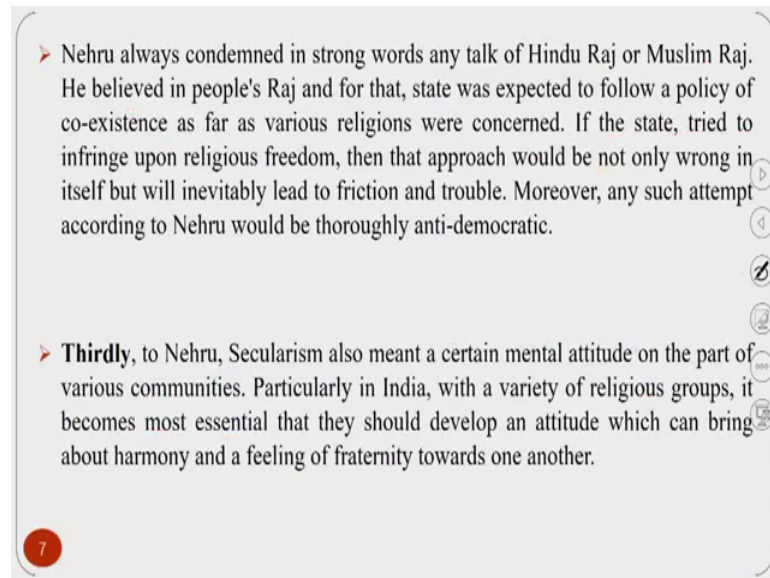
to Nehru is that a state should follow a policy of neutrality or we can also say a kind of distance from the affairs of religion or religious affairs. This is related to in a western conception of secularism the American model is about a wall of separation between a state and polity and the church and the both should not interfere with each other.

So, it is said that American legislation cannot or is not supposed to pass a legislation on the matters related to church and similar or vice versa church is not supposed to interfere in the matters of a state or politics. So, give, but however, in Nehruvian conception of secularism the idea of neutrality is a little different or somewhat unique in the context of India with a diverse religion majority on the other hand or minority on the other hand. So, he was also aware of the threat or the sense of insecurity among the minorities committees and their the role of neutrality or absolute neutrality is something he was trying to modify or trying to put it in such a way which will help in developing a self confidence or ensuring equality of opportunity to every religion without any consideration to their numerical strength.

So, however, the question of a state and it is neutrality that a state does not patronize or prefer one religion over the other or a state does not have its own religion it does not mean state is irreligious, but it means that a state do not have any official religion, but it does engage with the with the affairs of religion when there is a domination of one religion over the other or there is a sense of insecurity among the minorities community. So, there a state goes to give them protection from any religious domination by the other communities.

So, the question of neutrality remains crucial aspect of his conception of secularism in a later to Ghanshyam Singh Gupta in October 1945 before the independence Nehru clarified his point of view. So, I am convinced that the future government of free India must be secular, in the sense that government we will not associate itself directly with any religious faith. Earlier in 1931, in Karachi congress also which Nehru drafted the resolution on fundamental rights he also states that a state shall observed neutrality in regard to all religions. So, it will maintain a distance in neutrality from any particular faith or all religious practices.

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- Nehru always condemned in strong words any talk of Hindu Raj or Muslim Raj. He believed in people's Raj and for that, state was expected to follow a policy of co-existence as far as various religions were concerned. If the state, tried to infringe upon religious freedom, then that approach would be not only wrong in itself but will inevitably lead to friction and trouble. Moreover, any such attempt according to Nehru would be thoroughly anti-democratic.
- **Thirdly**, to Nehru, Secularism also meant a certain mental attitude on the part of various communities. Particularly in India, with a variety of religious groups, it becomes most essential that they should develop an attitude which can bring about harmony and a feeling of fraternity towards one another.

So, therefore, Nehru always condemned in strong words and he was very critical of any conception of Hindu Raj or Muslim Raj or Hindu Rashtra or Muslim Rashtra he believed in the people's Raj or a democratic secular nation rather than a Hindu nation or a Muslim nation and the conceptualization of nation on the basis of any religious practices. So, he believed in people's Raj and for that a state was expected to follow a policy of coexistence. So, far as various religions were concerned if the state tried to infringe upon religious freedom then that approach would be not only wrong in itself, but will inevitably lead to frictions and troubles. So, moreover any such attempt according to Nehru would be thoroughly anti democratic.

