

SHRI GURUJI ON “HINDU VIEW OF LIFE”

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1. The Authentic Voice

Sister Nivedita in her foreword to the Complete works of Swami Vivekananda wrote in the year 1906, “What Hinduism needed, amidst the general disintegration of the modern era, was a rock where she could lie at anchor, an authoritative utterance in which she might recognize herself. And this was given to her, in these words and writings of the Swami Vivekananda” (page ix - Introduction - The Complete works of Swami Vivekananda Vol I). More or less in the same words could be described the message that Shri Guruji gave to his countrymen during the three decades of his Sarsanghachalakship of the RSS. Like Swami Vivekananda, Shri Guriji’s ideas have come down to us mostly through the lectures he delivered and the letters he wrote on innumerable occasions. He neither had the time nor the inclination to sit down and write any book as such, though his skill, ability, scholarship and mastery over language for the task were unquestionable. To the question why in spite of his thorough knowledge of history, he did not write down a book on history, Shri Guruji’s reply was typical. “We are here to make history. It is for others to write.” In his endless travels, and meetings with people from all strata of society – rich and poor, intellectuals and illiterate – and in his almost daily lectures and discourses, Shri Guruji dealt with every aspect of life, both in their practical and philosophical dimensions. He was eminently qualified for such a daunting job. These viewpoints have a unique significance. They are not mere philosophical treatises. Shri Guruji was not just an academic philosopher. No doubt, he had mastered the crux and complexities of the Hindu philosophy. But, as a down-to-earth, practical leader of men, guide and philosopher of a multi-faceted countrywide movement, he had tested his philosophical wisdom by experience and experiment in his every day life and contact. He never lost touch with concrete situations and burning problems. As such, his viewpoint, while remaining deeply rooted in the Hindu spiritual tradition, had intense practical relevance.

But, Shri Guruji never got stuck up in the problems and travails of the immediate present. Though he never failed to give practical guidelines for the immediate problems of the organizations and the Hindu society, he had always kept a long-term perspective and never swerved from the national and the spiritual angle. Even while guiding politicians who approached him for advice, Shri Guruji never counseled expediency or unprincipled compromise. He belonged to the tradition of the Rishis who were the safe custodians of unerring wisdom.

All this was possible because he lived and worked during what could be termed a Yuga Sandhi. He belonged as much to the glorious traditions of the past as to the future with its immense possibilities. He was born into a family tradition enriched itself by rigorous and austere religious practices. His parentage left a deep and indelible impress of uncompromising spiritual values, of strict and rigorous adherence to religious practices and observances. His education at the most famous university – Benares Hindu University – where the atmosphere was throbbing with the living presence of Mahamana Malaviyaji molded him in a manner not possible elsewhere. The rare privilege to come under the spiritual magnetism of Swami Akhandanandaji, a direct disciple of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and the Gurubhai of Swami Vivekananda, gave Shri Guruji a unique opportunity to nourish his in-born spiritual tendencies to the fullest extent. To add to all these, Shri Guruji came into intimate contact with Dr. Hedgewar who was the very personification of dedication to Hindu nation. The touch of Dr. Hedgewar gradually transformed

and finally decided the direction of Shri Guruji's momentous life. In him, we find a blending of the influences of the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda and Shri Aurobindo and also Lokamanya Tilak, the father of Indian unrest. This was a rare combination pregnant with tremendous possibilities. As Guruji's life unfolded through its various stages, the world witnessed the presence of an organizer, a transformer, a philosopher and a prophet, all rolled into one. Shri Dattopant Thengadi with his intuitive perception described Shri Guruji as "The great sentinel". With genuine poetic inspiration Shri Thengadiji sang the glory of Shri Guruji in the following couplets.

O Mighty master! To the tune of Thy finger
The oceans dance and the mountains move
Crowns are raised and melted down

Thou art supreme, - Here and Above. (... p5, The Great Sentinel)

2. The Mission

The mission, the destiny, entrusted to Shri Guruji as the head of the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh was to bring about national regeneration. This required a restatement of the tenets and practices, views and objectives of Sanatana Dharma in terms of the new Yuga Dharma, in a manner both intelligible and applicable to the modern generation. Moreover, this had to be done in the context of the emerging world situation. No country, much less an important one like Bharat, could live in isolation. The way Bharat shaped itself was of critical relevance to the shaping up of the world. Shri Guruji knew it only too well. Though his prime concern was national resurgence and reconstruction, Shri Guruji knew that Bharat had a global role to play. The international situation that presented itself at that time was one of

great peril. There seemed to be no option left before the world. It was in the grip of two conflicting systems and ideologies

– capitalism and communism - locked in a no holds barred combat, each claiming to be the sole custodian of a world redeeming philosophy and a model for humanity.

Many people falsely believed that the Hindu regeneration movement had nothing to offer to mitigate the distress or to resolve the dilemma faced by the world. To them, the approach of Shri Guruji was based on narrow Hindu sectarianism whereas the situation demanded an alternate worldview, which could provide hope and cheer for the future of all humanity.

Shri Guruji unambiguously stated that much before capitalism and communism were even thought of, our forefathers in India had been thinking about the whole world and its all-round welfare. The prayer on their lips was “Lokassamasta Sukhino Bhavantu”. Let the whole world be happy. While the west based its philosophy on principles of competition and conflict, and envisaged survival only for the fittest, the Hindu paradigm visualized the entire world as one family. The highest that the west could promise was the greatest good of the greatest number. Bharat wanted to ensure that every one however small or insignificant had a proper and worthy place in the scheme of life. According to Shri Guruji, the different western views were incapable of offering a way of life, wherein not only human beings but also the entire creation will find a safe and secure place to occupy. This is inherent in their philosophy whether it is capitalist or communist. Both are compartmental and not comprehensive, because they are based on gross materialistic approach. Neither capitalism, nor communism that came as a reaction to the capitalism, could provide a lasting and peaceful solution because both were essentially materialistic. It was only the Hindu approach based on a spiritual view of things that could provide the real alternative. Spirituality does not compartmentalize. It does not reject material needs and requirements of man. It only locates and evaluates them in the total context. It gives a new view and vision of life, which includes both material welfare and spiritual enlightenment. Materialism does not ensure full growth of man. It indeed dwarfs him by abolishing the spiritual dimension altogether. For the materialist, whether a capitalist or a communist, man is essentially a body with or without a soul whereas spirituality envisages man as an embodied Divine spark or

soul. It encompasses both the aspects and envisages a perfect or an integral man. Shri Guruji called him ‘Poorna Manav’. This concept of ‘Poorna Manav’, which Shri Guruji invoked, was the cornerstone of the philosophy of integral humanism elaborately propounded by Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya. “Integral humanism” was indeed a restatement of the Hindu social philosophy based on Sanatana Dharma in the context of the present situation which is posited not merely as another alternative or just a Third Way but as the real way ahead for humanity sandwiched between capitalism and communism in those days.