So, here one can also understand the different mobilization which was unfolding during the anti colonial a struggle and for a very long time there was mobilization on the basis of religious lines also which deeply disturbed a Gandhian, Nehruvian conception of India or Indian nationalism which is based on secular secular principle of course, Gandhi and Nehru differ in their conception of secularism.

But nonetheless they wanted India to be a secular India without any consideration to any particular religious community and therefore, Nehru has a very strong critique or he was a vocal critic of any conception of Hindu Rashtra or Muslim Rashtra and he wanted India to be free from any religious or influence or religious character to provide opportunity or

equal opportunity for different religions without interfering in any particular religion which he thought may lead to further disharmony or rift.

So, the religious violence and rifts are not something unheard of it was more frequent and the social structure which is deeply hierarchical or violent is something which he wanted to eradicate and only way to eradicate such social divisions on the basis of religion was possible through a state which should be a secular state and which should maintain a neutrality from any forms of religions practices or any particular religion.

Now, thirdly Nehru secularism also meant a certain mental attitude and this is not just about the political aspect of secularism or as we have discussed just about a state, but he wanted every community or every individual or every Indian to develop a particular mental attitude towards other here other within quote means different communities or religious differences. So, to Nehru secularism also meant a certain mental attitude on the part of various communities particularly in India with the variety of religious groups it becomes most essential that this would develop an attitude which can bring about harmony and feeling of fraternity towards one another.

So, how to deal with other, how to engage with other? If one so, one of them a strength of religion is it gives a particular worldview which with certainties about religion and which certainties about morality and ethics how he should live the life, how we should deal with others and we have seen certainly in European experiences where other is seen as a threat as existence sell threat. So, if one is guided by a ones religious beliefs and faith then his or theirs encounter with the other or different the one who is following or believing in different faith is somewhat violent, somewhat based on mistrust or kind of seen as in existent sell threat n and which leads to perpetual violence as European countries have experience such religious violence.

So, Gandhi, Nehru and congress wanted to avoid such path of religious violence where each see other as a existential threat and then therefore, a kind of suppression and religion. So, partition is a result of such things, but the future India or the modern India that Nehru wanted to build or gave a dominating shape or a kind of very effective institutions and somewhat he has been successful in giving a secular character to Indian a state and secularism becomes a article of faith for many of or millions of Indians which is certainly now under some somewhat revision or somewhat re-articulation.



But, the secular characteristic of Indian state is by enlarge result of Nehruvian understanding of the state and its role where he wanted secularism to be accepted by the state by different communities and they see each other and the interrelationship between them should be governed by the secular belief rather than by their own particular religious faiths and beliefs and that will lead to a stable society harmonious society and develop a kind of fraternity which is desirable for India's progress and development.

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➤ To Nehru it was quite clear from the beginning that the realization of the secular ideal depended largely upon the attitude adopted by the majority community, the Hindus, towards other minority communities. Repeatedly he emphasized that the *'Hindus must always remember that the interest and the well-being of the minorities are their sacred- trust. If they fail in their trust, then they injure not only the country, but themselves'*. Any narrow and aggressive attitude on the part of the majority community would create a feeling of apprehension in the minds of the minority communities. He opined that it was much better to displease a few persons, to lose an election rather than fail in ideals. Such was the firm faith, Nehru had in Secularism.

➤ **Finally**, he wanted secularization of all areas of social life. Nehru recognised how deeply religions like Hinduism and Islam penetrated into the social life of India. Therefore he want to secularize every sphere of Indian society.