3. Not by Materialism Alone

Shri Guruji was of the firm view that neither communism nor capitalism could ever unite the world. The reason he gave is fundamental. Materialistic philosophy which considers man as basically a physical animal and which considers the fulfillment of material desires and wants as the supreme need of man can only generate competition and conflict and not Unity and

Harmony. The reason is simple. At the material plane, there is only diversity and difference. They foster concepts of separatism and exclusivism. For people who see only at the level of material reality there is nothing that unifies or integrates. There is no reason why they should think of cooperation. It is only when we look beneath the apparent diversities that we come to realize that there is an underlying unity though subtle which unites all these gross entities into one integrated whole.

Shri Guruji stated:

“From the materialist point of view we are all gross entities, each separate and exclusive in itself, who can have no bonds of mutual affinity or affection. There can also be no inner restraint in such beings, which can make them control their selfishness from running amuck in the interest of the humanity as a whole.

“After all, any arrangement evolved for achieving world welfare can be fruitful only to the extent the men behind them would mould their individual and national conduct in tune with the welfare of humanity. Without that supreme urge, any scheme, however good its purpose may be, will only provide one more alluring mask for the aggrandizement of power-drunk nations. That has been the uniform verdict of history right up to the present times.

“Our ancient Hindu philosophers, therefore, had turned their gaze to a plane higher than materialism. They delved deep into the mysteries of the human soul, well beyond the reach of material science, and discovered the Ultimate Reality which pervades all Creation, the one great common principle present in all beings whatever the name we may give it - Soul, God, Truth, Reality or Nothingness. It is the occasional realization of this common entity that inspires us to strive for the happiness of others. The ‘I’ in me, being the same as the ‘I’ in the other beings, makes me react to the joys and sorrows of my fellow living beings just as I react to my own. This genuine feeling of identity born out of the community of the inner entity is the real driving force behind our natural urge for human unity and brotherhood. Thus it is evident that world unity and human welfare can be made real only to the extent mankind realizes this common Inner Bond which alone can subdue the passions and discords stemming from materialism, broaden the horizon of the human mind and harmonize the individual and national aspirations with the welfare of mankind.”

Shri Guruji was of the considered view that the Bharateeya system was the only one which ensured individual freedom without compromising social development “The West relies on two systems: democracy and communism. Democracy, as we see, has led to the growth of selfishness and set up man against man. There is no peace to man. Spirituality has no chance to grow there. The self-praise and the condemnations of others, which are normally indulged in during elections, kill spirituality.

Communism on the other hand has led to the regimentation of mind; it destroys the individuality of man. But man is not a mere animal to be content with eating and procreating. He has an urge, which goes beyond that, which cannot be met merely by the material things.

In our system individual liberty and social solidarity were both ensured. The individual was freed from the shackles of economic bondage, because he was assured of a profession from his very birth. Even in the West, thinkers have begun pondering on these lines. This system

ensures a clear way to rise to Godhead, devoid of the worry for worldly needs. Thus it was that among all the castes, saints of the highest order were born. This is a wonderful democracy on the spiritual basis. All are one on that basis”.

4. The Hindu Framework

Shri Guruji had solutions for every problem. Though his life was dedicated to the task of organizing Hindu society, people from every walk of life, approached him with problems of every kind ranging from personal to the international. Since Shri Guruji's philosophy and view of life was based on the sound and scientific principles of Sanatana Dharma, his view and vision were clear and unambiguous. That is not to say that his opinions were rigidly conditioned by principles enunciated ages ago. Unlike the Semitic religions, Hindu Dharma has always been flexible and adaptive. Sanatana Dharma was basic and eternal. At the same time our sages had taken account of the inevitability of changes due to unceasing flow of time. So, principles of Sanatana Dharma had to be applied, not blindly and fanatically, but taking into view the requirements of changing situations. Shri Guruji understood this very well and gave guidance accordingly.

Society is in continuous flux. No social order can remain unaffected by the flux. The wisdom of the leaders lies in evolving suitable norms without sacrificing the fundamental laws. This has to take into account the individual aspirations also. Shri Guruji believed that the aim and object of the Hindu social order was to create perfected individuals – Poorna Manav – and then take them further up, lift Nara into Narayana. This could be achieved only if the entire social order is built up to create the environment suited to this. In-depth analysis of human psychology led Guruji to the same conclusion as envisaged by our ancient Rishis and scriptures. Man is in search of happiness. But he does not know the real source of happiness. So, he goes about searching for it in the external world under the impression that acquisition of various objects will give him the happiness he is seeking for. But, after innumerable trials and errors, he comes to the conclusion that after all happiness is a state of mind and it is within oneself to seek for. The temporary joys he gets from outside objects are not only evanescent but also produce reaction and revulsion. Unalloyed Bliss is lodged within one's own soul. Along with this realization comes another realization that this soul is the same in every human being. So, he realizes the essential unity of all. The limited 'I' becomes unlimited and engrosses everything. It is this broadening of the ego and its identification with the 'All' is really what is called liberation or Moksha. That is the ultimate objective of every human being. Such a liberated soul is a Poorna Manav.

But, then, this liberation is not to be achieved in another world or in another birth. It is to be achieved now and here, not in isolation but in the society in which we are born and brought up. Liberation is not from the society but from the prison of ego and selfishness. Such liberated individuals are the cream of the society –the salt of the earth, the true leaders and path breakers.

Shri Guruji believed that such perfection of individual is possible only if the society around him provides the congenial environment. Our ancient Hindu society was, in fact, built up with this as the final aim. Moksha was considered the ultimate goal of the individual. But, no one

can attain Moksha unaided, at one go. The human personality is constituted in such a way that during its journey to the goal, acquisition of wealth and enjoyment of happiness are in-built necessities for a total development of the personality. Only then could one be qualified for the ultimate step. So, society had to make arrangements for the creation of wealth as well as opportunities for enjoyment. These were called Artha and Kama. But, by the very nature of the limitations inherent it is evident that there could be no unlimited wealth or enjoyment. Therefore, our ancestors insisted that there must be a law and a system which would regulate wealth and enjoyment in such a way that no one will be at a disadvantage. This rule and system was called Dharma. It is only a society based on Dharma, allowing legitimate scope for every individual to acquire wealth and enjoy life with restraint that can provide the atmosphere for deserving individuals to go

beyond and graduate for liberation. Only such a society could be called a perfect society. This was the scheme of life, which was evolved in our country right from the beginning. These were called the four-fold Purusharthas. Gururji considered this to be the cornerstone of an ideal social order. These have nothing sectarian or parochial. They are indeed universal.

Along with this, the four-fold divisions into four varnas, and the four stages of life in the form of the ashramas were also part of the Hindu social organization; they sustained Hindu society for long. But now times have changed. Shri Gururji was realistic enough to recognize that the Varna Vyavastha and the Ashrama Vyavastha could not be practiced under the existing circumstances. So, he categorically stated, "As the older, dried branches fall off a growing tree to give place to new ones, likewise, the society would shed Varna Vyavastha the existing social structure at one time and give place for a new necessary one. This is a natural process of the development of the society."

Similarly, the Ashrama Vyavastha also could be introduced with suitable modifications to the best advantage of the individual as well as the society. That would give occasion for the utilization of immense amount of social capital, which is wasted under the present unplanned, chaotic condition. It is encouraging to find that the concept of 'Vanaprastha' is slowly catching the imagination of the society.

Shri Gururji was of the confirmed view that the Hindu social order based on Sanatana Dharma with suitable modifications has very great relevance today. It has none of the weaknesses of either capitalism or communism but has, at the same time, the advantages which they claim to possess. The Hindu social order combines individual initiative with social discipline. It does not stifle the individual like the communism nor does it place society at the mercy of individual self-aggrandizement. Shri Gururji believed that such a social order, if established in India, could be a source of inspiration for other countries as well. Based on these fundamental principles Shri Gururji had also given us hints regarding the economic and political system, which we should evolve in order to give free and full expression to our national personality and its aspirations.

5. In the Rishi Tradition – Mantra Dristan of Hindu Nation

Imbibing the Rishi tradition and carrying it forward Shri Guruji looked upon the Motherland as a manifestation of Divinity. This was a unique tradition from the dawn of history in Bharat. The 'Vedic Sooktaas' have hymns singing the glory of the Motherland. This reverential attitude continued, uninterrupted through the ages. Bemkimchandra's '**Vandemaataram**' describing Bharat as Lakshmi, Durga and Saraswati was only a new version of the age long sentiment. Shri Guruji fully absorbed this. Every little drop of water from our rivers and every little bit of sand, every mountain and every lake – in fact everything related to and reminding us of the Motherland, was the flesh of his flesh and the blood of his blood. There was total identification. The various languages spoken, the various forms of worship followed, the variety of dresses and dishes conveyed to him the richness and colourfulness of the beauty of India's soul. The history – be it one of sorrow and shame or success and joy reverberated in his mind with the same resonance as it did at that time to the people who experienced it. All these together constituted Hindu nationalism, which was identical with '*Sanatana Dharma*'. It was the protection, preservation and promotion of this eternal nationalism that was the life mission, which Shri Guruji inherited and worked hard to carry forward. More than everything else it was this undying spirit of Hindu nationalism that was dear to his heart, because he knew that it constituted the national soul. Economics and politics, state and its administration, Constitution and Governance, all the limbs and organs of the state were, in a sense, subservient to this great ideal. Not that they are unimportant or insignificant. Each of them has a vital role, but only if and when it serves the purpose of the health and vitality of the nation. Shri Guruji looked upon the work of the '*Rashtreeya Swayamsevak Sangh*' as embodying the national identity. Every other activity started by *Swayamsevaks* is meant to serve one aspect or other of this all-embracing national pursuit.

From a deep and intimate study of the history of our nation both from experience and academic sources Shri Guruji realized that the real strength of Bharat lay in its spirituality and Dharma. The Hindu society could overcome all the vicissitudes of history by relying on these factors. Her history was made, her socio-economic evolution was shaped, her value system was formulated by Dharma & spirituality. This shraddha made her capable of climbing the highest reaches of all-round achievements and success. Even in periods of decline and downfall it was these inner reserves of strength that helped India to survive and also to regain the lost glory. Shri Guruji also realized that this was possible only because India had produced an unbroken succession of saints and sages, who were known in our tradition as the 'Rishis'. Rishis were people, wholly devoted to the acquisition and spread of knowledge and its propagation in the society. They were the custodians of the norms, values and virtues of our social and collective life. They coveted neither power nor wealth. They scrupulously remained away from these two. That enhanced their moral authority and hold on the society. Even the kings and rulers paid respect to them and took instructions from them, not only in spiritual matters but also in mundane affairs, because everything had to be governed by Dharma. Being totally unselfish, the Rishis could be trusted to give right guidance at the right time. Shri Guruji in his speeches has often pointed out, how right from the time of Rama and Krishna, this tradition was established in our country. Later on Buddha and Sankara, Vidyananda and Samarth Ramadas carried on this unique tradition. In recent times again it

was persons like Swami Vivekananda and Shri. Aurobindo, who were modern Rishis in the true sense of the term, that gave guidance to the nation.