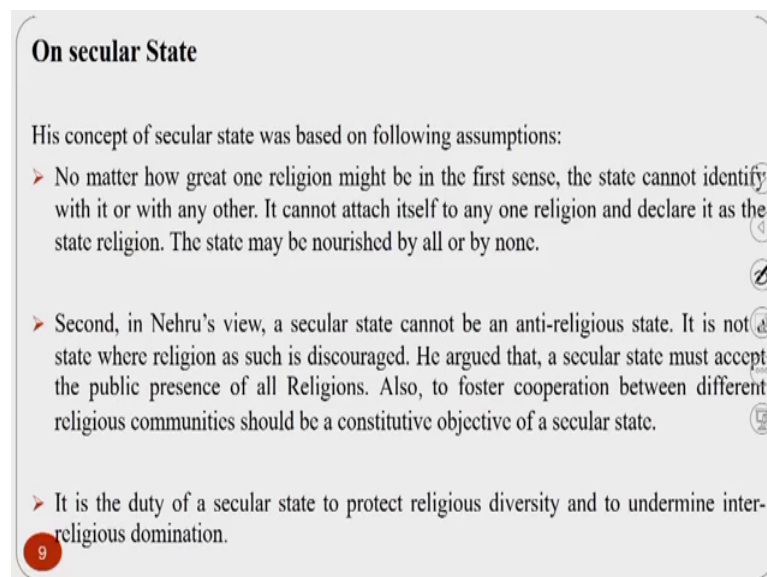
So, to Nehru it was quite clear from the beginning that the realization of secular ideal depended largely upon the attitude adopted by the majority community the Hindus towards the other minority communities. So, there is a kind of neutrality, but at the same time some kind of protection to the vulnerable communities or the minorities. So, repeatedly emphasized that the 'Hindus must always remember that the interest and the well-being of the minorities are their sacred-trust. If they fail in their trust then they ensure not only the country, but themselves'. So, any narrow and aggressive attitude on the part of the majority community would create a feeling of apprehension in the minds of minorities communities and he opined that it was much better to displease a few persons to lose an election rather than fail in the ideal of secularism.

So, he had such a strong faith in secularism and secular ideals that he was prepared to subject himself to critique or displease his enemy and Gandhi certainly from 1930s developed a lot of enemies because of his views on religious matters and the role of

secularism in Indian polity or Indian nation and the kind of relationship he wanted to develop between Hindus and Muslims. So, far Nehru also the protection of religious minority is the responsibility or developing a sense of confidence among those who are in the minorities is something which he wanted majority committee or Hindus to shoulder and if it is not done or if such sense do not prevail among the minorities then it will lead to a kind of harm to the communities and also to the social harmony which is required.

So, finally, he wanted secularization of all areas of social life as we have discussed and Nehru recognized how deeply religions like Hinduism and Islam penetrated into the social life of India. Therefore, he wanted to secularize every a sphere of Indian society. So, he here one can also make a distinction between secularism which is a belief, which is a theory, which is a article of faith and then a process of secularism which would enter every sphere of individual and community life and the interpersonal relationship should not be governed by religion which is the case event today or the caste or any other form of hierarchical relationships.

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**On secular State**

His concept of secular state was based on following assumptions:

- No matter how great one religion might be in the first sense, the state cannot identify with it or with any other. It cannot attach itself to any one religion and declare it as the state religion. The state may be nourished by all or by none.
- Second, in Nehru's view, a secular state cannot be an anti-religious state. It is not a state where religion as such is discouraged. He argued that, a secular state must accept the public presence of all Religions. Also, to foster cooperation between different religious communities should be a constitutive objective of a secular state.
- It is the duty of a secular state to protect religious diversity and to undermine inter-religious domination.

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So, Nehru also talked about the role of secular a state in the process of secularization. So, he can his concept of secular state was based on this following assumption that, no matter how great one religion might be in the first sense the state cannot identify with it or with any other religion. It cannot attach itself to any one religion and declare it as the

state religion. So, the state may be nourished by all or by none. So, there may be the existence of many religions or one religion, but a state cannot identify itself with that religion no matter how much great that religion might be.

So, in the conception of many leaders who thought about a theocratic state as in the form of Hindu Rashtra or Muslim Rashtra Nehru conceptualized Indian state or modern Indian state on the secular line where a state does not have its own religion and do not affiliate itself with any religion no matter how great that religion is. Second in Nehru's views a secular state cannot be anti religious state it is not a state where religion as such is discouraged he argued that a secular state must accept the public presence of all religions also to foster cooperation between different religious communities should be a constitutive objective of secular state.