Whenever there was internal decay of dharma within the society these Rishis came forward to re-interpret Sanatana dharma and propagated suitable value systems and patterns of behaviour keeping the living touch with the roots of our culture intact. Whenever the society was faced with foreign aggression or overpowered by unhealthy alien cultural influences, it was again the Rishis who made necessary adjustments possible while sticking firmly to spirituality and Dharma. The Rishi tradition was the backbone of this ancient society. It had to be maintained.

It was from this point of view Shri Guruji looked upon the Sangh. The main responsibility of the Sangh was to create an organized strength of the Hindu society on the basis of Dharma. It is indeed a divine work. It will invigorate every aspect of national life without getting involved or identifying with, any one of them. Its capacity to inspire and guide is strictly moral. Shri Guruji visualized the Sangh to play the vital role, which the Rishi tradition had played in our society and see that the nation does not deviate from the path of Dharma. For this, it has to be above party politics and politics of power, above the corrupting influence of wealth, name and fame. Swayamsevaks as members of the society and nationals of this country have the right and duty to involve themselves and play their role in all the areas of their life and work. But Sangh as such would remain away and aloof from partisan involvements of any kind, only guiding by its moral strength invoking the national interests. This is a delicate and difficult job, which has to be undertaken with great care and sagacity. Pit-falls are many and are to be avoided. By whatever name it is called, this unique Rishi tradition alone is the guarantee for India to be faithful to the national soul and carry its mission forward under all circumstances.

6. A Platform for Dharmacharyas

Another insight that Shri Guruji brought into the activities of Sangh was the key role that *Sanyasins* and Dharma Gurus belonging to various sects and sampradayas had to undertake. *Sanyasins* were always held in the highest respect by the Hindu society everywhere, at all levels. They have a tremendous influence over the people's psyche. Their words and lives mould people and determine social values and behaviour. Every religious sect has its own head who is a *Sanyasin* or a Dharma Guru to whom its entire member pay obeisance. To a very large extent the Hindu social organization is their making. There are innumerable such sects under the respective *Sanyasins*. Shri Guruji, knowing the pulse of the people, realized that the Hindu society could be effectively organized only if these large numbers of *Sanyasins* are taken into confidence and they

also accept the need for an organized Hindu society. Social changes and reforms could be effectively brought about if these heads tune their activities in that direction. No worthwhile change for the better could be forced down the throat of the people by mere legislation. In India it had always been the responsibility of Dharmacharyas to bring about social changes. Evil customs could be abolished, new practices could be introduced and social integration could be brought about easily and smoothly if the Dharmacharyas took the lead. Shri Guruji

saw that the Hindu society was in very bad shape. Out-dated customs still prevailed; untouchability continued. There was stagnation all around. Masses of people were getting converted. Service mentality was lacking. Organized effort could not be initiated. Social consciousness and inner dynamism were lacking. More over new spiritual organizations were springing up with modern out look while the older ones, were unable to adjust themselves to modern requirements. Even the Mutt heads and mission heads were finding it impossible to come together due to age-old beliefs and traditions. Unity of purpose of the various spiritual heads was the need of the hour. To bring them together on a common platform was a Herculean task, but that was the only way to strengthen the Hindu society. As Swami Vivekanada had stated, in order to achieve true national unity the scattered spiritual forces had to be brought together. Shri Guruji attempted the impossible and made it possible. Not only did they come together on a common platform, but also adopted unanimous resolutions and pledged to work for common objectives like the abolition of untouchability and social inequalities. In fact through the Vishwa Hindu Parishad Shri Guruji revived the millennia old practice of all the sampradayas and their heads coming together, explaining to each other their respective view points and creating a national consensus on the fundamental principles Sanatana Dharma while cherishing and nourishing the natural healthy diversities of beliefs, customs and practices. That was a unique contribution for which Shri Guruji will be remembered for all time to come.

7. Problems of Hindu Society

Apart from the philosophical framework of the Hindu approach to life and its problems, Shri Guruji had expressed his views on almost all aspects and problems confronting the contemporary world. They are too numerous to be included in the compass of a small book of this size. We shall only try to select some from among them, which are illustrative in character.

Regarding the much misunderstood word “Hindu” Shri Guruji was of the view that ‘the Hindu’ denotes a society. It is a word that is found in our Shastras. It is formed with the letter Hi from the Himalayas and Indu Sarovar, conveying the entire stretch of our Motherland. Shri Guruji quotes from the Bruhaspati Agama.

*Himaalayam samaarabhya yaavad-indu-sarovaram
Tam devanirmitam desam Hindusthaanam
prachakshate.*

Though the word Arya is an old and proud name, Shri Guruji was not in favour of using that word in view of the “Cooked-up Aryan-Dravidian controversy”. The word Bharateeya, though very ancient and normally unobjectionable it has acquired a connotation slightly different and ambivalent and as such cannot be a substitute or equivalent to the word Hindu.

Hindu Rashtra, according to Shri Guruji is not merely a religious concept. He defines Hindu Rashtra in the following terms. “Let me try to clear, at the very outset, one misconception about ‘Hindu Rashtra’. The word Hindu is not merely ‘religious’. It denotes a ‘people’ and their highest values of life. We, therefore, in our concept of nation, emphasize a few basic things: unqualified devotion to the motherland and our cultural ideals, pride in our history which is very ancient, respect for our great forefathers, and lastly, a determination in

every one of us to build up a common life of prosperity and security. All this comes under the one caption: 'Hindu Rashtra'. We are not concerned with an individual's mode of worship".

When he was asked the question whether he opted for a Hindu state, Shri Guruji explained his concept in very simple terms "The word Hindu state is unnecessarily misinterpreted as a theocratic one which would wipe out all other sects. Our present state is in a way a Hindu State. When the vast majority of people are Hindus, the State is democratically Hindu. It is also a

secular state and all those who are now non-Hindus have also equal rights to live here. The State does not exclude any one who lives here from occupying any position of honour in the State. It is unnecessary to call ours a Hindu State or a secular state".

Many people, supposed to be very intelligent and highly learned are confused about the fundamental unity of Hindu society on account of the multitude of faiths, sects, castes, languages, customs and habits. They look upon Hindu society as a conglomerate of disparate and even conflicting elements. But Shri Guruji disagrees. He says, "Well, this question stems from a superficial view of our Hindu life. A tree, for example, appears to be full of heterogeneous parts like the branches, leaves, flowers and fruits. The trunk differs from the branches, the branches from the leaves- all as if entirely different from one another. But we know that all these apparent diversities are only the varied manifestations of the same tree. The same sap runs through and nourishes all those parts. So is the case with the diversities of our social life, which have been evolved down these millennia. They are no more a source of dissension and disruption than a leaf or a flower is in the case of a tree. This kind of natural evolution has been a unique feature of our social life".

Shri Guruji's views about the role of war in settling conflicts among nations and place of violence in society are clear and specific. According to Hindu Dharma war is the last resort, not to be undertaken lightly at the very first provocation. "It should be used as a surgeon's knife. Even as a surgeon uses his knife to perform an operation to get rid of an infected portion to save the patient, so also violence in certain extraordinary circumstances can be used to cure the society of any malady that needs such a surgical intervention. Further, certain other conditions should be fulfilled. One who applies violence should have perfect control over it, should know when, where, to what extent and how far to apply it, when to end it and how to repair the damage caused, if any"

He was absolutely non-dogmatic about certain things, which people very often consider to be basic to Hindu Dharma. On the question of vegetarianism Shri Guruji is of the view that our Shastras have taken the comprehensive nature of the world into consideration and made rules for different living being to suit their different tastes, attitudes etc. They have not made a flat rule applicable to one and all.

Regarding cow slaughter Shri Guruji looks upon cow as a special case, which cannot be classed with other animals. Even in the Vedas cow is called that which should not be killed (Aghnya).

Shri Guruji considered that Cow slaughter began in our country by the foreign invader to stamp out every vestige of self-respect in Hindus. It is a sign of slavery, which should be removed in the interest of national self-respect. There are other reasons also why Cow slaughter should be put an end to. There are so many grounds on which a ban is not only

justified but also necessary. Even from the point of view of economics Cow slaughter is a bad bargain if not suicidal. Shri Guruji felt that all these should be explained to the people.

“However, I look at it from another standpoint also. Cow slaughter began in this country with foreign domination. The Mohammedans started it and the Britishers continued it. Therefore it is a stigma on us. We have now achieved independence and with it all such stigmas ought to be removed. Otherwise we will be still labouring under mental slavery. Now instead of being removed it has increased manifold”. Regarding the unique characteristics of Hinduism, which are not found in other religions. Shri Guruji makes the following points. “The idea of *Ekam sad vipraah bahudhaa vadanti* (Truth is one, sages call it variously) is one of unique ideas of Hinduism. Secondly, whereas the others have been pursuing an outward search for happiness, our philosophy has concentrated on the inward search. It is this inward happiness that has been termed as *shreyas*. The social order, if it has to secure maximum happiness to all, must be able to ensure *shreyas* to one and all. The philosophical basis for the incentive to do this lies in our concept of the ‘community of soul’ and its realization. Bhagavad-Geeta has said *Ishwarah sarva-bhootaanaam hriddesherjuna tishthati*.

Such a categorical assertion of the identity of soul in all living beings is found nowhere else”.

Shri Guruji was not taken in by the “Great upsurge of religious fervour in the country” His considered view was that one has to judge it from the point of view of the effect it produces on the society. Shri Guruji asked. “Are they able to instill in the people’s mind a noble resolve to put an end to their present-day self-centered life and to live up to those sacred teachings of character, service and scarifies? I feel the answer is clearly a ‘no’.

Mere momentary upsurges of emotion will not build character, Often; effusion of emotions will only shatter the nerves and make the person weaker than before, leaving him a moral wreck. It is just like a liquor-addict who is left imbecile after the effects of liquor subside”. A tree has to be judged by its fruits, not merely by its foliage.

On the question of “Akhand Bharat” Shri Guruji accepted that it was his dream and there was nothing to be apologetic about it. Explaining it further he said; “Our national prosperity and happiness were razed to dust when we thought of *Brahma satyam jaganmithyaa* only. A similar fate overtook us when we were immersed in our narrow personal and family life alone. So, both these extremes – ativyaapti and avyaapti – must be avoided and a middle path adopted. We get that balance. When we take up the golden mean between the two extremes in the form of ‘nation’.

8. Sanatana Dharma Vs Other Religions

Shri Guruji’s personality was essentially spiritual. Naturally, his outlook on every subject had the spiritual orientation. The spiritual enlightenment, which pervaded his whole life, was the result of intense Swadhyaya and Sadhana. But, he never gave spiritual discourses or even answered questions on spirituality or spiritual experiences. Only people very close and intimate with him could get occasional glimpses of his Sadhana or Siddhi. But, people in the

spiritual field and those who were heads of spiritual institutions were aware of this dimension of Shri Guruji, which he zealously kept away from the public gaze. Such people had a high esteem of Shri Guruji's attainments, so much so that when the Peetha of Sankaracharya of Dwaraka fell vacant and had no immediate successor, the name that was suggested by the concerned people was that of Shri Guruji. They wrote to him imploring to accept the great seat. Nobody had any doubt about Shri Guruji's spiritual qualification for the high office. But Shri Guruji politely turned down the offer on the ground of his being too small and instead suggested the name of a person who according to Shri Guruji was qualified enough. The suggestion was accepted.

Shri Guruji's views on religion was truly in the Hindu tradition, reestablished and reinstated by the Sri Ramakrishna Vivekananda order. Contrary to the image that is sought to be given to Shri Guruji by vested interests, Shri Guruji was no fanatic, because Hinduism by its very nature is liberal and inclusive. It had no difficulty in accepting the validity of any form of faith or religion so long as it catered to the moral and spiritual evolution of its followers. Even the attitude of certain religions, which claim exclusive possession of the ultimate truth, can be understood so long as it does not impinge on the religious freedom of others who hold a contrary belief. What is objectionable is deliberate, organized effort to impose one's religion upon others. This was Shri Guruji's attitude also.