So, there the question of neutrality somewhat tricked here in the sense that a state does not affiliate itself with any religion and yet it does not prohibit any religious groups or it does not discourage any religion. So, it acknowledges the public presence of religion and it tries to develop among them a kind of harmony or fraternity and that is the objective of modern secular state which does not mean entire religion state or irreligious state.

So, it is the duty of a secular state to protect religious diversity that is there in India and to undermine inter religious dominations or to counter any kind of religious domination of one community by the other. So, in a religiously diverse society where the prospects of inter religious dominations loom large a secular a states respect for all religions manifests itself as a commitment to minority rights. And therefore, the minority rights and protection of minority rights becomes necessary for a secular state where there are always the possibilities of dominating one religious community by the other.

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➤ In a religiously diverse society, where the prospects of inter-religious domination loom large, a secular state's respect for all religions manifests itself as a commitment to minority rights. In that case Nehru justified state's intervention in the majoritarian acts of a religious community.

➤ He believed that the use of force, violence and coercion was necessary for the functioning apparatus of the state. It protect it in the instances of external aggression, armed rebellion and internal disputes and riots. However, it should not be used in the evil spirit of hatred and cruelty towards 'other'. In collaboration with this, the state require to formulate coercive laws and regulations for the maintenance of peace, harmony and unity within its territorial jurisdiction

So, in that case Nehru justifies a state interventions in the majoritarian acts of a religious community. So, therefore, he understand the role of a state and its forces in maintaining at times the religious dominations of one group over the other. So, he believed at the state use of that the use of force violence and coercion while necessary for the functioning apparatus of the state. It protects it in the instances of external aggressions, armed rebellions and internal disputes such as riots and others.

However, it should not be used in the evil spirit of hatred and cruelty. So, these forces which may be helpful in the times of you know crisis or existential threat to the state which he acknowledged, but he did not want it to use for in a negative sense or with the spirit of hatred and cruelty towards the other or any particular communities. So, in collaboration with this the state requires to formulate coercive laws and regulation for the maintenance of peace harmony and unity within its territorial jurisdiction. So, a state can regulate the religious violence or control that violence, regulate certain organizations which may lead to law and order problem or pose a threat to the state.

So, in that in such context he wanted and therefore, in Nehru we have a strong conception of a state capable of enforcing its will on the society or in the society which is deeply hierarchical feudalistic or believes in domination of one group over the other be it on the basis of caste or religion or gender and therefore, in his conception a strong or

interventionist state is desirable to create a India which should be a secular India and where there is nondiscrimination on the basis of religion caste and gender.

However, the use of such force violence or regulation is not in ill fate or in evil spirit of hatred or cruelty towards other or any particular religion. So, the idea is to develop social harmony or a society or interpersonal relationship in the society which should develop a true or mutual respect or true faith or solidarities which will help in transforming India socially and economically.

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- Nehru also tried to evolve a uniform civil code for the whole of Indian people, irrespective of the distinctions of religion and caste by introducing many measures of social legislation.
  - He once wrote that the word 'Secular' conveyed to him much more than its mere dictionary meaning, specially in the context of the social conditions prevailing in this country. According to D. E. Smith, the definition of a secular state, in Nehru, was of a religiously neutral body i.e. 'a state protects all religions, but does not favour one at the expense of others and does not itself adopt any religion as the state religion'. Secondly, the process of secularization should extend to the social realm of day to day life which includes the 'social codes and rules of marriage, inheritance, civil and criminal law, political organization and indeed almost everything else'. Lastly, the inclusion of the provision of fundamental rights and the articles of 15, 25, 26, 28 and 325 further reinforced the secular agenda of the Nehruvian state in India, which is distinct from the Gandhian idea which provided equal amount of consideration and respect to all religious faiths.
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So, Nehru also tried without much success to evolve a uniform civil code for the whole of Indian people irrespective of the distinction of religion and caste by introducing many measures of social legislation and to some extents his support for Hindu code bill as proposed by Ambedkar is also because of his belief in reforming the society within or religious groups or community within.