"We Hindus believe that each individual can worship the Form of his choice in his own way. All can attain Him-if the effort be sincere and honest. And that is why Hinduism is not a proselytizing religion. The very idea of conversion starts with the assumption that mine is the only sure and correct way and all others must be converted to it. Do you believe in this? This, if said in respect of attainment of God, will be speaking too low of Him. In fact in Hinduism we not only tolerate another man's religion or way of worship, but we have a respect for it. It is not 'conversion' into Hinduism. It is only giving an opportunity for those who had been made to change the faith by force of circumstances in the past, to return to their ancestral faith. Is it not a fact that only a handful of Muslims came to our country from outside? All the rest have only changed their faith for well-known reasons. Returning to one's ancestral faith is not conversion at all, it is merely home-coming".

What Guruji objected to was the abuse of religion as a separatist ideology by vested political interests. Shri Guruji firmly asserted "politicians are playing their own game by dividing the

people more and more. In all such communal matters, the villain of the peace is the politician. Persons of great merit, character and devotion to God, who should have been the real leaders of the people, are nowhere."

The same attitude could be extended to Christians and Christianity also. Shri Guruji's approach was not one of expediency but one based on principles of Hindu culture and philosophy. Wherever he has criticized or condemned Muslims or Christians, it would be seen that the target of criticism was not religion as such but the abuse of religion by politicians who promoted separatism and even anti-nationalism.

When the heated question about the controversial issue of a common civil code arose, Shri Guruji did not lend his support to that idea. Guruji said that while a humanitarian and reformist attitude in these matters is all right, a mechanical levelers-attitude would not be correct.

Guruji said that he will be happy if the Muslims arrived at the conclusion that polygamy is not good for them. He would not like compulsion. His view (or conviction) was that India always had infinite variety and still for long stretches of time India was one strong nation. What were needed were Unity and Harmony and not Uniformity. True to the spirit of Sanatana Dharma, Shri Guruji stated, “We must respect, not merely tolerate all other faiths. Ours is not Sahishnutavad but Sammanavad” (not tolerance but respect).

Shri Guruji firmly believed that when religion is used for political purposes or religion looks for political support for its existence or expression, it is bound to lose its purity and capacity to assure the goal which the founders had set before them; it becomes a handmaid of power, degenerates and causes ruin all around.

“Even after understanding all this, there are some who feel that political power is essential even to spread our *dharmic* ideology. In the past, Christianity and Islam, they say, spread far and wide because of the political power they wielded. But on a closer study, we will find that ultimately political power will never solve the problem. For instance, the Government and most of the people were ranged against that single individual, Jesus Christ. After he was crucified on the cross, his disciples had no one to guide them. But their hearts were charged with idealism. Fired with the spirit of Christ, with the faith and zeal of their new realization, they spread far and wide in the world. And the world bowed at their feet. Then they had no political power. But when, in course of time, their successors fell a prey to the lure of political power, corruption and degradation entered their ranks. The present plight of Christianity rendered powerless to mould the life of its own Christian countries and even made a tool in the hands of imperialistic political powers is the direct outcome of the pollution of their ranks with political ambition. The perversion of Islam at the hands of its power-drunk followers-miscalled the spread of Islam-is too well known. It had nothing to do with the awakening of the spiritual values of life”.

9. Various Issues and their Solutions

Shri Guruji was not a saint who saw a sin in every social evil. He was a social scientist who looked for the cause – effect relationship and sought to remedy the bad effect by removing the root cause. When the editor of the illustrated weekly of India told Shri Guruji that his next issue will be on the subject of prostitution and expressed the fear, that Guruji would not even touch it with a pair of tongs, Shri Guruji disarmed him by a candid explanation. Shri Guruji said, “It all depends upon how you bring out the issue, and what will be the idea behind it. If it is done only with a view to appeal to the low tastes of the public, then definitely no decent man will relish it. If it is brought out to throw light on the problem from various angles, then it *should* be read by one and all. It should also be recognized that this practice stems from a human weakness, which has made this profession a social need for thousands of years. As such, it is well nigh impossible to root out completely this profession. Then, the only approach to this problem would be to improve the conditions of those women who are in this profession, give them education, make them devoted to Dharma and God”.

Shri Guruji believed that every Hindu, belonging to whichever caste, has a right for ‘Yajnopaveta’ and ‘Gotra’. If they do not know their ‘Gotra’, have lost touch with it, they can be

given the 'Gotra' of the priest. That was being done in the olden days and has sanction of the Shastras, Shri Guruji pointed out that in the shastras, it is also said that all those who do not come under any 'Gotra' belong to 'Kaasyap Gotra', because all are supposed to have been born from 'Kaasyap'. They should be given equal rights and footings in the matter of religious rites in temple worship, in the study of Vedas and in general in all our social and religious affairs. This according to him was the only right solution for all the problems of castism found in the Hindu society. Shri Guruji also submitted these suggestions to all the Sankaraachaaryas. Going a step further Shri Guruji was willing to accept Muslims and Christians desirous of returning to Hindu fold by giving them a 'Gotra' with some little 'Praayaschitha'.

Shri Guruji had given considerable thought to serious questions of economic development like industrialization and had expressed his views which are in tune with our age old Bharateeya culture, fully taking into account the changed situation. For example, on the question of the pattern of industrialization Shri Guruji said, "Nationalization of industries means State Capitalism which is as good or as bad as Capitalism. I look forward to a system of Industrial Cooperatives wherein every member of the Cooperatives – why every member of the society at large – would understand both his responsibilities and obligations more than his rights and the way to evade duties. Bharatiya culture lays stress on the duties and obligations of oneself to the community. I would like free Bharat to recapture that spirit. Small scale and home industries should be spread everywhere. They should feed the bigger centers of industry. For example, Japan's industrial structure is like that. In cycle industry each part can be separately made and assemblage can be done at one center. Only some specified industries pertaining to Defense etc, may be single large- scale endeavours. This alone will ensure a harmonious build up of agriculture and industry. It will also help to eliminate the growing disparity between village and city life".