So, many measures he undertook, but there is also his acute sense of the time the circumstances which also enabled him to understand the limitation of his time or his context. So, he tried these measures, but remained compromised in his success or in his objectives. So, he once wrote that the word secular conveyed to him much more than its mere dictionary meaning especially in the context of the social condition prevailing in this country. According to D. E. Smith the definition of the secular state in Nehru was of a religiously neutral body. For example, a state protects all religion, but does not favor

one at the expense of others and does not itself adopt any religion as the state religion. It is not a theocratic state, it does not favor a particular a state over the other and yet it protects all the religions especially when there is a domination of one religious community over the other.

So, secondly, the process of secularization should extend to the social realms of day to day life which includes the social codes and rules of marriage, inheritance, civil and criminal law, political organization and indeed almost everything else. So, Nehruvian conception of secularism is not limited to the state laws and constitution, but also to transform or to influence everyday life in this society and the way society govern itself through the marriages law, inheritance laws, civil and criminal law etcetera. So, lastly the inclusion of provision of fundamental rights and the articles of 15, 25, 26, 28 and 325 further reinforce the secular agenda of Nehruvian state in India which is distinct from the Gandhian idea which provided equal amount of consideration and respect to all religious faith.

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**Critiques of Nehruvian model of secularism**

- As a liberal democrat, Nehru was mainly instrumental for inculcating into our Constitution some of the prominent liberal trends. However, Nehru's model of secularism is not free from criticism. Many scholars and political theorists have criticized his secularism on the following grounds;
- They criticized Nehru for his identification of secularism with a defence of minority rights, as if the only purpose of secularism is to equally respect all religions and to provide support to all of them.
- Nehruvian model of secularism hardly helped in countering intra-religious dominations, rather its main focus was on fighting inter-religious dominations. For this reason, the strength of Nehruvian secularism—its defence of minority became its weakness and became only a “pro-minority” secularism.

Now, to look at some of the critiques of Nehruvian model of secularism we find as a liberal democrat Nehru was mainly instrumental for inculcating into our constitution some of the prominent liberal trends. However, Nehru's model of secularism is not free from criticism and many scholars and political theorists have criticizes secularism on the following runs; first they criticize Nehru for his identification of secularism with a

defense of minority rights, as if only purpose of secularism is to equally respect all religions and to provide support to all of them.

So, here again one needs to make a distinction between Nehru's own conception of secularism or a secular state and what is termed as the Nehruvian model of secular state. So, as I was saying that Nehru himself one to use secularism much beyond the political sphere or the affair of the state to encompass all aspects of social life or individual community lives to eradicate or to remove all kind of hierarchy meet on the basis of caste, gender or religion. So, his understanding of religion or secularism is very different from the Nehruvian conception of secularism which came to be regarded merely as a protection of minority rights or many argue about the minority appeasement, but Nehruvian conception is much more broader and complex than this conception.

But, however, as many of his followers came to believe or the practices of a state came to be understood or perceived as merely as a protection of minor minority rights hence there is a critique to his conception of secularism. Second Nehruvian model of secularism hardly helped in countering intra religious dominations rather its main focus was on fighting inter religious dominations. So, for this region the strength of Nehruvian secularism or its defense of minority becomes its weakness and became only a pro minority secularism.

So, as we have discussed that the question of hierarchy within a religion so, Nehru did understand the intra religious domination of one group over the other group within the same belief or belief system or same religious tradition; however, the conception of secularism as being practiced hardly in contour or contour this hierarchy. So, within Hinduism we see the upper caste dominating the lower caste or Dalit reassertion or self dignity movements and similarly in Islam we see such kind of intra religious domination which hardly and get resolved by this Nehruvian model of secularism and that remains one of them critique of Nehruvian model of secularism.