Shri Guruji was not in agreement with those who considered industrialization, mechanization and economic progress as almost synonymous. To a question whether this approach is right, Shri Guruji replied, "That is the reason why the world is heading towards conflicts and wars. In the competition for the disposal of surplus production to other countries, conflict for markets develops after a stage. Fight ensues. Secondly, men are thrown out of work by machines. But this should not be. The Western theory of creating multiplicity of wants, more machinery to meet them and so on, will only result in making man the slave of machine. It should be clear that machine is for the happiness of man. It is like *Bhasmaasur*, and will destroy the maker if not held in control. Persons with moral force and wisdom can alone control and direct such a *Bhasmaasur*. Men with such sovereign authority must be able to guide the destiny of man".

Shri Guruji's well considered view on how to impart religious values in our school curriculum with out bringing in any particular religion as such is worth recollecting. "Certain fundamentals can be accepted, viz., belief in a Universal Being pervading the entire universe, and having the realization of that Supreme Principle as one's aim of life. There are many. But broadly speaking, whatever may be the way, controlling the mind and preventing it from going the evil way is the basis. The principles of Yoga form the basis for all religious life, whatever the denomination of one's faith be. Concentration of mind requires some training in Yoga.

Emphasis should be on instilling *shama damaadi shatsampatti* (the six-fold virtues like tranquility, self-restraint) in the children. Now, in the present system, only some information and bread-earning tuition is all that is imparted". He has also suggested certain courses that can be easily adopted for this purpose.

"Education on a mass-scale giving the right understanding of religion –not the non-religious education that is being imparted nowadays by our politicians, but good, religious education. Give people true knowledge of Islam. Give people true knowledge of Hinduism. Educate them to know that all religions teach man to be selfless, holy and pious. Then, teach history as it is. Set right the present distortions. If there was aggression from the Muslim invaders in the past, say so, and also that the aggressors were foreigners and have nothing in common with the Muslims here. Let our Muslims here say that they are of this land and that the past aggressors and their aggressions are

not part of their heritage. Instead of being taught what is true, the Muslims now are taught the distorted version. Truth cannot be hidden for long. However long you hide it, ultimately it comes out and creates only far worse feelings. Therefore I say teach history as it is. If Afzal Khan was killed by Shivaji, say that a foreign aggressor was killed by a national hero".

On the matter of teaching Sanskrit to students Shri Guruji regretted that there was no attempt even up to the college level to make the students speak simple Sanskrit, as it is done in the case of English. His mind revolted against the practice of even thesis for Doctorate be written in English. Sanskrit is a living language. There are many who speak it. Even to day books and papers are published in Sanskrit. With all these, Shri Guruji wondered why Sanskrit is taboo.

Shri Guruji had very clear ideas about the special features of the Hindu concept of education. He says "Recognizing and bringing out the diverse talents latent in man is taken as the cornerstone of modern education. The modern system has yielded substantial results too. We find men of great achievement in the various fields of arts and sciences in all modern countries. Merely stuffing of information into the brain and making it a lumber room, as is done in our country, is not its aim. The Hindu concept of education goes further. It does not content itself by merely drawing out the latent physical and intellectual faculties in man. According to us life is not a mere bundle of desires and passions; there is an Ultimate Reality residing within us. To realize and manifest That is the basic aim of our system of education".

Shri Guruji's view on our leaders proclaiming India 'secular' is both interesting and instructive "Emphasizing a state as secular, from the point of view of a Hindu, is superfluous. All these centuries in the past, we have been able to maintain religious harmony in the country. The state was only keeping a close watch to see that the people did not fall out and thus render the state weak. Otherwise all had their freedom of worship etc. That was the concept followed by Hindu ideology. But it was only in the interim period of Buddhist era that the state was non-secular, i.e., theocratic. During that period, the resources of the state were being used for propagation of a particular persuasion and dissuading others from practicing their own. All these unfortunate things were done by the state in the name of Lord Buddha, i.e., out of a misunderstanding of what he had said. This was only an exception to the great current of our national life. Therefore the qualifying word 'secular' is superfluous and unwanted from our point of view".

Even on a subject like our constitution and the various amendments brought in frequently Shri Guruji's views are extremely sound. "My only regret is that the Government is setting bad precedents in the formative years of free Bharat. The articles of people's faith and objects of their reverence are being weakened one by one. The Constitution could have been made into a unifying and strengthening factor. They began wrongly by framing an elaborate Constitution too cumbersome for reverence. Even so it could have been developed into an object of respect if the Government itself had any regard for it. But nothing of the sort exists. There is an amendment every year. People get the impression that you can play with the Constitution as you like. Its sanctity has been violated. I wish they had given an honest trial to the Constitution for at least 10 to 15 years. Then we would have known how it worked as it was and where to amend it for improvement. Actually the Government has been hammering away at it with out any second thoughts. That is why I said that the Government is setting bad precedents".

10. Ideal Hindu Women

Shri Guruji believes that women had a very vital role in bringing about social cohesion and also in building up character in the society. For this, what was necessary was to emulate the heroic examples of womanhood in our history. It was not necessary nor is it advisable to borrow foreign models, which have no relevance in our country. On the contrary it will only disrupt our society and destroy our values. Two role models of women who could be emulated with great advantage, often quoted by Shri Guruji are 'Vidula' and 'Savitri'. About 'Vidula' he says, "There is a beautiful anecdote narrated in *Mahabharata*. There was a queen by name 'Vidula'. She sent her son Sanjay to the war-field but the fellow became nervous and terror-stricken. He turned his

back to the enemies and galloped to his capital. When *Vidula* saw her son in that crestfallen state she closed the entrance to the fort and severely chastised him. The conversation between the mother and the son has become famous as *Vidula-Sanjay-Samvad*, wherein *Vidula* instructs her son as to how a brave warrior should conduct himself on the battlefield. She then orders him to go back to war and return as a victorious hero. As the story goes, Sanjay sallied forth into the battlefield, displayed exemplary valour and came back to be received by his mother with honour. The words of *Kunti* when the five *Pandavas* came to seek her blessings before proceeding to give battle are remarkable for their heroic tone. She says:

Yadartham kshatriya soote tasya kaloyamagata:

Na hi vairam samanaddhya sidamti purusharshabha:

(The moment has arrived for which Kshatriya mothers give birth to sons. Lion-hearted men are not cowed down in the face of enemies.)