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**Conclusion**

- Thus, Nehru regarded secularism as the most essential feature of a modern democratic society. Modern India, could not go back to the narrow medieval concept of a theocratic state. He said, *'If she were to develop like a modern State, how could she believe in the religious, theocratic conception of a state which considers people of other faiths as something beyond the pale?'* Thus, Nehru's secularism was a practical necessity in India as a solution to the problem of religious diversity which was a challenge to her unity, harmony and social stability.
- Chester Bowles writes of Nehru as *"One of his greatest achievements is the creation of a secular state in which the 45 million Muslims who chose not to go to Pakistan may live peacefully and worship as they please."*
- It was due to Nehru's efforts that India emerged and develop as a secular state in the mid twentieth century. Much before independence, he played a heroic role in the development of a secular basis for Indian polity.

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So, to conclude, however, we find that is Nehru regarded secularism as the most essential feature of a modern democratic society and modern India could not go back to the Nehru medieval concept of a theocratic state and he said if she were to develop like a modern state how could she believe in the religious theocratic conception of a state which considers people of other faiths as something beyond the pale, something which should be discarded or something which should be subjugated or controlled or regulated. So, Nehru secularism was a practical necessity in India as a solution to the problem of religious diversity which was a challenge to her unity, harmony and social stability.

So, Nehruvian conception of secularism is much beyond the philosophical or theoretical articulation of the term, but it was to give a proper effect in the everyday functioning of Indian state or developing a society which should be peaceful, harmonious despite of being despite of the presence of diverse religions or plurality in terms of religious faiths and belief systems. So, there is a practical concern or pragmatic approach to secularism in Nehruvian conception as well. So, it is a practical necessity or the pragmatic approach which also defines his conception of secularism and not just merely theoretical or intellectual interest in this question of secularism.

So, Charl Chester Bowles writes of Nehru as, *"One of his greatest achievements is the creation of his secular state in which the 45 millions of Muslims who chose not to go to Pakistan may live peacefully and worship as they please"*. So, one of the achievement of



Nehruvian state is also considering the fragile nature or the effect or aftermath of partition the polarization of community on the basis of a religion in such a context Nehru by enlarge was successful in giving a direction to Indian state in a secular giving a secular direction to Indian state without any consideration to the religious groups and communities of course, that is now somewhat again revisited in the context of post Babri politics post Babri Masjid demolitions politics in India. But, certainly for a very long time India despite of so many rights and communal tensions maintained a secular path and credit to credit for that must be and should be given to Nehruvian conception of secularism and Nehruvian ideals of secularism.

So, it was due to Nehru's efforts that India emerged and developed as a secular state in mid 20th century and where there is a great many organizations working towards revivalism of different religious varieties. So, much before independence he played a heroic role in development of a secular basis for Indian polity and he was instrumental along with Gandhi and others to give a decisive secular turn to anti colonial a struggle differentiating himself for the Hindu revivalist movement on the one hand and Muslim separatist on the other.

So, Nehru did play a very significant role much before the independence in giving the secular base to Indian polity Indian freedom a struggle defining Indian nationalism in a more secular sense than in a narrow revivalist sense of religious nationalism. So, and in the post independent India certainly when he was prime minister for 17 years he had decisive impact in shaping Indian state as a secular state and we did develop in we did succeed in developing a sense of confidence among the minorities or different communities in India and for a state the membership to a particular committee does not or do not entitle him for a preferential treatment or a special treatment.

So, that is all on Nehruvian conception of secularism. In the next class we will be discussing his views on internationalism and his contribution to foreign policy and some of the major contribution he made in international politics or in global arena.

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So, on this question of secularism in Nehru you can refer to some of these takes certainly this recent work by Rajeev Bhargava, *Nehru against Nehruvian: on Religion and Secularism* you get the complex or nuanced understanding of Nehru's concepts on Nehru's understanding of religion and how Nehruvian appropriation of Nehru ideals; Nehruvian I mean the followers of Nehru and their appropriation of Nehruvian model of religion or secularism was very simply simplistic and lead to a kind of problematic to the understanding of secularism so, that you can read from this article.

The other text you can look at is *Sources of Indian Traditions* and *Political Thought in Modern India* and also this text *Nehru and Secularism* from A. Perumal, *The Indian Journal of Political Science* and also Benjamin Zachari's *Nehru*. So, these are some of the texts you can refer to understand Nehru's concept of secularism. So, thank you and thanks for your patience.

Thank you all.