"I am sure, if our mothers make a resolve to uplift the society, then there is no power, either in this world or the other, which can defeat them. The ideal of *Savitri*, before whom

even the Lord of Death accepted defeat, is before them. May they all invoke within themselves such single-minded devotion to the ideal, such purity of character and such peerless heroism! Once we do this, I am sure, the long night will pass and a new dawn will spread its golden hue over the horizon of not only Bharat but over the entire world with the renewed effulgence of our *Dharma*".

There is one more couplet in *Mahabharata* which says: May no woman give birth to one who would mutely suffer insults, who is devoid of vigour and manly prowess and one who would bring joy to the enemies".

With the great qualities of Motherhood ingrained in them women could play a tremendously effective role in transforming the society, even working well within the limitations imposed on them by their domestic responsibilities. Shri Guruji suggested that "They could establish useful contacts among the womenfolk in their own neighbourhood and carry out programmes which would inculcate our cherished ideas among them and their children. The spirit of mutual help and service would also have to be made popular through our day-to-day social intercourse. Our womenfolk should not be allowed to develop inferiority complex or a feeling of helplessness. They should be taught that they are the living emblems of *Parashakti*. There are quite a few of our educated mothers who have spare time and energy, which is often wasted in gossip or fashionable clubs. Here is one useful hint for them. There will be many small boys and girls in their neighbourhood who do not go to schools. They can make such children gather either in their own house or in some other convenient place and engage them in games, stories, songs, etc".

Though the duty and responsibility of looking after the home and preserving its purity and sanctity mainly rested on the women along with the inescapable commitment to bring up children in an ideal way, Shri Guruji believed that women have a special role to the society for which they are eminently fitted. He was neither a votary of seclusion of women nor and advocate of modern feminism. He wanted women to be well educated and socially oriented. He has given certain tips, which could be well absorbed and regularly practiced by our enlightened Mothers and Sisters. "Literacy campaign among women is one more important programme, which our educated mothers alone can successfully tackle. But here also, inculcating noble *samskars* in them should be given the priority; teaching of alphabets should come second. In order to do this, instill in them a spirit of pure devotion to our motherland, faith in our *Dharma* and pride in our history. Show them the map of our sacred Motherland, the holy streams and mountains, the *Tirthas* and *Temples* stretching right from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari. Introduce them to the rich variety of our national life in language, literature, art and social traditions. Thus make them become intimate with the true spirit of our national being".

11. A Living Embodiment

Shri Guruji had tremendous faith in the future of our country. But he also believed that mere faith and hope are not enough to carve out a golden era. His diagnosis of the situation was realistic - neither pessimistic nor optimistic. This is how he summed up his vision about our future and the way to achieve it. "The real trouble with us in this country is that we do not have a goal before us. There is no sense of mission. Without it no country can become great.

We must not merely exist, we must live. Bharat must show to the world that spirituality does not deny worldly life; it, in fact, fulfils it. Unless we as a nation adopt such an exalted goal, and strive for it, people's energies will not be released, and there will be no great achievements. The tragedy of the present situation is that those with patriotic instincts who ought to work do not work at all and the anti-national forces work with tremendous energy. Ravana was very active; he fought in the three worlds and conquered everything. But Janaka and so many other good people were only sitting, contemplating on the Absolute or doing penance and sacrifices. And only when a very active man, Rama, came on the scene could things be reversed. He traveled throughout the country in the name of *Vanavaasa*, gathered a large army and defeated Ravana. It only means that it is not enough for persons to be good, they should become active and dynamic; then only evil can be checked. Our future is what we make of it. Everything depends upon how we will and strive for it. You must have heard of the *Subhaashita*:

*Udyamena hi siddhyanti kaaryaani na manorathaih
Na hi suptasya simhasya pravishanti mukhe
mrigaah.*

(It is only through effort that works are accomplished, not through just desires. The prey won't enter into the sleeping lion's mouth of their own accord).

Samartha Ramadas has declared: 'Effort is Almighty'."

12. For Sadhana and Swadhyaya

As we all know, Shri Guruji was the very embodiment of all the qualities, which he preached for the good of the society. We hardly come across a person who devoted every moment of his life and every iota of his energy for the fulfillment of the great vision of a resurgent Bharat. The highest glory of Bharat was the only goal before him. A strong and well-organized Hindu society was the sure means for achieving this. Creating a network of *Swayamsevaks* in every nook and corner of the country who are imbued with this patriotic fervour, disciplined and dedicated, imbued with personal and national character, ever ready and willing to surrender themselves at the alter of the nation, was a sacred task for which Shri Guruji devoted his entire life. Like Sree Sankaraachaarya and Swami Vivekananda, he traveled from one end of the country to the other preaching this gospel of Hindu unity and national glory. No other leader has traveled across the country as many times as Shri Guruji has done. He was an eternal traveler, a pilgrim always on the move. As Swami Vivekananda had visualized, the Queen of his adoration was 'Bharat Mata'. The Mantra on his lips was 'Victory to the Mother' (Bharat Mata ki Jai). True to his commitment, Shri Guruji passed away with the same Mantra on his lips. Naturally his life is a burning flame of inspiration for anyone who has a desire to serve Mother India.

To know Shri Guruji is to know the soul of India, and to follow him is to make one's life a 'Saadhana in Patriotism'. His lectures, his writings, his letters and his conversations, all are the genuine expression of the multifaceted greatness and glory of this great country. As we celebrate the hundredth year of Shri Guruji, it is a proud achievement that the Sangh could

bring out a bunch of twelve volumes, which contain almost all the available literature which he has bequeathed to us. They are the windows to a great mansion, the fragrance of a rare flower, a perennial source of strength for all those who are fortunate enough to read them. It is the latest addition to world's classical literature to be treasured for all time to come.